Journal of

BLACK THEOLOGY

in South Africa

Vol. 8 No. 1

May 1994

JOURNAL OF BLACK THEOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Volume 8 (Number 1) 1994

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EDITORIAL

This issue of our Journal appears one month after a very important event in the history of black people of South Africa as well as that of the aspirations of all black people in the world. On the 26, 27, and 28th April 1994, black people of South Africa went to the polls to cast their very first vote for a constituent assembly and a government of their choice. Now that the elections are behind us and all citizens of South Africa have to face the future together it is imperative for them to stare reality in the face. They have to lift up all the concrete issues that will determine the value of their vote and address them as honestly as they can. Some of those issues we offer them to you in this journal.

Most of the papers that are included in this journal, were read at a Pan African theological conference held in Johannesburg. That conference which was attended by black theologians from the continent and the African Diaspora, addressed many issues that derive from the experience of black people in the world and the way in which they struggle to retain their faith in the Messiah in situations that militate against it. We now offer them to you in this issue. The rest of the papers will appear in the November issue. It is our hope that you will find them valuable as we did and join in the debate they also generated.

THE STATE OF BLACK SOUTH AFRICA: A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

The current carnage and destruction of black life which engulfs many of our communities, is serious challenge to the relevance of our faith as members of the Black Christian community. How we understand and respond to this present crisis will determine the future of our role in the new South Africa. It is even risky to speak about the new South Africa because what we experience everyday as we watch with horror the destruction of black life, is the ruthless tenacity of the old racial order of Apartheid seeking to reconsolidate its political base despite the euphoria about the ongoing process of negotiation.

Black Theology since its inception in the late sixties has sought to promote the dignity of black life by developing a strong incarnational faith geared to active resistance against all forms of racial oppression. To what extent has black theology achieved this will depend on how we understand the current role of the black church leaders and members in our present context. For I want to believe that the impact of the black theology movement can only be judged by the active role of black Christians in resisting the enslavement and oppression of black people irrespective of their religious affiliation. My impression, as I try to understand what is happening is two-fold. The Black Christian community on the whole has played a very significant role in supporting and promoting the broad democratic movement especially through a number of key leaders both the laity and the clergy. We must begin to appreciate this broad based view of the Black Christian community that has and continues to be at the fore front of all our political struggles in South Africa. The other important dimensions which are worth noting are the specific forms of resistance that have created a critical climate for resistance. We have witnessed over the past few years an active participation of the black

clergy in organised protests in our communities. The culmination of this activism led to the development of the Kairos document, which provided a significant theological justification to continue to engage in the struggle for liberation. I mention these two aspects in order to challenge the view that black theology is a movement reflected in particular documents published by black theologians and not embodied in the commitment of ordinary black Christians participating in different aspects of our struggle. Such a view must be rejected with the utter contempt it deserves. For it portrays black theology as purely an intellectual movement not rooted in the faith praxis of the Black Christian community. This is a truncated view of theology, one that reflects the eurocentric idealism that has characterized most of Western theology. If our struggle as black Christians has not been nourished by our faith and vice versa then we cannot speak today of a black theology movement.

But the real challenge today is how black Christian praxis addresses the destruction of black life. That for me is the crux of the matter. We must move beyond an obsession with of self denigration and destructive self criticism and begin to reclaim the resources of our faith. That task I believe requires a serious analysis of 1) who we are, that is a question of critical self identity 2) an analysis of the present socio-political dynamics and their impact on the process of transition 3) provide a theological critique of the present political situation 4) redefine the need for a fresh black Christian praxis.

1 MOVING BEYOND THE FACADE OF NON-RACIALISM

There is a growing disillusionment about the establishment of non-racial democracy in South Africa. This is encouraged by the perception, that the forces of violent death manifest themselves in the black communities with few exceptions in the white areas. This raises fundamental questions about the political vision especially of a non-racialist orientation about our current struggle. Such a vision unfortunately undermines one of the important characteristics of our struggle, that of race. What we must appreciate is that the policy of Apartheid has shaped the basic attitudes of our communities especially those of whites about the insignificance of black life. On the other hand for many blacks this has encouraged attitudes of self denigration - hence black life in the context of the prevailing violence is cheap. The denial

of the dynamics of race and ethnicity whilst understandable on the part of those who have been victims of Apartheid, cannot wish away the legacy of racism and ethnic chauvinism in our context. This has been confirmed by recent events at the World Trade Centre in Kempton Park during the invasion of the A.W.B., as well the troubling ethnic conflict in our communities.

But to speak of race and ethnicity only in terms of victimization is not enough, what is at stake is that race and ethnicity have been the main influence in the socialization process of many South Africans under the Apartheid System. Race and ethnicity have shaped the mindset of many individuals thus consolidating or providing authenticity to divisions that continue to influence our lives even today. What I am suggesting is that the racial and ethnic discourse that is pervasive in our context informs the actions of many individuals especially those of white and black conservatives. This is reflected in the desire for example to establish an Afrikaner 'Volkstaat', the obsession with a narrow and static view of Afrikaner Culture and tribalism. I want to suggest also that this kind of ethnic chauvinism will continue to haunt our political context for a very long time. Non-racialism as a new form of ideological discourse will not eradicate racism and ethnic chauvinism. This will only deepen the denial of the racial and ethnic character of our struggle. This sad denial is reflected in the leadership crisis that we see in some of our main political movements in the country today.

What we need to appreciate as we reexamine our present political context is that whilst race and ethnicity have been the dominant forces in shaping our life, they have also had adverse economic consequences. The poor and the marginalised continue to be the majority of black people. Squatter camps are reservoirs of black dehumanization and poverty, this is not to deny the manifestation of white pockets of poverty in certain urban areas, but on the whole the economic structures have benefitted whites. What the non-racialist discourse misunderstands is that because of the historical impact of racist and ethnocentric forms of political life, the legacy of racial capitalism under Apartheid will continue to prevail even in the so called new South Africa. Therefore to deny the concrete and yet devastating dynamics of racism and ethnic chauvinism is very dangerous. The alliance of the COSAG group should not be underestimated for it represents a bad omen for the future.

How then do we move beyond this facade of non-racialism as we attempt to come to grips with our present political context? We must emphasise

more than before that our struggle is an antiracist one and is against all forms of ethnic chauvinism, tribalism and sexism. I have focused on the question of racism and ethnic chauvinism because they are products of the Apartheid legacy which is one of the root causes of the current violence in many of our communities.

Our current struggle against the forces of death must be grounded in a new sense of black identity, one that upholds the moral imperatives of the black religious experience. At the core of this black or African religious experience is the radical affirmation of our humanity, some times referred to as ubuntu or botho. To be human is to resist all that which seeks to destroy life. It is also a relational concept that affirms mutual moral responsibility - 'Motho ke Motho ke batho' This moral dimension of our humanity is what shapes our identity. However because of the devastating forces of racism and ethnic chauvinism we see the denial of our true humanity, one which manifests itself in the horrendous acts of violence in our communities.

What this new sense of identity should emphasise is that as black people we are committed to the struggle for life, the affirmation of true humanity one that is antiracist opposed to ethnic chauvinism and committed to the creation of a just democratic order for all. What is at stake, is reaffirmation of our black identity as the moral initiative to provide leadership. As the Media continues to portray black life as negative, prone to violence and death, this new identity seeks to aggressively affirm the moral courage to challenge the legacy of Apartheid. I want to suggest that inspite of the criticisms by both white liberal and non-racialist theologians, black theology has and continues to inspire this kind of moral leadership. I want to emphasise this positive dimension of black religious identity because it must inform our future christian praxis.

2 AN ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT SOCIO-POLITICAL DYNAMICS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE PROCESS OF TRANSITION

Tinyiko Maluleke in his paper on a comprehensive analysis of the South African situation makes a very interesting point.

> The central problem of the present political process in South Africa is that an attempt is being made to pour new wine into old skins. The

> structures of Apartheid cannot be strengthened at the same time as a new dispensation is being worked out. The neglect of structural transformation in the direction of democracy and, the naivete of some liberation movements that structural transformation can wait while more urgent issues are being attended to is proving to be a nightmare. This is especially true because, the structure, namely government is still firmly in place [JBT Vol 6 No 2 pp36-37].

What we have to understand, inspite the euphoria about the ongoing process of negotiation in Kempton Park is that the power relations have not changed. The white regime continues to wield tremendous political influence. For example the idea of the government of National unity was not the idea of the African National Congress. But the National Party successfully persuaded the A.N.C to adopt this dubious principle. I suppose for various reasons. The concept of power sharing in terms of the well known legacy of Apartheid, is a fraudulent one, because it assumes that the oppressor and oppressed will through this kind of political partnership achieve a sense of stability and shared political power. What we need to explore to together is, what is behind this government of national unity.

It is clear that the outcome of our long struggle to dismantle Apartheid will not result in a truly democratic order, were the oppressed finally will achieve their rights. The concept of majority rules has been abandoned for the sake of political expediency. The main focus now is on the protection of minority rights. This represents a major contradiction in the so-called new political dispensation. This idea of a grand coalition between the Nationalist Party and the African National Congress will create a state that will be dominated by both Elites the Yuppies and Buppies of the New Political dispensation. The N.P would still gain prominence. Steven Friedman in his interesting essays make the same point even more convincingly:

> Even if a settlement is inevitable, a democracy is not: indeed, ensuring one may be far more difficult than negotiating a new political order. The Legacy of polarization could persuade both sides that the only viable settlement is one negotiated between elites from which the opponents of negotiation are excluded [Friedman 1991 p194].

He goes on to state ...

> To expect a democratic culture on either side of the divide to emerge soon would be unrealistic. The transition period, stretching up to and well beyond the installation of a new political order will be marked by many pressures which will threaten democracy and, perhaps, many instances it is limited in practice. But the space to create a democratic culture and society may exist. Whether it is used will depend on the political actors [Friedman 1991 p195].

I do not wish to belabour the point, to say we must be realistic, the new political dispensation, will not represent victory over the white racist domination, but a new form of political co-option in maintaining the white sociopolitical hegemony. What is very sad to me as a black christian is that a number of prominent church leaders are providing theological justification for this deceptive political arrangement. Those who challenge the aspiration of black people not to be duped by this coming new form of oppression are equally opposed to black christian praxis that seeks to expose this profound contradiction. This creates a new challenge for any black Christian praxis. It means a simplistic view of who the enemy of the political aspirations of the majority of the oppressed people will not do, our enemy is no longer simply the sociopolitical racial order of Apartheid, but a more complex form political hegemony based on the political and economic interests of certain political movements from the centre who seek to entrench their positions of power.

In other words the challenge is to deal with new forms of political alliances, which will finally determine the nature of the new political dispensation. It is in this context that the hermeneutic of suspicion becomes a new weapon for our struggle. Cornel West, I believe makes a very important point in this regard.

> The two basic challenges presently confronting Afro-Americans are self-image and self determination. The former is the perennial human attempt to define who and what one is, the issue of self identity. The latter is the political struggle to gain significant control over major institutions that regulate peoples lives [West. 1982 p22].

I want to suggest that the current sociopolitical dynamics that inform the process of transition are still to a major extent controlled by the proponents

of Apartheid. They provide not only the logistical support for the process but because of their enormous economic and political resources determine its direction. It is an irony to observe that some of the so-called key political players at Kempton Park are homeland leaders who are part of the creation of the Apartheid system. They all continue to be on the payroll of the South African state whose interests they cannot repudiate. The whole process is very suspect but the outcome is even more suspect. What is at stake in this process, is that the aspirations of the black majority are not at centre of debates but party interests and especially the political posturing of certain politicians to gain prestige and power. In other words the pain and the struggle of black folk who are being murdered everyday is not the driving force in this process. The process as a whole lacks the moral imperatives that are a focus of our struggle. It is a faceless process for it ignores the ongoing death and tragedy that affects the majority of black people in this country. The question I want to pose is, how can black church leaders continue to support this process without demanding certain crucial correctives to the present process of negotiations? It is my hope that during this conference important solutions will be suggested to address this problem.

3 A THEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF THE PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION

In my introductory remarks I mentioned that Black Theology since its inception in the late sixties sought to promote the dignity of black life by developing a strong incarnational faith geared to promote resistance against forms of racial oppression. I want to suggest that the task has not changed, what has changed is the nature of oppression. The oppressive structures today whilst subtle are more demonic and destructive, more black people have died during this period, and violence in many of our black communities is at its peak. An average of 5-10 people are killed everyday. The question we have to ask is why? How do we respond to the destruction of black life from a theological perspective? This is the challenge this conference will have to answers as we attempt again to assert our full humanity as the people of God?

Like the old christian communities of the past especially in biblical times, we are called to be vigilant, to develop profound scepticism about the values

of any social order that seeks to destroy life. This is part of our prophetic existence. The biblical drama highlights the contradictions of human existence always by pointing us to eschatological presence of Gods realm (of Luke 21:7-18) when the disciples wanted for an assurance of things to come Jesus said, "Beware that you are not led astray: for many will come in my name and say , I am he and the time is near. Do not go after them" Luke 21:8. These messianic pretenders posed a challenge for community making deceptive claims to be the Messiah. There are the false prophets who promise miraculous deliverance, claiming that the kingdom of God is about to appear. I do not want to pretend that in our present political context we confront the same impending catastrophe of the community that was addressed by Jesus, but what is crucial is the ability to repudiate the claims of those who speak in simplistic terms about our ultimate deliverance. In every age the church is confronted by these messianic pretenders. This we encounter especially amongst some of our church leaders who have committed themselves to the view that the present negotiations will usher in a new political dispensation. At a time when most of our people are killed in black communities we hear deceptive claims about peace. And yet the structures of violence represented by the military continue to promote havoc and destruction. The critical question we have to confront, who is really speaking the truth in this context? Who really represents the voiceless, the oppressed in this period of turmoil and conflict? Whose interest are being served by the current negotiation process? Even the Church is suspect for it no longer speaks for the majority of the oppressed people but promotes views of the key political players at Kempton Park.

One of the fundamental problems with the church today is that it is being co-opted by certain political forces in our society. Power relations to great extent play a very important role in how church leaders respond to our present crisis. There is a tendency amongst many of us not to confront our political leaders. What is becoming clear is that as churches we respond to the initiatives of certain leaders. If you analyze recent statements from Churches, they reflect this common tendency. Our task as we respond to this crisis is to develop a process of critical theological reflection of the role especially of the black churches. Someone not long ago suggested to me that we have lost our prophetic urge as black churches, because the white liberal agenda domi-

nates everything in our life as people. We continue to be preoccupied with problems which are not our own.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

One of the challenges of moving out of this political impasse characterized by ongoing violence and deepening ideological conflicts is for the church to promote a new presence. This christian presence is a new form of christian praxis whose goal is to re-educate the majority of the oppressed people about the contradictions of the present negotiation process. The task is an educational one, one that is not just geared to simplistic voter education which has become a band wagon of many church groups. But one that exposes the serious contradictions of the new political dispensation in terms of how it fails miserably to address the aspirations of the oppressed majority of our people.

What is critical about this new christian praxis is to challenge political leaders to be accountable in terms of providing concrete evidence of their commitment to create a just social order. This quest for radical accountability has to address a number of issues. It must address the question of the self image of the majority of our black people whose whole existence has been deformed and destroyed by the system of Apartheid. This self image which is being ravaged by forces of death, must rediscover a deeper understanding, a certain basic religious, cultural values of ubuntu. There is a sense in which this call for accountability amongst our leaders is a demand on their part to promote a positive black self image as part of establishing a new democratic social order. It is also in this context that a black theology can play a creative role in fostering a positive black self image, whose main thrust is antiracist, in that it respects, and celebrates at the same time a positive self image of others. The legacy of self hatred which was promoted by Apartheid, must be challenged by a determination to demand respect for who we are as a people. This is part of our quest as we redefine our role in the evolving social order. The other aspect of this demand for accountability from our leaders, is the invitation to ensure that the structures of the new society serve the needs of all irrespective of status, race or gender. For a new South Africa to be a true blessing to all, it must promote a democratic ethos that would become an envy for the whole of Africa. We have many former liberation movements

who after assuming political power, have become oppressive regimes. This should be avoided at all cost. The answer is to hold leaders accountable to cause of justice. The hermeneutic of suspicion should be at the centre of this call for accountability. What we demand from our leaders is moral leadership informed by broadly accepted principles of democracy.

The other critical challenge confronting the christian community in this period of uncertainty, conflict and violence, is to promote a new sense of unity especially amongst the oppressed majority of our people. The idea of the Patriotic front has not materialised amongst our political movements. It must be revived. Here the black churches in the townships can play a very key role. Whilst the peace structures are important as an avenue to promote political tolerance and reconciliation. Churches must challenge especially black political leaders to strive for solidarity by engaging in those programmes that involve our people in working for common political goals. It is in this context that the efforts of Bishop Tutu and Bishop Mogoba must be commended for bringing together Mr Mandela and Chief Buthelezi. This role of challenging black leaders must be pursued vigorously. Writing about this need to address the crisis of black leadership, Cornel West in his recent book "Race Matters", makes a pertinent remark,

> The crisis in black leadership can be remedied only if we candidly confront its existenial. We need national forums to reflect, discuss, and plan how best to respond. It is neither a matter of a new Messiah figure emerging, nor of another organization appearing on the scene. Rather, it is a matter of grasping the structural and institutional processes that have disfigured, deformed, and devastated black America such that the resources for nurturing collective and critical consciousness, moral commitment and courageous engagement are vastly underdeveloped. We need serious strategic and tactical thinking about how to create new models of leadership and forge the kind of persons to actualize these models [West 1993, p.45].

What is at stake in the ongoing carnage and destruction of black life is to demonstrate and to promote, a faith that makes a radical difference. That faith for me over the years has and continues to be nurtured by black theology. A theology that is reflected in the songs, the revivals, healing liturgies of the black churches in the ghettoes of this our sad and beautiful land. The

church as a faith community must also through its influence foster new models of leadership committed to just democratic values.

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RACISM AND ITS IMPACT ON BLACK WOMEN
A South African Perspective

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(A paper presented to the ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, 15-21 August 1993, Johannesburg, South Africa)

INTRODUCTION

It is not an easy task to speak of the impact of racism on Black women because of three related reasons. First, it is because of our shared humanity with Black men, that Black women do not view their struggle for liberation from racism as an isolated, exclusive reality. Part of the point of departure for Black women is that all Blacks as a community are oppressed. However, it has to be stressed that racism has and continues to have a particular impact on women. The second reason for this difficulty is the assumption that amongst Black women themselves the impact of racism has been the same, whether one is a rural woman or an urban woman; live in an informal settlement or not; is a working class or middle class woman. In other words such a broad topic may conceal class differences within the Black community. This shows that the situation in which we find ourselves in South Africa is very complex and as such cannot be treated by one paper. We cannot afford to speak of women without qualification. The fact that there are many women out there who would have loved to be here to share how they have experienced racism without the inhibition of having to use a foreign language is proof of the complexity of the situation. Language and academia automatically exclude a great number of women. The end result of this is that middle class women have to speak on their behalf. This statement does not in any way undermine the necessity of Black women intellectuals to develop a theology that takes a Black woman's experience seriously. The third reason for my difficulty is that it is almost impossible to speak of racism

without speaking of sexism because of their inter-relatedness; as both of them are relational concepts, like any form of oppression.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the effects of racism on Black South african women. What I am writing about is a story; one of many stories of women throughout the world. My hope is that Black theologians in the process of this investigation will be able to see how Black theology itself has continued to perpetrate the aims and objectives of White and racist oppressive rule whilst they claim to be speaking from a Black experience of struggle. An attempt will be made to first, define my understanding of racism as a sociological concept. In the discussion on how racism developed, we will refer to both sociology and science. When discussing the impact of racism on women, we will look at psychological economic, political, and religious oppression. A brief look at the part played by Black Theology in oppressing women will be done. The last section of this paper will be exploiting why Black women reject the racism- sexism- classing syndrome. Racism is located within a specific context in South Africa, and this is the subject of our next discussion.

I am writing from an experience of pain, humiliation of struggling with what my faith means in the context in which I find myself; pain because of what Black women have been subjected to because of the colour of their skin (both by White women and White men); humiliation as a result of an undermining of Black women' integrity and dignity by Black men, as if oppression by Whites was not hard enough. The struggle with faith experience in the context of suffering results from the Christian faith which is said to be democratic in essence but void of the least democracy in practice when it comes to women. The paper is therefore written from a context of the cry of weariness from all women on the one hand, and on the other hand from a deep experience of faith in God who brings hope. It is a time when God is giving birth to something new. The delay of the birth is probably delayed amongst other things by (to use medical terms) a mal presentation of the unborn baby. A normal presentation is the vertex (head), now, once the baby presents by the shoulder or breech (buttocks), labour is prolonged as both these parts of the body find it difficult to negotiate the pelvis. In cases like these a cut has to be made or a Caesarian section performed to extract the new life without damage to both the mother and the child. It is in the reali-

sation of this that Black women say they will cut if necessary, but their freedom will be realised. A definition of racism seems appropriate at this stage.

RACISM AND THE RACE PARADIGM

Boonzaaier and Gordon define racism as, "condition of control over the means for both the life chances and lifestyles of the subordinated other through the use of stigma, pejorative treatment and discrimination resulting in differential opportunities and highly differentiated sharing in rewards of society" (1988; and 1987:16). From this definition we gather that racism has to do with manipulation of societal power/forces and a refusal to accept a two-way communication/relationship. Racism so defined explains all that omen are to suffer because if the relationship is between the powerful and the powerless prescriptions of how they are to conduct their lives will come from the powerful.

The man who is sometimes known as the father of modern racism is Count Joseph Arthur because he proposed ideas which became influential in many circles including science. Although racism has existed as early as 300 AD the notion of "Race" as refer to a cluster of inherited characteristics comes from the 18th and 19th century thinkers (Giddens, 1990:256). Count Joseph proposed that three races existed; Black, White and Yellow. Black was marked by an animal nature, lack of morality and emotional instability. This is partly why superiority of the White race is a key element of White racism today., It is the same type of thinking that later influence Adolf Hitler and part of Nazi party ideology.

In South Africa racism is associated with colonialism. The race paradigm was entrenched since 1950 resulting in the apartheid ideology (separate development). It feeds on the assumption that the South African population consists of a number of discreet unassimilable groups. One of the reasons why White South Africans found the race paradigm handy, according to South African historian Theal, was that it provided them with the means to justify the discrepancies between the ruling and servicing classes.

It is necessary to point out that White South Africans have realised the negative connotations of race. They have substituted race with terms like "culture", ethnic group, nation, Volk or community. The shift is necessary

for them (whites) to conceal their true interests - that of domination. When one looks at ethnicity itself one may observe that what it is said to be differences are mainly learned processes which in all honesty cannot be reasons for staying together. "Ethnicity refers to cultural practices and outlooks that distinguish a given community of people". Members of ethnic groups see themelves as culturally distinct from other groupings in a society. Some of the characteristics which may serve to distinguish ethnic groups are language, history or ancestry (real or imagined). This results in other ethnic groups to think that they were born to govern, alternatively to see other groups as "unintelligent, lazy and soforth" (Giddens, 1990:244). Having defined racism, one can now see how over-emphasis of "ethnicity" or "minority groups" has a potential to perpetuate the underlying notions associated with the race paradigm. I believe that this is what is happening in South Africa.

Like Race, they have an ability to create moods in the minds of human beings to justify or maintain group formation at the expense of a comprehensive human liberation. The core of racism therefore is injustice, irrespective of the name which it takes. What impact has racism on Black women?

PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA

In many ways, from early childhood Black women have bee led to believe that they were intellectually inferior to Black men, White women and White men. As Bennet rightly observes, "at school females were encouraged to pursue domestic subjects whereas the males are the ones who have the head for science and maths..." (171).

Even in adult life, denigration of Black womanhood continues, especially for working class women. For example, when a Black women is employed by a White family she is given an overall, a pinafore and headgear so that she does not dress up like the "Madam/Missus". A picture which she will continually have of herself is that of being a servant. This is done in such a way that she does not see herself as a human being who is created in the image of God. In fact, her dignity is denied. When she dresses herself up nicely on a Sunday afternoon to go to Church one street down she is confronted with a White man in his car who hoots at her and whispers, "Hey baby" (irrespective of the age of the woman concerned). This White man assumes

that if a Black woman is out of her overalls she is presenting herself as a sex object. This may result in a sense of guilt; that there is something wrong which the woman has done to call "this" man's attention.

One would expect to have better treatment in the church which professes not to be of this world; a church of Jesus Christ which claims to be non-racist and non-sexist. One can look at any or most of the "mainline churches" to see how power functions. Whilst on the one hand Black men are struggling for power to be Bishops and so on, White men are forcing their way through to Administrative positions where the money is, to make sure that no Black man ever controls money. Black women, being the oppressed of the oppressed are the ones who suffer the most. Being in the majority, when the male Bishops are visiting circuit/parishes they are expected to organise a present for "our father". In other words, whilst they (women) do not participate in placing those Black Bishops there, they are the ones to feed them, or keep them in "power". Women internalise this oppression, and resign themselves to running soup kitchens for unemployed men in the streets, church bazaars and running Sunday School classes. Black men have also become a part of the "system" so that it becomes very difficult to distinguish their actions from White racists. The surprising thing is that those who are very active in the "people's liberation" are usually the ones who give women a tough time when it comes to gender issues. On reading their "very profound Theology" one can be fooled into thinking that you are talking about the same thing when you speak of liberation, yet, on closer observation, one has no option but to agree with James Cone when he says that, "The difficulty that Black male ministers have in supporting the equality of women in the church and society stems from the lack of a clear liberation-criterion rooted in the gospel and in the present struggles of oppressed peoples...It is amazing that many Black male ministers, young and old, can hear the message of liberation in the gospel when related to racism but remain deaf to a similar message in the context of sexism" (Maimela, 1990:60; cf James Cone). For me this shows how racism has not only turned Black women but Black men as well into Schizoid personalities. The second issue which comes out of this analysis is that it is possible that when Black male theologians speak of liberation, that liberation either excluded Black women or, the lesser (women) is included in the larger (men).

Furthermore, statements like, "Who told you that you are oppressed? Are you also a feminist? This liberation 'thing' has no room in Africa; You are only involved in the liberation movement because you are frustrated by the fact that you are not married , you need a man and all will be well", are very common. Because of this continued bombardment of the woman's psyche with these derogatory comments some may come to believe that struggling for full humanity is an anomaly for women. This shows how dangerous it is to take the identity of one's oppressor. Whites make the same comments about Blacks, for Blacks are so dumb that they cannot know when they are oppressed unless they are told. In fact making these comments is a critique on God who created women and said "it was good".

It is equal to saying that God made a mistake by creating women. By implication it means that God created an incomplete human being. This type of mentality further calls into question the mission of Christ; that of having come to liberate all human beings from all forms of oppression that undermine human dignity. All of this cause psychological trauma to women which may manifest itself in many ways, one of which would be adoration of male leadership (by females). Men will then claim that women never vote other women into positions of leadership and make noise about the strangeness of this phenomenon. What oppressors fail to appreciate is that they are themselves contributors to the dependency syndrome in women.

RACISM HAS REDUCED WOMEN TO A SERVICING CLASS

This is a very complex issue. It touches on economic exploitation of women. Bonita Bennet writes, "The capitalist system needs a right-less group of people who an be controlled and exploited in the labour market. In South Africa, this group is the predominantly Black working class. The women of this class of people suffer the most: they are triply oppressed. They are exploited because they are women, because they are Black, and because they are workers". (170). How did these women come to be in that position? The establishment of cities, towns and villages is a contributory factor. Cities sucked healthy men from the countryside for the purposes of labour in industrial areas. They were considered single, so they were accommodated in single men's hostels. Their wives were not allowed to come with them because they

were not needed as such, Pass Laws and influx control kept this in check. This on its own established the fabric of indigenous societies. Women were forced by poverty to the cities and were employed as domestic service workers. They were deprived of a good education. As their husbands and brothers were boosting the South African economy, some rural women and their children had to look after the block so that children did not starve. Illiteracy rates became higher and higher. So whilst Black women saw to it that White women went to work by looking after White children, Black children were left without parents to see to their schooling. These brave women, however, tried their best with their little income to pay for their children's education. Racism, with regards to women, is a clear strategy of making Black women feel ashamed of the Blackness and womanhood. I want to also suggest, therefore, that the effects of racism are, amongst other things, determined by one's social class. For example, in rural areas there is no, or very poorly developed, infrastructures. As a result there is no pure water supply and no electricity. This means that women have to walk long distances to fetch water or to collect firewood. For the latter they are accused of depleting natural resources and not caring for the environment, which is "God's creation", yet no provision for alternatives is made. (I am in no way advocating for deforestation.)

Whilst women form the majority of the labour force they are the least paid. Society has conditioned people in such a way that low pay is something that is taken for granted, and most of the time never questioned.

In the political sphere, the few women who hold positions are subjected to a lot of stress. They are expected to "prove they are capable", but that is not expected from men.

In the religious sphere women are not treated any better. In some churches because their ordination was negotiated for by men there are constant threats of not being stationed if they speak "against men". The point here is missed altogether because the fight is not against men but against all forms of justice: racism, classism, sexism etc.

BLACK THEOLOGY AND WOMEN

I am echoing many women throughout the world who raise the question of the invisibility of Black women in Black Theology. When Black male theologians were at Seminaries, Black women were kept out of theological institutions. This means that Black women have been deprived of a chance to acquire tools which are necessary for developing hermeneutics and a systematic theology, and later to be accused of being not intellectual enough to theologise. Even those women who go to theological seminaries have it tough there, because their Black brothers cannot accept that God can and does call women to the ordained ministry. It is accepted because of pressure. I know of at least one theological Seminary where Black male students refuse to listen to anything that has to do with women and their oppression.

Jacquelyn Grant asks a genuine question when saying, "how adequate is the conception of Black Theology for the liberation of the total Black community?" She further suggests that "Black women have been invisible in theology because theological scholarship has not been a part of the woman's sphere" (Black Theology and the Black Woman). I want to believe that Black Theology has in this sense delayed development of a holistic theology of liberation. A time has come for women to reflect on their experience because it is within this context that God's revelation is experienced and received by women. Are Black Theologians wanting to maintain that it is the prerogative of men to handle theological issues?

WHY WOMEN REJECT SEXISM AND CLASSISM

1 It is contrary to our theological inclusiveness that God made us all in one image be we male or female, we are called to provide equal oppor tunities, acknowledge our uniqueness and celebrate rather than exploit that uniqueness.

2. We had no part in the selection of our parents, genes or preponderance of our pigmentation or area of birth. God works through women, men, youth and children. So does God also care about or ecology.

3. These ideas of Racism, Sexism and Classism divide and deprive humanity of gifts, graces and resources to enhance the rule of God here on

earth. I choose to say the rule of God one each/earth than to say God's Kingdom or God's Queendom.

4. While there was always sexism and classism in our African heritage, it was discouraged and efforts made to compensate those who were deprived or victimised by it. For example, single women would be allowed to build their own home, have their own cattle and cows and be a family with other people's children since we were (and still are) all members of the extended family.
5. These evil ideas negate Jesus Christ's teaching and ministry. Jesus spoke to people of all classes, people of all sexes, Samaritan women, Marty and Martha, women disciples, read Luke 8: 1-3 etc.
6. If we truly want to see a God-guided and people centred world, we need to desist, i.e. stop perpetuating or condoning racism, sexism and classism in one's thoughs and vocabulary, practices be they personal or institutionalised. Repentance is the essential step towards redemption. Let's change ourselves first just as much as we demand similar change in other people or our "secular society".
7. We deprive ourselves and all of God's people of the needed sustenance, guidance and inspiration that is presently thwarted by racism, sexism and classism.
8. Our faith should permeate and underpin what we say, do and stand for and not just say and love what we say.

"COME TO MY HELP LORD FOR I'M IN TROUBLE": WOMANIST JESUS AND THE MUTUAL STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION

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> I looked at my hands, to see if I was the same person now I was free. There was such a glory over everything, the sun came like gold through the trees, and over the fields, and I felt like I was in heaven.
>
> I had crossed the line of which I had so long been dreaming. I was free; but there was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom, I was a stranger in a strange land, and my home after all was down in the old cabin quarter, with the old folks, and my brothers and sisters. But to this solemn resolution I came; I was free, and they should be free also; I would bring them all there. Oh, how I prayed then, lying all alone on the cold, damp ground; "Oh, dear Lord," I said, "I ain't got no friend but you. Come to my help, Lord, for I'm in trouble!" [Loewenberg and Bogin, 220].

"I'm in trouble," Harriett Tubman said. What was the source of her trouble? She was finally free. Her prayers had been answered; her dream had come true. She had reached the "state" which she perceived to be like heaven - freedom - the long awaited reality. Freedom in her understanding was the essence of the good news of the gospel. What happens when we encounter the good news of the gospel? We are taught that the Christian response is to go forth in all the world and "spread the gospel" to others. Even from a Christian point of view, then, it is not difficult to understand the yearnings of Harriet Tubman. The gospel experienced, must be shared; freedom experienced, must be shared. However, it is not uncommon that the gospel, when encountered creates dilemmas which are not easily resolved. The gospel keeps us in a perpetual cycle of decision making. We must say yes to the gospel, and that yes is manifested in life as lived daily; or we can say no even by our inactivity. The dilemma for Tubman meant trouble. Just as life in

general, for Black people was a perpetual state of "trouble", certainly for an escaped slave, the thought of going back into the den of iniquity was a source for grave concern. For there were both political and social (negative) consequences, even possible death.

But for Tubman, the challenge was both a personal one and a religious one. The will for her family members and others to have the "heaven-like" experience was matched only by her Christian beliefs. The nature of her Christian belief was of such that, as sung in the old time gospel song, she "just couldn't keep it to herself". Yes, freedom experienced is indeed freedom shared. What happens when the nature of the gospel and the nature of the existential situation render one in direct conflict with the "human principalities and powers that be?" Isn't that often what being a Christian means? - challenging unjust and evil powers.

In the experiences of Black Women, Jesus was ever-present; he has commonly been perceived and experienced as being present in "times of trouble". Ntozake Shange in her choreopoem, FOR COLORED GIRLS WHO HAVE CONSIDERED SUICIDE WHEN THE RAINBOW IS ENUF, commented through one of her characters that to speak of Black Women's existence as "colored and sorry" is to be redundant. (Shange, 43) Sadness or sorrow (the pain, the sufferings) are perpetually a part of the African American Woman's reality; so much so that, whatever else the consideration, these components are always present in the lives of Black Women. Consequently, to be "colored and sorry" is to be redundant. In the same way, one could say that to speak of Black Women's existence as being in trouble, or more to the point, having trouble, is to be redundant. The multi-dimensional nature of Black Women's oppression means that "trouble" is always in the way. Contrary to another old gospel song, "Trouble in my Way, We Have to Hide Sometimes", it is literally impossible to hide. The pervasiveness and interconnectedness of racism, sexism and classism, and other forms of oppression which define a good portion of the lives of Black Women, make "trouble" inescapable. Jesus, for many Black Women, has been the consistent force which has enabled them not only to survive the "troubles" of the world, but to move beyond them and inspite of them.

In this essay, I will explore three sources of the troubles of African American Women, with special reference to the problem of Christology. Essentially, I argue that the central christological problem rests in the fact

that Jesus Christ historically has been and remains imprisoned by the socio-political interests of those who have historically been the keepers of principalities and powers. This Jesus has been a primary tool for undergirding oppressive structures. I, therefore, wish to discuss the "troubles" of African American Women by exploring three ways in which Jesus has been imprisoned: 1) The imprisonment of Jesus Christ by Patriarchy; 2) The imprisonment of Jesus Christ by White Supremacy; and 3) the imprisonment of Jesus Christ by the Privileged Class. Then, in conclusion, I wish to explore the implications for the liberation or the redemption of Jesus Christ based on the lived realities of African American Women.

THE HISTORICAL IMPRISONMENT OF JESUS CHRIST BY PATRIARCHY

It is no accident that in the course of Christian history, men have defined Jesus Christ so as to undergird their own privileged positions in the church and society. This is evidenced by the fact that Jesus Christ is so often used to justify the subordination of women in the church. An understanding of the context in which this kind of interpretation emerges, provides explications of the interpretation itself.

An aspect of the social context in which Christianity, as we know it, developed, and in which we now live, is "patriarchy". Defined in the male consciousness, patriarchy assumes male dominance and control, making normative the centrality of men and the marginality of women. The primary roles of men and the secondary roles of women, effectively insures a hierarchy in sex or gender roles. Moreover, patriarchy embraces "the whole complex of sentiments, the patterns of cognition and behaviour, and the assumptions about human nature and the nature of the cosmos that have grown out of a culture in which men have dominated women". (Collins, 51). That is to say, patriarchalism is a way of looking at reality so that role assignments are not arbitrarily given, but they are apart of the rational and systematic structures of perceived reality itself. Patriarchy has been called a "conceptual trap" which ensnares its victims and keeps them in place through the constant reinforcements of society which cooperate to keep the male status quo in place. It's like being in a room, and unable to imagine anything in the world outside of

it. (Gray, 17) It becomes difficult then for either men or women to imagine themselves outside of their prescribed roles; and when this does happen, in the case of women, they are treated as "exceptions", as long as the system remains in place.

Living within these parameters means living with dualism which effectively, keeps men in superior and women in inferior positions, thus rendering men as authority figures over women. Just as Jesus has power and authority over men and women, men have power and authority over women and children.

The christological import of these effects of patriarchy, of course, is that the divine is generally associated with what it means to male in this society. In another place, I have explored the specific correlation between patriarchal assumptions about gender roles and the issue of women's leadership in the church. (Grant, passim) However, suffice it to say here that the lingering controversies regarding leadership/ordination/placement of women in the church are overwhelmingly and distortedly christological.

Women have been denied (humanity, personhood, leadership, equality, etc.) because of the Church's history of negative christology. This aspect of the negative christology has resulted primarily from over emphasis on the maleness of Jesus. The maleness, in actuality, has become idolatrous. In fact, the maleness of Jesus has been so central to our understanding of Jesus Christ that even the personality of Jesus, and interpretations of Christ have been consistently distorted. In effect, Jesus has been imprisoned by patriarchy's obsession with the supremacy of maleness.

Feminists have sought to break the prison of patriarchy. Using gender analysis, many of the historical, biblical and theological interpretations have been challenged. Feminist theologians have been working diligently to overcome the sin of patriarchy. They have been able to break from the conceptual trap by taking seriously women's experiences as the context and one of the sources of biblical interpretations. Seeing reality through the eyes of women has lead to the rereading of biblical texts and the revising of biblical and theological interpretations. In many instances, some feminists have been able to reform Jesus; other have attempted to liberate Jesus and women by suggesting that though Jesus can be seen in relation to the male physical reality, Christ transforms maleness and may take on female or feminine forms. Still some feminists have argued the uselessness of these revisionist ap-

proaches, for in their views, to speak of Christianity and patriarchy, is to be redundant.

As victims of sexism, Black Women, along with other women are once removed from the image of God.

THE HISTORICAL IMPRISONMENT OF JESUS BY WHITE SUPREMACY IDEOLOGY

As I explore the problem of Christology from the perspective of an African American Woman, the question of sexism and its function in the historic oppression of women must be adequately addressed. Feminists have provided some significant analyses that have helped in breaking the prison of patriarchy, pointing directions for eliminating the sin of sexism from our lives, our churches and societies.

For African American Women, however, the question is much broader than the sin of sexism. Racism, in the view of many, has been the basic defining character in the lives of African American Women in North America. Recent publications continue to document the contemporary manifestations of racism in our every day lives. Unfortunately, the church has not escaped this sinful reality. On the contrary, the Church has been a bastion of the sin of racism. This is reflected not only in the practice of much of its populace, but in structures and in its theology (theologies). Studies on church leadership (even present patterns), and the history of theology would confirm this. Theologically, perhaps this is nowhere more apparent than in the christological issue wherein negative color symbolism has been institutionalized in Christian theology. The constant battle between light and dark, good and evil (God and devil), White and Black, is played out daily in racial politics of the dominant culture (Euro-Americans), and at the same time, theologically legitimated and institutionalized in the racial imageries of the divine. The racism is reflected in the fact that the white imagery is presented as normative and to the exclusion of any other possible imagery of Jesus or God.

These oppressive ideologies and theologies have been developed in the context of racial/White supremacy. The ideology of White supremacy produces the kind of racism with which we have been afflicted throughout most of the history of this continent as we know it. Racism, according to Joel

Kovel "... is the tendency of a society to degrade and do violence to people on the basis of race, and by whatever mediations may exist for this purpose" [Grant, 199 (Kovel,x)]. These mediations are manifested in different forms, and are carried on through various disciplines: psychology, sociology, history, economics, art and symbolism of the dominant (White) group. Racism is the domination of a people which is justified by the dominant group on the basis of racial distinctions. It is not only individual acts, but a collective, institutionalized activity. As C. Eric Lincoln observed,

> [f] or racism to flourish with the vigor it enjoys in America, there must be an extensive climate of acceptance and participation by large numbers of people who constitute its power base. It is the consensus of private persons that gives racism its derivative power ... The power of racism is the power conceded by those respectable citizens who by their actions or inaction communicate the consensus which directs and empowers the overt bigot to act on their behalf. [Grant, 199 (Lincoln, 11-12)]

Racism, then is not only measurable by individual actions, but by institutional structures, and theoretical precepts. Its presence is guaranteed even in the absence of any particular human carriers.

Now, theological and specifically, christological expressions of this racism are represented in our common imaging of Jesus Christ and of God. The irrationality used here is similar to that used in the sin of sexism. For example, even though we insist that God is a spirit and Jesus died for us all, we persist in deifying the maleness of both God and Jesus, certainly giving men a social, political and theological edge over women. With regard to the sin of racism, though we claim God as spirit and Jesus as being for all, we have consistently and historically represented God and Jesus a white. We have infact diefied "Whiteness".

Even in popular culture, God, as reflected in Hollywood (of the movie "Oh God"), has been given to us as residing in the midst of pure whiteness, and being represented by "an old white man" (perhaps the only thing approximating accuracy in the image of God presented is "old"; if eternity implies anything, perhaps it implies old, even though the concept of "eternity" is believed to defy all such human categorizations. The "eternal nowness" of God can be perceived to the ageless). In other words, Christian consensus (albeit

based upon and grounded in the history of theology) enables "respectable christians" to accept without question, the destructive negative color symbolism of Christian theology. No wonder some Black folks are still singing and praying "Lord wash met whiter than snow", inspite of the problematic nature of related scriptures at best. (cf. Bailey, p.180 and Felder, p.42)

In the White Church Tradition, Jesus Christ has functioned as a status quo figure. Because historically Christology was constructed in the context of White supremacy ideology and domination, Christ has functioned to legitimate these social and political realities. Essentially, Christ has been White. This is evidenced not only in the theological imagery, but also in the physical imagery of Jesus himself. In a society in which "white is right and black stays back", and white is symbolized as good and black evil, certainly there would be socio-political ramifications of color with respect to Jesus. The implication that white/light is good and black/dark is evil functions, not only with respect to humanity, but also with respect to human's concept of their deity. The late Bishop Joseph Johnson put the point strongly this way:

> Jesus Christ has become for the white church establishment the "white Christ", blue eyes, sharp nose, straight hair, and in the image of the Black man's oppressor. The tragedy of this presentation of Jesus Christ by the White church establishment is that he has been too often identified with the repressive and oppressive forces of prevailing society. The teachings of the "white Christ" have been used to justify wars, discrimination, segregation, prejudice, and the exploitation of the poor and the oppressed people of the world. In the name of this "white Christ" the most vicious form of racism has been condoned and supported [Johnson,NBCT,JITC, 25]

To counteract this historical and theological trend, Black theologians have called not only for a new departure in theology but even more specifically for a new christological interpretation. The White Christ must be eliminated from the Black experience and the concept of a Black Christ must emerge. Theologians like Cone, Wilmore, Cleage, and others have argued this point from various perspectives. some argue for literal blackness; some for symbolic blackness. The point if to uplift the oppressive ways in which the negative images have functioned for Black and White People. It's a question of images in relation to human beings. We have been given to believe that

Blacks are not in the image of God. for this reason many still harbor beliefs, strong feelings and attitudes about the inferiority of Blacks even when our intellect tells us otherwise.

African American Women as women and Black persons are thus twice removed from the image of God.

THE HISTORICAL IMPRISONMENT BY THE PRIVILEGED CLASS

Isn't it interesting that what for some have been called theological paradoxes and dialectical tensions, for others have been in actuality historical contradictions, which have led to social, economic and political imprisonment?

Take, for example, the notion of "servanthood", both in the Christian and secular contexts. Explorations into the area of domestic servanthood illustrate my point. In particular, a look at the relationship between White Women and Black Women vis-a-vis slavery and domestic service demonstrates that the Christian notion of servanthood has historically been used to reinforce a servant, subservient and obedient mentality in politically oppressed people. the catechisms which were taught to slaves were designed to clearly identify the earthly slavemaster as the god of the slave. One such catechism, Jones' Catechism admonished the slave to respond to the master

> 'with all fear', they are to be 'subject to them' and obey them in all things, possible and lawful, with good will and endeavour to please them well, ... God is present to see, if their masters are not [Raboteau, p.163 and Crum, p.204-5]

Even after slavery it appears that the attitude survived, for Black People in general and Black Women in particular have always been disproportionately relegated to being servants of White People. Still, they were given to believe that it was not only their civil duty, but their Christian or heavenly duty to obey ... In other words, Christian servanthood and socio-political servanthood were taught to be the same. But black People recognized the contradictions. So they sang:

> I got-a shoes
> Hou got-a shoes
> all o' God's chillun got-a shoes.

when I get to heab'n,
goin' to put on my shoes,
I'm goin' to walk all ovah God's heab'n,

Even though people outside of the culture may interpret this message as mere concern for shouting, or the ecstasy that comes with various forms of spirituality, it infact was a challenge to the contradictions under which they lived. The refrain took an interesting twist:

Heab'n, heab'n,
Everybody talkin' 'bout heab'n ain't goin' dere;
Heab'n, heab'n,
I'm goin' to walk all ovah God's heab'n.
(Frazier, p.93)

Those Christian servants who have (had) the power to define the politically oppressed servants ought not to assume that their earthly political and social powers controlled divine things. they may be forced into dehumanized forms of servanthood, but divine retribution was to come.

Interestingly, even though we use the servanthood language with respect to Jesus, we have in effect made him apart of the bourgeoisie. He has become a privileged person, not unlike the so-called "christian servants" of the culture of oppressors. They specialize in maintaining their privileged positions in the church and society, while the real "servants" of the world are structurally and systematically disenfranchised. the real servants are the economically deprived, the socially ill, the politically impotents and the spiritually irrelevant, if in fact not spiritually empty.

Jesus has been made to escape all of these realities. Though he was born in a stable, he has been made royal --he's king of kings; Though he was a Jew, all traces of his Jewishness have been erased for all intents and purposes; Though he died the common death of a criminal, we've erased the agony, suffering and pain, in the interest of creating a "sweet Jesus".

In an interview with a Black pastor in which he interpreted the images on the stained glass windows just recently installed in his church, he commented: "The White Church has erased the pain from the face of Jesus. He does not suffer. The crucifixion is a painful experience. We show the pain

the agony, the suffering. It's the face of the Black Man --the face of Black People". It's the face of the real servants of the world (Johnson).

I am arguing that our servanthood language, existentially functions essentially as deceptive tactics for keeping complacent non-dominant culture peoples and the non-privileged of the dominant culture. Thus, our White Jesus, the Jesus of the dominant culture, escapes the real tragedy of servanthood. But oppressed peoples do not. christian theology and history have insured the embourgeoisement of this Jesus.

Being neither among the dominant culture nor the privileged class, again, Black Women and other non-white Women, because of their triple jeopardy, are three times removed from the image of Jesus/the image of God.

In effect, I am arguing (as other have done) that Jesus has been conveniently made in the image of White oppressors. William Jones some years ago asked the question "Is God a White Racist?" Feminists have asked "Is God/Jesus a male chauvinist pig? When poor people ask why Lord?, one could interpret this question to be, "Is God/Jesus for the rich and against the poor?" All of these oppressive conceptions about God/Jesus are re-inforced by the imagery and symbols including language. What is needed is a challenging of Christian theology at the points of its racist, sexist and servant languages, all of which are contrary to the real message of Jesus Christ.

African American Women's understandings of Jesus help us to see how Jesus is appropriated even inspite of the historical oppressive presentations of him.

WOMANIST JESUS: THE MUTUAL STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION

What we find in the experiences of African American Women is a process of mutual liberation: Jesus was liberating or redeeming African American Women, as African American Women were liberating or redeeming Jesus. The Jesus of African American Women has suffered a triple bondage or imprisonment as well. Jesus has been held captive to the sin of patriarchy (sexism), the sin of White supremacy (racism) and the sin of Privilege (classism). As such, he (Jesus) has been used to keep women in their proper place; Blacks meek, mild and docile in the face of brutal forms of dehumanization; and he has also been sued to insure the servility of servants. African

American women heard twice (and sometimes three times) the mandate "Be subject..., for it is sanctioned by Jesus and ordained by God..." consequently, they (African American Women and Jesus) have suffered from the sins of racism, sexism and classism.

However, in spite of this oppressive indoctrination, Jesus Christ has been a central figure in the lives of African American Women. they obviously experienced Jesus in ways different from what was intended by the teachings and preachings by White oppressors (and other oppressors). Four experiences demonstrate how African American women are able to liberate Jesus as Jesus liberated them: 1) Jesus as Co-sufferer; 2) Jesus as Equalizer; 3) Jesus means Freedom; and 4) Jesus as Liberator.

Jesus as Co-Sufferer. Chief among Black People's experiences of Jesus was that he was a divine co-sufferer, who empowered them in situations of oppression. For Christian African American Women of the past, Jesus was a central point of reference. For inspite of what was taught them, they were able to identify with Jesus, because they felt that Jesus identified with them in their sufferings. There was mutual sufferings. Just like them, Jesus suffered and was persecuted undeservedly. Jesus' sufferings culminated on the cross. African-American Women's cross experiences were constant in their daily lives - the abuses physical and verbal, the acts of dehumanization, the pains, the sufferings. The loss of families and friends and the disruption of communities. but because Jesus Christ was not a mere man, but God incarnate, they, infact, connected with the Divine. This connection was maintained through their religious life --their prayer tradition and their song tradition. Their prayers were conversations with one who "walked dat hard walk up calvary and ain't weary but to tink a' nbout we all dat way". (Carter, 49). The connection was also evidenced by the song tradition in which one could lament, "Nobody knows the trouble I see...but Jesus...."

Jesus as Equalizer. African American Women had been told twice that their inferiority and inequality were apart of the nature of things. they, along with African American Men, were taught that they were created to be the servant class for those in control. They were not to preach (in the case of women, and Black men in some traditions), and they were to acknowledge their place as apart of God's providence. But African American Women ex-

perienced Jesus as a great equalizer, not only in the White world, but in the Black World as well. And so they would argue that the crucifixion was for universal salvation in its truest sense, not just for male salvation, or for White salvation. Because of this, Jesus came and died, no less for the woman as for the man, no less for Blacks as for Whites. Jarena Lee, in the last century said:

> If the man may preach, because the Saviour died for him, why not the woman? Seeing he died for her also. Is he not a whole saviour, instead of a half one? as those who hold it wrong for a woman to preach, would seem to make it appear [Lee, 15-16].

Because Jesus Christ was for all, he infact equalizes them and renders human oppressive limitations invalid.

Jesus Means Freedom. Perhaps no one better than Fannie Lou Hamer articulates Black Women's understanding of Jesus in relation to freedom. She takes us a bit further than the equality language by challenging our understanding of and desire for mere equality. She said:

> I couldn't tell nobody with my head up I'm fighting for equal right[s] with a white man, because I don't want it. Because if what I get, got to come through lynching, mobbing, raping, murdering, stealing and killing, I didn't want it, because it was a shocking thing to me, I couldn't hardly sit down [Wright, p. 26].

We are challenged to move beyond mer equality to freedom. Freedom is the central message of Jesus Christ and the gospel, and is concisely summarized in Luke 4:18. Based upon her reading of this text her consistent challenge to the American public was that to be a follower of Jesus christ was to be committed to the struggle for freedom.

Jesus, The Liberator. the liberation activities of Jesus empowers African American Women to be significantly engaged in the process of liberation. Sojourner Truth was empowered, so much so that when she was asked by a preacher if the source of her preaching was the Bible, she responded, "No honey, can't preach from de Bible$--can't read a letter". then she explained;

"When I preaches, I has jest one text to preach from, an' I always preaches from this one. My text is, "When I found Jesus!"" In this sermon Sojourner Truth talks about her life, from the time her parents were brought from Africa and sold, to the time that she met Jesus within the context of her struggles for dignity and liberation for Black People and women. The liberation message of Jesus provided grounding for the liberation and protest activities of such persons as Sojourner Truth and many other women activists.

Both White Women and Black women have re-thought their understandings of Jesus Christ. They have done so against all odds. For they (both) live in the context of patriarchy, which has enabled men to dominate theological thinking and church leadership/ Black Women continue to suffer from the sin of White supremacy, wherein it is believed that the theological task belongs to Whites. In midst of all this women have emerged to say that women's experiences, (African American Women, Hispanic Women, Native American Women) must be taken seriously; and even if men refuse to do so, women must forge ahead nonetheless.

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FREEDOM IN BONDAGE: BLACK FEMINIST HERMENEUTICS

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to portray the situation of a Black Christian woman in South Africa, thus, the condition of a woman in the church. Despite the fact that the Bible proclaims God as redeemer (OT) and Jesus as saviour (NT),the Black Christian woman in South Africa finds herself in bondage. She is (supposed to be) free in Christ but this freedom cannot be fully realized because she is always in chains. There is therefore an urgent need for a relevant hermeneutics in order to rescue her.

The Black woman in South Africa, unlike her White counterpart is always 'bound'. She is the object of oppression from almost all sectors of society (excluding Black children). Even the latter becomes questionable on the basis of the attitude that modern youth has towards parents today (Masenya 1989:9, 144). These women can be referred to as 'the roots of oppression' to quote Cutrufelli (1983). They suffer a trilogy of oppression (racism, classism and sexism) and therefore Black feminists, unlike their White counterparts, fully grasp the interrelatedness of sex, race and class oppression (Hooks 1984: 14; Cochrane 1991:25).

Being bombarded by this oppressive setting, William (1990:24) poses the following questions:

> I wonder which of the many oppressions in my female-ness and in my blackness weigh the heaviest on me. Which of the many liberations do I thirst for most? Do I thirst most of all to be liberated from my colour, from my class, my ignorance of my tradition, from economic domination? Or is it the liberation from all male domination that women all over the world are struggling for today?

1 BLACK WOMEN : THE ROOTS OF OPPRESSION

The three forms of oppression from which the Black (Christian) woman is the victim are foregrounded in the following paragraphs in order to highlight the bondage of this woman.

It becomes frustrating for a person who identifies with God as creator and redeemer to realize that her oppression is caused by her nature as a Black and as a woman. This frustration is caused by the fact that she is not in a position to improve (if this is necessary) or to change her nature as given by God. If as Christians, we believe that man (ha-adam Gn 1:26) which implies undifferentiated humanity (cf Swidler 1979:76-77) and not only males or Whites, was created in God's image, it becomes un-necessary to despise one-self or to allow people to look down upon one as a Black woman, particularly a woman in the Church.

The issue of class oppression also becomes an almost insur-mountable problem for a Black (woman) in South Africa, for in this country class and racial discrimination go hand in glove. As a Black woman, a member of the second race and of the second sex, one can only hope to qualify for membership of a second or even lower class.

Race

Blacks (including women) in South Africa suffered oppression from Whites just because of their God-given colour. The White missionaries who brought the Bible and established churches among Blacks in this country impressed up on them that they were destined to be slaves for Whites and that the latter state of affairs was God-ordained. They therefore used the Bible as a tool of oppression. A socio-political system was built in such a way that a few White South Africans should have tremendous power over many Black people, their land and all the other resources in the country (economic, religious, political, and social; William 1990:25).

They were thus in a position to shape almost all spheres of life to serve their own (not God's) ends at the expense of Blacks and unfortunately this was done in the name of the Bible or of God. The God of the Bible is, however, a God of the oppressed, the poor and the despised of society. This liberating message of the Bible was missed by Blacks in missionary encounters

with the Whites. In there they were socialised to regard Whites as super-humans and to regard themselves as less than humans just because of their colour. Even though the Bible (the Church) proclaims the freedom brought by Christ, the Blacks (including Christian women) do not experience this freedom fully.

Previously, I mentioned that Black women, unlike their White counterparts, are in the worst condition of oppression. A Black woman's position is at the bottom of the occupational ladder. White women can be the victims of sexism (by White men) but racism allows them to oppress Blacks (men and women); Black men may be the victims of racism but sexism allows them to exploit and oppress Black women (Mashinini 1991:350-351; Mpumlwana 1991: 380).

The preceding portrayal becomes unfortunate for a Black woman who identifies with the Bible and turns to religion (Christianity) as a crutch. In black communities, with no access to expensive and more sophisticated forms of social activities, religion tends to be pivotal in the individual's life (Sampson 1991:55). The Bible message was supposed to be liberatory in this setting; this is however, not the case. Hence, these women fail to experience the complete liberation that the era of Christ has ushered. To use the words of Sakefeld (1986:60), these women scarcely experience the '... *shalom*, wholeness or salvation in the broadest and deepest sense of the term'.

Class

Class, race and sex as factors contributing to the oppression of Black women are interrelated. In South Africa, Blacks auto-matically qualify as the lower class due the economic exploita-tion suffered from the White minority. For the South African Black, race becomes a criterion to qualify the class to which he/she belongs. Due to this political, social and economic deprivation, Blacks could only qualify as the have-nots and thus as members of a lower class. A Black (Christian) woman, as a member of the Black community is the most exploited person in the community. The average Black South African woman is a domestic or farm worker. Domestic workers are the most exploited working group in South Africa. As they are not protected by any laws, they are at the complete disposal of their workers (cf William 1990:25-35; Lawson 1986). Bonnet as quoted by Mandew (1991:122) calls

them '... a rightless group of people who can be exploited in the labour market'.

In such situations, Black women become the object of oppression by a fellow woman who has advantage over her and treats her as slave because of her race. This is not only unique to domestic workers in the Whites' houses. Black women (sometimes under the guise of apartheid, because the latter deprived them of good economic backgrounds) also have the tendency of exploiting fellow Black women. The story of Sarah's treatment of Hagar in the Old Testament also portrays how a female can exploit another female in a position of lesser power. The Black Christian woman is not immune from situations such as these. A Christian woman who finds herself in this condition fails to perceive clearly the liberatory message of the evangelist Luke in 4:18-19:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives ... to set at liberty those who are oppressed ... to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

In lieu of this situation in which Black (Christian) women find themselves, there is a need for a hermeneutics that will liberate them completely.

Sex

A Black (Christian) woman like all other women, is subject to discrimination because of her sex. The domination of women by men is not unique to South Africa; it is universal. In South Africa it took a unique shape for Black women through the combination of racism and sexism. This universal oppression of women is rooted in the phenomenon of patriarchy. The latter indicates the legal, economic and social system that justifies and enforces the sovereignty of the male head of the family over the other members. In such a situation, women, children, workers and property become subject to male heads of families, tribes and societies. Feminists have come to realize how race, gender and class are intertwined to maintain patriarchy in many countries (particularly in Black contexts (Ackermann et al 1991:xvi).

A Black (Christian) woman in South Africa finds herself subjected to patriarchy almost everywhere: (in the work situation (cf the above mentioned section on class), in the family and even in the church.

Family

African culture, like most world cultures (including the cultures that produced the Bible) is patriarchal. The Father is the head of the family. As head he is given all the honour by family members. A wife falls within the category of 'children'. In such family settings, the decisions taken by the heads tend to be final. Some African proverbs reflect on this low status of women and the superiority of men. As a Black/African girl grows, she is under the authority of her parents and confined only to the home under the care of her mother. In this setting, girls are hindered from exercising their intellect and gifts if they go beyond the expected norms. 'By the time the girls are big and they get married, they know what their role is : to serve their husbands with their bodies and strength i.e. cooking, washing etc. If a girl does not do that, she is regarded as abnormal' (Mpumlwana 1991:383).

In an African setting, parents can decide for the girl that she is to be married to a *paternal* relative. In marriage, she be-comes subject to the authority of her husband (Christian husbands read this attitude from the Bible) and the in-laws (particularly the mother-in-law). If the latter happens to have a son who is easily controlled by her, the situation becomes very difficult for the bride because the oppression then comes directly from her mother-in-law. In such a situation, the bride is expected to 'prove herself' to be a *woman*. Being 'a woman' in African culture means being a 'super human', for a woman is not expected to be tired. The bride is expected to be a full time domestic servant for the whole family, serving even those who are traditionally expected to engage in household chores, the daughters of that family. This is expected because, as the bride, she must prove that the lobola paid for her was not in vain. This situation is rife in African families, even in Christian-orientated families, particularly in rural areas.

In such a setting, even if the husband is concerned about his wife and would wish to relieve her from some of the duties (though this is mostly unheard of among Black men), he would be looked down upon in ridicule and scorn, particularly by his mother. This situation would remain almost perma-

nent if the couple were to remain permanently in the family of the husband (the latter state of affairs is normal particularly if the man is the youngest son in the family). Even if it becomes possible for the son to leave his house and stay with his wife only, the Black (Christian) woman's situation of bondage still remains. Black men, including Christians, feel that they are not obliged to help in household chores. This situation sometimes leads to conflicts for women as well as men engaged in full time jobs (Kayongo-Male & Oyango 1984:20). Back home from their work situations, the woman in line with the Scriptures and the culture, as it were, is expected to run up and down and serve the husband whose supposed contribution to the family (or to himself) is watching the television or reading the newspaper.

I would agree with Bam (1991:367) men such as these use culture as an excuse not to work in the house. It becomes comfortable for them to use culture and religion for their own convenience. Many aspects of our culture which have proved contrary to Christianity, however, have been changed; in this respect, however, where a husband is supposed to show his love to his wife and to 'nourish her as his own body' the husband fails. Culture, significant as it may be, must not remain static. Under this situation, the Christian woman finds it difficult to reconcile her husband's behaviour with that of Christ, who though he was God, became a servant for our redemption. A Christian woman, though free in Christ, is always in chains.

The Church

The church that preaches liberation and the value of human beings in Christ unfortunately fails to practise that which it preaches. This church, which preaches justice and equality, has been regu-lated by patriarchy through the years.

On answering the question why this has been the case, why the Church of Christ could perpetuate a system that is opposed to justice and equality (i e patriarchy), feminist theologians argue that patriarchy has been persistent due to its religious legiti-mation which is found in most cultures (Mandew 1991:120).

Patriarchal societies perceived God as a male and thus every male as next to God. A male thus serves as a model human being vis-a-vis a sinful being (hence, a less godly one) - a female. As a result of this patriarchal world-

view, the Church, including the Black church, becomes male-dominated. Women may engage in menial tasks but major decision making is done solely by men or in some circles mostly by men. In the Black church lay leadership is practised by males, even the ordination to ministry (except for a few cases) belongs to men. Some Christian men are still influenced by culture, tradition and the wrong interpretation of Scriptures that femininity cannot lead (Mncube 1991:358; Mandew 1991:126; Mpumlwana 1991: 374-375). One wonders if the new era of salvation heralded by Christ is not above all these (culture, tradition etc). Black women in these churches have little or no freedom to enjoy.

The wrong use of Scripture (mostly always in favour of men against women) by men and by elderly women serve to oppress the Christian woman. Elderly women tend to accept the Bible un-critically taking it as the undisputed word of God (Sampson 1991:56). Deviating from such traditional conservative inter-pretation of Scripture is unheard of, because one may be designated 'a liberal', 'a backslider' et cetera. Due to the spirit of corporeality typical of Africans, the best a Christian woman can do in this context is to succumb. She thus remains bound, though free, in Christ.

This male church unfortunately fails to copy Christ's example, Christ never looked down upon women nor dehumanized them. When Christ sets us free, we become free indeed. It is high time that Christians in the male-dominated churches take these words of Christ seriously. They need to recognize that as long as gender discrimination persists in churches, they themselves can never become free and whole (Moltmann-Wendel & Moltmann, J 1974:14).

Most Christian women particularly in Black churches, still value the Bible as a source of divine revelation and as a norm for their lives. From the Bible they understand God to be the redeemer of people, to be the one who identifies with the oppressed; however, due to among others, wrong interpretation of Scriptures, women cannot fully enjoy their freedom in Christ. This situation may not be allowed to continue any longer, particularly in the church for :

> The very beginnings of humankind are challenged when living in the face of these demoralizing, dehumanising conditions. It takes a superhuman being to survive. These dehumanizing conditions are totally out of line with God's intention as at creation (Jordaan 1987:43).

A need therefore arises for a hermeneutics that will appropriate the liberatory message of the Bible to the oppressed majorities, to the Black (Christian) women. They must be completely free; this freedom they can attain with the co-operation of their oppressors, in particular Black men. Those oppressors should be willing to accept necessary changes, even if these would mean uprooting their long-held precious biases. There is an urgent need for a Black feminist theology; a theology that would acknowledge that '... it is no accident that God created a human being called a woman, a Black woman, in God's own image for God's sovereign purposes ... She has all the reasons to fight (as a member of the Black race and as a member of the female sex) for her human rights, particularly in view of the new freedom in Christ' (Masenya 1993:9).

1 BLACK FEMINIST HERMENEUTICS

In Black Christian communities, the Bible still plays a pivotal role in shaping people's lives. In view of the great impact Christianity played on the African continent in the past years and also in view of the religious outlook on life typical of Africans, I perceive that there will be few, if any, revolu-tionary feminists in Africa, that is, feminists who do not see any hope in the Bible as a tool for the liberation of women (Sakenfeld 1985:63-64).

According to Cady Stanton (cf Schüssler Fiorenza 1983:11) a scholarly feminist interpretation of the Bible is politically necessary for i) throughout history and specifically today, the Bible has been used for the oppression of women and also to hinder their liberation (cf the situation in Black churches).

ii) Not only men but particularly women (cf the great majority of women vis-a-vis men in Black Christian churches) faithfully believe in the Bible as God's word and for both man and woman, the Bible has much authority.

iii) Reform should not be limited to one area of society; one cannot reform the law and other cultural institutions without reforming Biblical religion which contends that the Bible is holy Scripture.

The Bible and the Christian religion has been used previously to subject women due to, among others, improper methods of inter-pretation. There is a need, particularly in the Black Christian Church (I cite this setting because

this is the immediate setting which was supposed to prove liberatory for the Black Christian woman and one which has much impact on the whole life of the woman) for a revision of the methods of interpretation. These methods should take into serious consideration the conditions under which Black women live. These women should come to a realistic appreciation of the Biblical message of God as a redeemer. This can be achieved through women's commitment to the struggle against their oppression and also through the co-operation of the oppressors, in particular the Black men for the latter are their immediate oppressors (cf sections on the family and the church above).

Black feminist hermeneutics will have to consider the world which produced the text. More harm has been done to Scriptural inter-pretation due to literal interpretations assigned to the Bible in Black churches (Cochrane 1991:23). The background (cultural, religious, social, historical) information to the Biblical text should be a prerequisite to understanding the meaning of the text to the modern reader (Carmody 1988:6).

Black feminist interpreters should take note that, just as the experiences of those who actively participated in the process of producing the Bible were significant, the experience of modern readers (Black Christian women in this context) is significant in the production of the meaning of the Biblical text. Hermeneutics should thus consider the experience of the Black woman with a view to making her embrace the reality of God as liberator. Thus, to use West's (1991:83) terminology, Black feminist inter-preters should read 'in front of the text'. This approach to Scripture is helpful because a (Biblical) text has the capability of projecting a future possible world, a world in front of the text, a world which the text realistically proposes for the reader (Schneiders in West (1991:84-85). In this case, those who accuse the Biblical text may be partly answered, for the oppres-siveness of the text serves a twofold function i) to act as witness to that from which we have been saved and ii) to challenge us to act for the course of justice (Schneiders 1989:9 as quoted by West 1991:85).

Black feminist interpreters will, like all other feminists, move from the point of departure of radical suspicion. Patriarchy, played a crucial role in the composition and reduction of the Bible, hence a frank and often painful assessment of the extent of patriarchal bias in the text provides an honest starting point of how the tradition can be meaningful today (Sakenfeld

1986:55-56). This assessment also becomes relevant for a Black feminist Christian because her experience of patriarchy is intensive: in the church through the shallow methods of exegesis and in the family through an African culture with its emphasis on hierarchy.

Sakenfeld (1986:56-63) indicates three emphases that Christian feminists use to approach the text of the Bible. In the following paragraphs a review of each option will be made and how each may contribute meaningfully to Black feminist hermeneutics.

Option 1: Looking to texts *about* women to counteract well-known texts used *against* women.

Under this option, feminists i) reinterpret some of the famous texts and ii) foreground 'forgotten' texts which present women in a positive light. The following examples will suffice: Genesis 2-3 in this option suggests fresh interpretations that are not so negative to women; for example, the creation of a woman out of the rib of a man may mean that as the last person in creation (cf human being as the last item in creation but ultimately the crown of creation in Gn 1) she is a ruler (cf Phyllis Trible in Swidler 1979:78). The discussion on marriage in Ephesians 5 is often approached from the point of emphasis of the theme of mutual subjection that initiates the pericope in V 21 (cf Ward Gasque 1988:8) etc.

Added to this approach, is the new emphasis on the texts that appear to be positive to women (e g Gal 3:28) according to which in view of the new dispensation brought by Christ, both male and female are one and thus equal in Him. This new affirmation in Christ should be viewed by the oppressors of Black Christian woman as being above ideology, tradition, etc.

Included in this approach is the attitude of Jesus' relationship with women as indicated in the gospels, and the leadership roles of women in Scripture (Sakenfeld 1986:57). In this regard, the foregrounding of Jesus' or God's encounters with *despised* women (Mary the poor women (cf class), the Samaritan woman (race), God's visitation to Hagar (race) could be appealing to the Black Christian woman.

In this option, Jesus' attitude is viewed as exceptional and even revolutionary for his time, an attitude reflecting a critique of the patriarchy of his day and all times. The main advantage of this option is that it focuses attention

on the various Biblical witnesses about women and the retrieval of forgotten or 'lost' positive texts and traditions.

Though this option has its own limitations, it can contribute positively to Black feminist hermeneutics because:

i) It neutralizes male-biased Biblical interpretations by foregrounding women and making them realize that they too (despised as they may be) have a place in God's book, the Bible.

ii) Through this option, Black Christian women will come to an appreciation that the God of the Bible also used women (despite the low esteem they were given by the culture of their time) for God's sovereign purposes (Deborah, Meriam, Mary etc).

iii) Through this approach, Black Christian women will appreciate their Saviour's attitude towards women. This last point I hope, will be even more appealing to these women. One of their chief purposes in life is to follow the example of Christ and to lead lives worthy of Him. That is why such women never tire in their efforts for they *believe* that Christ became a human being to save them, that He now lives to intercede for them and that Christ will eventually liberate them.$$

Option 2: Looking to the Bible generally for a theological perspective offering a critique of patriarchy.

In this option, the Bible is approached with a view to establishing the essence of the gospel and applying this to women. What is significant in the Bible according to this approach is understanding how God dealt with the world through Jesus of Nazareth. The key reflection for feminists here falls within the larger option of liberation theology. Hence emphasis in this approach is on the overall redemptive message of the Bible. Reuther, one of the proponents of this option, refers to it as a prophetic-liberating tradition of Biblical faith. According to her, this tradition has four essential themes: i) God's defence and vindication of the oppressed ii) the critique of the main systems of power and those in power, iii) the vision of the coming of the new age iv) a critique of ideology or of religion (Reuther 1983 as quoted by West 1991:85).

This option will still be relevant for Black feminist hermeneu-tics as it highlights the theme of God as redeemer through Jesus Christ. This theme is

of significance for a Black Christian woman because her perception of her relationship with Christ is that of one who, though she was bound by sin and therefore lost, was found by the loving Saviour.

Liberation as a theme is of course relevant to all feminist hermeneutics.

Option 3: Looking to texts about women to learn more from the history and stories of ancient and modern women living in patriarchal cultures.

In this option, texts about women are used to address the condi-tion of women as oppressed persons due to their sex and as people yearning for freedom. The Bible is viewed as an instrument used by God to show women their true condition as the oppressed group and who are however, endowed with a vision of a different heaven and earth and different models of how to live toward that vision (Sakenfeld 1986:62). The main strength of this approach is that women (including Black women) may appropriate the Biblical tradition by identifying with the women in the Bible in their oppression as well as in their exercise of freedom.

Through the use of one or more of these approaches, some feminists find themselves drifting away from the Bible, as they do not find it to be a suitable tool for the course of their struggle. As I mentioned earlier on, this may scarcely be the case in the Black church because the average Black Christian woman primarily focuses on her relationship with Christ as it is reflected in the Bible, and secondly, she accepts the Bible as her norm. In it, she finds the revelation of God (the redeemer) through Christ (the saviour); thus, with appropriate hermeneutics, one which recognizes her as a full partner with man in God's plan for the world, this woman, who is in bondage, can attain complete freedom in Christ.

This paper highlights the urgent need for feminist (Black) hermeneutics. Both men and women, Black and White, have an obligation towards such a hermeneutics because

i) It highlights the significance of reception criticism; the role played by the reader despite her position in society, in text production.

ii) As it advocates and embraces certain feminist interests, a feminist interpretation of the Bible challenges Biblical studies to be more human and more transformative of society.

iii) Feminist readings also serve to expose the ideological nature of the text

and fourthly, this last one is in particular significant to the Black woman '... by continuing to appropriate the Bible in spite of the recognition of its dominant patriarchal interests, feminist readings take seriously the Bible's significant role among the poor and oppressed (West 1991:chs 4, 7-8), as well as the need to stand in continuity with the memory (Metz 1980; Welch 1990) of the many forgotten and neglected women within or behind the Biblical text' (West 1991:100) (West 1991:87).

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CHRIST IN AFRICA: THE INFLUENCE OF MULTI-CULTURITY ON THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST.

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(This paper was read, in modified form, at the Church-University discussion group at the Rand Afrikaans Universiteit (RAU), in Johannesburg, on Monday the 23 of May 1994.)

1 THE TOPIC

The topic at our disposal is, in my opinion, somewhat *elastic*. Its content can go in various chosen directions. Although I shall allow the topic to remain as it stands, I shall concentrate more on South Africa than Africa in general. There is a level at which the phrase, *"Christ in Africa"* is a slogan[1]. It can be used variously and divergently. That means, the topic is both multi-faceted and controversial. I have chosen to consider mainly the basic issues implied and assumed in the question of Christ in Africa. This means that instead of discussing the topic directly I shall ask basic questions related to implications and prior assumptions. In short, I shall, more or less, complicate the topic further. But I do not do this for fun. I think that it is important to be analytical and critical of familiar and apparently innocent topics. For us in South Africa, this topic is important enough to warrant such an approach.

I have divided my paper into two broad sections. *In the first section, five valid* and possible directions towards which the topic of 'Christ in Africa' could veer are introduced. Without dealing exhaustively with any of these five directions, significant issues in each are outlined. I also make some suggestions. *In the second section*, I concentrate on the issue of multiculturism. This issue is dealt with under four different perspectives. Finally, I present some concluding thoughts and proposals. Rather than clog the topic with elaborate propositions and exhaustive evaluations, I have been mindful of the fact that

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1 I am using the word slogan in a very loose sense namely that slogans in and of themselves communicate little, rather they are 'ice berg tips'. The million dollar question is of course, what the 'iceberg' is.

in this paper my job is to introduce rather than pronounce the final word on the subject.

1.1. Where do we start? Missionary Experiences Or African Culture?

The phrase 'Christ in Africa' can be used to denote the sum-total achievements and experiences of Euro-Western missionaries and churches in Africa since the 18th century - i.e. a discussion of missionaries and the legacy of their activities. This use of the phrase is in fact quite common because it is generally assumed that Christ's arrival in Africa can be dated[2] together with European arrival in Africa[3]. Understandably the role of missionaries, merchants and colonialists in bringing 'Christ to Africa' is most controversial. The controversy, as I have already hinted sometimes deteriorates to the most basic question: Did they really bring Christ to Africa? Of course, theologically speaking, as Kraft (1979) has pointed out, missionaries have been amazed again and again, all over the world, that wherever they went, 'Christ had been there before them'. But what does that mean? Is this a 'historical' truth or a 'spiritual' truth? The main tendency is to think about the possibility of Christ being in Africa long before the missionaries arrived as a 'spiritual' rather than a 'historical' truth. Thus we have a situation where there are two possible starting points into an inquiry of Christ in Africa - African culture or the missionary enterprise. First, there are those who subscribe to the notion of 'Christ' or 'God' being in Africa before the missionaries arrived. For those, the starting point in a discussion about Christ in Africa is more likely to be African traditional culture and pre-colonial Africa. Secondly, there are those who regard the pre-colonial presence of Christ in Africa as a 'spiritual' rather than a 'historical' matter. For such people, the Western missionary enterprise is often the starting point.

Both paths have their hazards. Those who take the Western Missionary Enterprise as a starting point for an inquiry into Christ in Africa; invariably have to deal with issues such as: missionary collusion with colonialism,

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2 For an attempt to debunk this established theory and point out its incongruity in terms of religious history, see Kalu, (1988).

3 See, Du Plessis (1911) and De Gruchy (1979), for example. Both their histories, perhaps inadvertently, connect the 'beginnings' of Christianity in South Africa to colonial presence in Southern Africa.

racism, capitalistic exploitation and missionary cultural ethnocentrism. They also have to deal with questions such as: What happened to Christ whom the missionaries brought to Africa when missionaries joined forces with colonialism, racists, and capitalists[4]? Secondly what happened to Africans and their culture under the impact of these forces - forces which simultaneously brought 'Christ' to them? Thirdly, what have been the implications of these circumstances for the kind of 'Christianity' that took root in Africa[5]? These are very real issues not just about the past but about today.

Those who proceed from the premise (especially African theologians) that pre-colonial African traditions and cultures are our basic point of departure in understanding Christ in Africa[6], have also to deal with such issues as; the lack of records (especially records by Africans) on pre-colonial African traditions and religions, the daunting challenges of oral records, the fact that African culture and traditions, like other cultures, have not been static, but dynamic. Therefore, the danger of 'romanticising the African past' becomes real[7]. There are two distinct calls for caution with the manner in which the African past is considered. *Firstly,* there are those who call for caution against romanticism because it diverts attention from the present African realities of oppression and suffering[8]. Black theologians have been in the forefront of this particular call for caution against romanticism. Yet there is a sense in which even this kind of romanticism is understandable[9] though not necessarily 'acceptable'. How else would Black and African Christians people cope with the contradiction between the Biblical gospel and the life they lived in Apartheid South Africa for example. African Initiated churches are, for example, often chided for 'living in the African past' and construing the

4 See Majeke (1952), Cochrane (1987) and Villa Vicencio (1988).

5 See Boulaga (1984).

6 At least two different ways of using the Africa's past, traditions and cultures as a point of departure. The one way accepts the perceptions of missionaries and Western theological traditions on Africa culture as authoritative. [The question is: Is this really different from using missionary experiences as a starting point?] The other way, is to regard missionary perceptions with 'suspicion', preferring other paths to reconstruct the African past such as oral tradition.

7 Buthelezi (1976).

8 Thus Buthelezi (1976:62) differentiates between "psychologically "living in the past in order to compensate for the ... existential emptiness of the present ... and "living in the past" because it is able to offer something substantial..."

9 See Mosala (1985).

Christian faith as an 'escape' from present realities. But what is wrong with such a 'use' of the Christian faith if it helps people cope with a hostile environment without trading with their faith? This question is specifically significant if we understand religion not only in the Marxian sense of it being *the opium* of the people[10] (though even opium can be a good and effective painkiller) but also in the Weberian sense of seeing religion as a "creative, change-generating" force amongst the poor[11].

Secondly, there are those who call for caution against heavy reliance on the African past simply because they see little practical value in the African past. Those who see little value in the African past suppose that since being Black and African today is so radically different from whatever it might have meant two hundred years ago, the real value of the African past is negligible[12]. This reality coupled with the practical problems of reconstructing an African past reduces the African past to something to be studied as far as possible, but certainly not something to detain us for too long. Can 'Africa' have a present without a past? I do not think so.

The question that confronts us is: Can we even begin to talk about 'Christ in Africa' unless we acknowledge the reality of Africa as culturally (at least) distinct from Europe and America, not only three hundred years ago but today? Does not the question of 'Christ in Africa' require of us to take Africa, and Africanness very seriously?, assuming of course that we do take Christ seriously already. If we do not take Africa and being African seriously, it seems to me that talk of 'Christ' and of 'Africa' will be hollow. The implications of such a stance are numerous. A valid conception of Christ in Africa is one that will move away from preoccupation with the activities of missionaries in Africa. This means that African culture becomes a pivotal source of the African experience of Christ. African Independent Churches become 'African' rather than merely non-Western churches. Is it not true that those Christian traditions and confessions that have not taken Africa and

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10 Even this Marxian expression needs to be read in context of other issues that Marx raises on religion. It may not be an altogether negative verdict on religion. (See Bender 1972:45-52).

11 See Villa-Vicencio 1988:188.

12 In the Apartheid context the possibility is real that the degree of generated self-hate amongst Africans may be such that it may become embarrassing for some Africans to trace themselves to an African past.

Africannes seriously are under threat of extinction if present trends do not change[13]?

1.2. African appropriation of 'Christ'.

"Christ in Africa" may yet be a manner of speech designed as a discussion starter on the way in which Africans, in general, have *received or not received, corrupted, appropriated, contextualised* or even *sharpened* the Christian faith that was brought to them by white missionaries. There is a level at which even today - to be truly Christian means not to be truly African. The subject of Christ in Africa is essentially a discussion of African forms of Christianity. Yet it is not possible even to see African forms of Christianity unless one thinks that Africa and Africannes can be a legitimate host and home for Christ - just like Europe and 'Europeaness'. Lip service about the validity of 'Africannes' as a container for 'Christ' abounds. This is the story of the failures of many ambitious projects to 'indigenise' African churches[14]. It is the story behind the call that a certain John Gatu of Kenya made in 1971 requesting that all missionary personnel should no longer come to Africa. Refusal to accept Africa as a valid home for 'Christ' is also behind many disastrous attempts to create 'partnership' between Western and African churches - White and Black Churches. As already hinted above this means that phenomena such as the so-called African Independent Churches[15] must be re-considered[16]. Verdicts previously passed on these churches must be re-opened. Established descriptions of these churches such as: 'other-worldly', 'separatist', 'syncretistic'[17], independent[18] and 'sect' must be abandoned.

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13 See Anderson (1993).

14 See Buthelezi (1976).

15 The African Independent Churches, earlier called the Separatist Churches (Sundkler (1948)) lately called, at least by one prominent scholar, the African Initiated Churches (Daneel 1987), are generally regarded as the 'purest expression of African Christianity. See also, Anderson (1991) (1992) (1993).

16 See Sundkler (1948), Daneel (1987), Anderson (1991, 1992, 1993).

17 In 1948, Sundkler had described them as a bridge by which African return to their pagan past.

18 A few scholars of these churches, are uncomfortable with the adjective 'independent' since it describes these churches in terms of what they are not, i.e that of which they are

Underlying these descriptions is the notion that the Western church-type and Western Christendom is the standard of what it means to be Christian. Often, dubious forms of Western 'Christianity' will be tolerated, whereas the slightest 'deviation' from (Western) tradition by African Christians will be looked upon with much suspicion and ridicule. Pockets of 'Africanised' Christianity even within the so-called 'mission churches' and the so-called 'English-speaking churches' must begin to be taken seriously. The pre-funeral-day night vigils, the foot-stamping, the repetitive choruses, the ceremonies of 'taking off the black mourning clothes', the peculiarly African preaching style, the *Manyano* and the *Amadodana* traditions, the funeral 'celebration' etc. These events and practices must begin to be taken seriously as valid African appropriations of Christianity. These must find their ways both into theology books and worship books. More than these, the emerging theologies of Africa must be accepted as valid[19]. Technically this includes what is termed Black Theology (prevalent in North America and South Africa) and African Theology. Unless we take all these as valid, we have not, in my opinion even begun to consider Christ in Africa.

1.3 Culture of Blacks vs Culture of Whites?

The phrase, 'Christ in Africa' may be an invitation for us to talk about the 'culture of Blacks' and how this culture has responded to 'Christ'. [Both the issues of culture and whites as Africans will be discussed separately below]. The perspective in such an approach would be one of drawing sharp distinctions between 'the culture of Blacks' and 'the culture of whites', with the 'noble' aim of clarifying the Black culture by contrasting it with White culture. This approach can also be used to demonstrate how different 'the ways of the Blacks' is from the 'ways of the Whites[20]'. For me, culture means everything about human beings. The only qualification I would add is this: The 'culture' of a given community is not necessarily the product of, or the consensus of, all members of that community.

Independent - namely White churches and Western missionary organisations. (cf Daneel (1987).

19 See Mbiti (1976).

20 Attie van Niekerk's infamous book "Saam in Afrika" is such an approach that uses contrasts in order both to clarify and distinguish between 'white' and 'black' culture.

In South Africa, with its Apartheid background, Whites and Blacks have for years lived physically apart. This means that deliberate and legal policies have been enforced, in various ways to ensure that Blacks and Whites exists apart. In that limited and forced extent, there is room to talk about two 'cultures', one White and the other Black. But we need to appreciate both the artificial and the discriminative nature of this separation of Blacks from Whites. [In fact in all of colonial Africa the separation of Whites from Blacks has been discriminative]. But if we confuse this discriminative and often racist 'separation' as a natural situation owing to 'cultural' differences we end up with an embarrassing situation to explain. 'Cultural' differences between Blacks and Whites are indicated by things such as:

(a) Blacks live in places like Soweto and Phola Park ; Whites live in places like Sandton and Turffontein.
(b) Blacks speak Zulu, bad English and a little Afrikaans while Whites speak English and Afrikaans.
(c) Eighteen Blacks can live in one small room, but two White children cannot live in one room.
(d) Black Christians can worship under a tree, but White Christians always worship in big churches.
(e) Whites have cars and big houses and need more money to maintain them, but blacks either walk or use taxis therefore they need less money.
(f) Blacks believe in witchcraft and commit ritual murders, while whites believe in science and never kill human beings (at least not without a good 'motive'.
(g) Whites like 'Braai Vleis' and Blacks like eating pap and sour milk.
(h) Blacks are loud and Whites are quiet and considerate.
(i) Black names are 'words' with meaning, whereas White names are 'names'.
(j) Blacks steal, rob and kill while Whites are decent hard workers.
(k) Blacks sing well but Whites cannot sing.
(l) Hypocrisy is a virtue among Blacks, whereas honesty and forthrightness is the trademark of Whites.
(m) Blacks are emotional and whites are logical.

I could go on with more typical examples of 'cultural differences'. But, most of these 'cultural' differences are either exaggerations or environment-induced. South Africans, Black and White like Braai-vleis. South African Christians, if they could have it their way would not like to worship under a tree. The reason that most Whites cannot speak Sotho is not really a cultural matter. Those who must and want to can speak Sotho without mutilating their tongues. Do Whites not commit ritual murder? What about the now common family killings. Do Whites have a scientific rather than a superstitious mind? What is so scientific about the Voortrekker monument and the solemn occasions held in it year after year? Are Whites logical, well we have just had an election campaign in South Africa and many Whites were not always logical in their arguments.

While there may indeed be some differences between White and Black South Africans, I think that, apart from those induced by artificial and racist separation, White and Black South Africans have many common 'cultural' traits. The onus is upon those who propagate a dichotomous view of cultural differences between Black and White South Africans to be forthcoming with credible cultural differences.

In our context, the question of 'Christ in Africa' must therefore be understood to refer to how; Black and White Christians, in the light of past discrimination, racism and artificial separation, can together as participants in a largely 'homogeneous culture[21]', perceive, receive and proclaim Christ.

1.4 Christological Debate?

The phrase 'Christ in Africa' can, technically speaking, solicit a discussion on what theologians have called 'Christology'[22] meaning the doctrine of Christ. Under this option, the main questions would be: What is distinctive of the way in which Africans understand Christ, his 'person', his incarnation, his saving work (soteriology). The very choice of the term 'Christ' is curious. Why 'Christ' and not 'Jesus of Nazareth'? Christologically, already, this

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21 Culture is here understand in dynamic rather than static terms. Therefore the economic and political basis of 'cultural differences' must be appreciated.

22 Africans have indeed been involved in Christological debate. (See for example, Mofokeng (1983), Daneel (1989) Schreiter (1991).

choice of 'Christ' and no 'Jesus' is *unAfrican*[23]. Jesus of Nazareth, walked the streets of Tyre, Sydon, Galilea and Jericho. But 'Christ' is on the right hand of God. The former cried when he saw his friends, Mary and Martha crying for their deceased brother. 'Christ' invokes worship and admiration not evaluation. Jesus of Nazareth was crucified. In the West over the ages, Christ has been, *Rabbi, the turning point of history, the light of the Gentiles, the King of Kings, the cosmic Christ, the Son of man, the true image, the monk who rules the world, the bridegroom of the soul, the divine human model, the Universal man, the mirror of the eternal, the Prince of peace, the teacher of common sense, the poet of the spirit and the man who belongs to the world* (Pelikan 1985). In a sense we can tell 'who' Christ is in Africa[24], by looking at the 'pockets' of Africanisation in the African forms of Christianity[25]. Unlike in the West, African Christology is very new and still developing. This means that the predominant manner in which Christ is understood in African remains largely Western - i.e. in forms I have just described above. In Africa, Christ is the *healer, liberator, ancestor, mediator, elder brother, the crucified one, head and master of initiation*[26] and *the Black Messiah.*

1.5 White Africans?

To talk of Christ in Africa need not imply an exclusive discussion about Black Africans. There are White Africans too. Of these the Afrikaners (some would say Boers) are perhaps the best known group. But they are by no means the only ones. The point is; the 'ways of White Africans' is different from the 'ways of White Europeans and White Americans'. Our talk about Christ in Africa should ideally include both such White Africans as well as Black Africans. I have already argued thus above. Therefore talking about Christ in Africa includes forms of Christianity found in the largely Afrikaner Reformed tradition. What is Africa's challenge to what Jaap Durand

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23 See Nyamiti (1991:12f.)

24 Pelikan (1985) gives a comprehensive discussion of the manner in which Western culture has accepted and conceived of Jesus over the centuries. His work is also excellently illustrated.

25 For different articles by different African theologians on Christology see Schreiter (1991).

26 The climax of this initiation is His death and resurrection (cf Sanon 1991).

(1985:49) has called Dutch Reformed Church schizophrenia" - meaning "its concern for the social and political welfare of the Afrikaner people, on the one hand, and its apparent lack of concern for the same problems amongst blacks..."? What is Africa's challenge to the 'pietistic strain' that encourages withdrawal from the world in Afrikaner Christianity[27]? What is Africa's challenge to the English-speaking churches which have a tradition of protest without resistance[28]? What is the challenge of Black and African theologies for the White Church[29]? It seems to me that if we are to include under the rubric, Africa, white Christians, which we should, then these question present real challenges.

2. Multi-culturity and Culture

The vastness of possibilities under this topic is a serious methodological hazard. But it is also an indicator to the richness of the topic at hand. The subtitle, namely *the influence of multi-culturity on the experience of Christ* does not really help. In my opinion, the sub-title rather complicates the issues. The notion of multi-culturity is more complex than it looks. It depends very much on (a) what one wishes to convey by it, and (b) the use that one wishes to make of it. A common sense definition of multi-culturity would be that it points to the existence of multiple cultures. It acknowledges the existence of various cultures whilst pointing to the possibility for these cultures to exists alongside one another amicably. Several problems emerge, however.

2.1. Firstly, the notion of multi-culturism[30] presupposes the issue of what culture[31] is. It neither attempts to define culture nor acknowledge the problematic nature of the process of defining culture. In my opinion, even if we fail to define what we mean, by culture, we should at least be able to sketch out some issues and problematics in the process of defining culture. That

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27 See Saayman (1985:56) and Bosch (1984).

28 Villa Vicencio (1988).

29 See Kritzinger (1988).

30 i.e. Belief in the existence (and equality) of multiple cultures. For this more technical and 'postmodernist' understanding, dubbed 'multiculturism' see West (1993).

31 A very helpful analysis of what 'culture' is, is offered by Schreiter (1985). See also Luzbetak (1988) and Kraft (1979).

way, our understanding of culture does not become like a lump of clay in our hands - whose shape can be changed by a slight twitch in our fingers. This is precisely the danger inherent in this meta-term, multiculturism.

2.2. *Secondly,* multiculturism is a postmodern[32] concept. We must remember than a little more than a hundred years ago the word culture had a very distinct meaning. It referred to Euro-American life-style, its religion and its attendant 'civilisation'. Even by the turn of this century[33] the opposite of 'culture', meaning Euro-American civilisation, was denoted by words such as 'savage', 'pagan', 'barbaric', 'primitive'. When we find these words in general, church or mission historical works, they do not merely describe the religious state of the people being described; they specifically serve to disclose the cultural state of the people - more precisely their lack of culture. A 'barbaric' people is a culture-less people. A savage tribe is savage precisely because 'no cultural precepts and values inform the behaviour of such a tribe'. What has happened within the space of the past hundred or so years then? What has happened to the 'savage' and 'barbaric' tribes that filled many history and anthropological books? This is the question that the term, multiculturism obscures[34]. Most of them have become, what we now call the Third World[35] - so we talk of 'Third world standards' and 'Third World peoples'. In this sense, multiculturism is an attempt to file out the disturbing historical memory of the hegemonic dominance of a single culture versus several non-cultures. Has this situation completely changed in our times? I am not convinced that it has.

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32 Two excellent discussions of the (possible) influence of postmodernism specifically on the church and Christian missions are, Newbigin (1986) (1989) and Bosch (1991).

33 See Du Plessis (1911).

34 My reservations on the concept of multiculturism do not derive from opposition to the view that accepts a multiplicity of cultures. It is precisely because of the tendency to 'romanticise' cultural multiplicity, in my opinion, inherent in this term, that I am uncomfortable with it. In this way, the term multiculturism can be anti-multiple cultures insofar as it obscures the *power basis* of cultural multiplicity.

35 The term is not an imposed one. It was a consciously chosen one by political leaders of African, Asian and Latin American countries at Bandung in 1958 (cf Frostin 1988). This they did so as to distinguish themselves ideologically from the First and Second worlds which were engaging in a cold war.

2.3. Thirdly, as already hinted above, the notion of (a) valid and (b) equal cultures, built into multiculturism, is more romantic than real. In America for example, everybody knows that it would be very difficult for either a confessed communist or a Muslim to become president. In our own country, no one would seriously attempt to make Venda culture normative in national ceremonies. It would be fiercely resisted. Nor would we, if we could help it, allow two lesbians to become president and first deputy president of our country. South Africa is to all intents and purposes, whatever that means, a Christian country. 'Christian culture' is *in* and all other cultures are tolerated. More seriously though, talk of multiculturism does not eliminate the disproportionate power relations and power realities between various cultures, whichever way you define culture. Some cultures are more powerful than others. Some cultures have more money than others. Some cultures are more glossy and glitzy than others. We all enjoyed watching the film series "Gods must be crazy". It makes for a good laugh. But it is also designed to demonstrate how 'far back' Bushman culture is from our own. Bushmen can track thieves and wild animals, but we use helicopters to do that quicker and more efficiently. The romantic and harmonious notion of multi-cultures is a 'cover-up' both in relation to the past as well as in relation to the present. All these issues that I am raising precede the question of 'Christ in Africa'. It is these issues that influence and determine the manner in which Africa experiences, interprets and proclaims Christ.

2.4. Fourthly, the coinage 'Christ in Africa', at least in common usage, assumes that a 'pure gospel' unadulterated by 'culture' encountered Africa -or that Africa encountered an unadulterated Christ. Missionary and Euro-American agency in the bringing of the 'gospel' to Africa is not supposed to have interfered with the purity of the gospel and the uncontaminated Christ. This analysis is common to Western scholars who write with the aim of praising the efforts of Western missionaries. Sometimes those white scholars who write about African Independent Churches, with the aim of demonstrating African creativity in appropriating Christ, inadvertently commit the same mistake[36]. The equation therefore consists on the one hand, of the pure

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36 They do this when they seem to argue (cf Anderson 1993) that in the African Indigenous Church traditions, Africans have managed to 'strip the gospel' of all Western trappings -. i.e.

gospel (or Christ) and (barbaric) African culture. This equation is faulted. We know Christ through the incarnation. The christian gospel has been always wrapped around a culture. No such 'pristine gospel' ever existed apart from an 'incarnation' or 'culture'. The real issues in the phrase 'Christ in Africa' relate to how Euro-American culture encountered African culture. That is the package in which Christ was wrapped when He 'came' to Africa. A discussion of Christ in Africa therefore, necessarily includes, a discussion about Euro-Western civilisation. How did it help or frustrate the cause of the Gospel in Africa? How is it continuing to do that in our own times? It also include the role of colonialism since the gospel was often presented hand in hand with colonialism[37]. During our own times the influence of consumerism, pluralism, racism, urbanism, and materialism upon our African culture has become relevant in any discussion about Christ in Africa.

3 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS

As explained in the beginning, my approach has concentrated on basic, implied and assumed issues in the topic. Rather than plunge into telling stories about Christ in multi-cultural Africa, I have chosen to ask probing questions about the meaning, experience and possibilities of Christ in a supposedly multi-cultural South Africa. This is, in my opinion, a useful way of addressing an otherwise deceptively familiar topic which can easily become flat and elusive.

On the basis of the positions I have adopted on the issues raise in this paper, valid conceptions of Christ in Africa should be built upon at least some of the following propositions and realities:

(a) Africa, its peoples, its culture, (pre-colonial) past and present as well as all its peoples must be taken seriously as a valid and creative 'host' of Christ. This means challenging and going beyond Euro-Western conceptions of Africa even if these are held by Africans.

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they have finaly appropriated the 'naked' gospel which they are supposed to be now applying to their context.

37 See Majeke (1952).

(b) African forms of Christianity such as those represented by African Initiated Churches and the 'pockets' of Africanisation within the so-called 'main-line churches', must be accepted as valid and creative forms of Christianity. The phase of 'describing'[38], 'othering' and 'apologising' on behalf of these forms of Christianity must come to an end.

(c) African theologies deserve the same acceptance accorded to Euro-Western and Latin American theologies. This means that African must begin to 'do' African theology. These must become the over-arching frameworks in all African theological research and discourse.

(d) The continued dualistic and often racist and exploitative view of culture as being the culture of the *West versus the* 'non-cultures' of the *rest* must be challenged and rejected in whatever form it masquerades. Even if it presents itself in the language of multiculturism, this view must be rejected.

(e) Already, Africans are 'enacting'[39]' their Christology. We see these in the powerful healing ceremonies in such churches as the International Holiness Apostolic Church of Frederick Modise and the Zion Christian Church of Legkanyane. As they integrate their Christian faith with traditional beliefs, Africans are 'vocalising' their experience of Christ. On the theological front, Black and African theologies are doing the same. In Africa, Christ is not a 'rabbi', 'the monk who rules the world', 'the teacher of common sense', or the 'bridegroom of the soul'[40]. Christ in Africa is, the healer, the Black Messiah, the ancestor, the elder brother, the crucified one and the master of initiation.

(f) White (and Black) African Christians, theologians and churches must begin to situate themselves epistemologically and contextually in Africa. For this to happen, Africa must cease to be something out there. This has implications both for the churches and theology. Both need to effect a kind of *epistemologica ruptura*[41] from the West.

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38 Started by Sundkler in 1948, but to a smaller extent by Du Plessis in 1911.

39 Daneel (1989) describes the total praxis of the African Initiated Churches as an enacted theology of liberation.

40 See Pelikan (1985).

41 See Frostin (1988).

(g) **The notion of multiculturism must not be allowed to 'cover-up' the religious, socio-political, economical and power basis of 'cultural' differences. A valid view of the multiplicity of culture must include a keen awareness of the role of religions, politics, economy and power in fostering and sustaining a fare share of so-called cultural differences.**

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BOOK REVIEWS

ANDERSON, Allan. *Tumelo - The faith of African Pentecostals in South Africa*. Pretoria: Unisa. xi + 170pp. No price quoted.

In this book, Anderson, thanks to the help of field-worker and translator -Sam Otwang, analyses empirically researched data collected in Soshanguve, a black township near Pretoria between October 1990 and October 1992. Yet this book must be seen in continuity with others by the same author and publisher (*Moya: The Holy Spirit in an African context* (1991) and *Bazalwane: African Pentecostals in South Africa* (1992)) - it is "the third in a series of monographs ... (p.3). This latest book is based on the same body of researched data as was the previous one (see my review *Missionalia* [1992] 21:2 p.186-187).

The basic means of data gathering was participant observation (p.1 & 2), taped translated interviews and a few recorded sermons (p.9). "Steroptyped questionnaires" were jettisoned so as to ensure a qualitative research rather than the previous quantitative one. The aim of the research was to "identify the (pentecostal) churches through the eyes of the members of the churches themselves" (p.4). Thus the ordinary members rather than the leadership was targeted for interviews. Anderson re-defends his "broader" use of the term Pentecostal although he consistently differentiates between "Pentecostal" and "Pentecostal-type" churches. Statistics show not only the rapid growth of Pentecostal and other AIC type churches, but also that they grow "at the expense of the mission churches which have declined drastically" (p.8).

In the second chapter, Anderson looks at the patterns of recruitment and proclamation of the word in Pentecostal churches. Liturgy, sacraments, church life and socio-political concerns are discussed in the third chapter. In chapter four, salvation, healing methods and "deliverance from trouble" are broached. Christological and theological issues are introduced in chapter five. The paramount questions of the Holy Spirit and prophecy in African Pentecostal churches (APCs) is discussed in the sixth chapter. In the last chapter, the contributions and challenges of the Pentecostal churches to Christian mission are highlighted.

Insofar as this book contains an attempt to elucidate the *faith* of African Pentecostal churches rather than classify these churches, it deserves its title.

My main concerns, however, relate to the methodological presuppositions. Anderson seems to assign pre-critical authority to the taped interviews for most part. He wants us to understand that in these taped interviews the people are speaking for themselves about themselves and as such their testimony is both authoritative and authentic. The whole presentation is therefore more descriptive than analytical. Ordinary church members are speaking for themselves! Anderson merely describes (and perhaps systematises) what ordinary members of Pentecostal churches have revealed to him. How can we be sure that his "description" is in agreement with the "reality"? Because, he is "no detached and disinterested observer" (p.3).

Of course things are not as simple as all that. After reading Anderson's book, we do not merely see the Pentecostal churches "through the eyes of the ordinary members" - we see them through the eyes of the author as well! Behind the statistics, questionnaires and cassette tapes there is Allan Anderson and his agenda. These "ordinary church members" speak through him. The tone may sound descriptive, but Anderson is analysing, sifting and prescribing. An overt admission to that effect would do the author no harm. To put it differently, if Anderson is a participant observer - he too needs to be both observed and observable right through the process. In a serious endeavour to observe him, we may find his use of empirical research methodology to be a red herring.

The complete lack of acknowledgement of limitations - not merely of Anderson as a white person - a practice which has become merely a strategic cliche amongst white South African theologians - but of the very methodology by means of which Anderson conducts his research is regrettable. At numerous points and levels the author "universalises" Soshanguve findings without always explaining the precise connections between Soshanguve and the "world".

Although the statistics do show a marked difference between AICs and mission churches' membership figures, theological and even liturgical similarities between AIC and black mission churches could be much higher than Anderson seems to suggest. The fact that the 81% of Pentecostal church members "formerly belonged to other churches (of which half were from mission churches)" (p.25) may reveal a *continuous* rather than *discontinuous* relationship between African Pentecostals and black mission churches. The acknowledgement of the possibility of a *continuous* relationship need not necessarily lead, (as it is often supposed by both who adopt a sympathetic and non-sympathetic view of Indigenous churches), to the patronising suggestion that APCs merely *react* to and *expand* upon mission churches. In fact, it is proponents of a radically discontinuous relationship, like Anderson, who beg the question.

The meaning of manifestations of these two groups of churches in South Africa cannot be understood merely from the point of view of disproportionate membership statistics (see p.136). The romantic notion of APCs "without any "white" influence whatsoever" (p.137) causes Anderson to adopt what comes across as a rigid wall between APCs and black mission churches. This notion is as romantic as the purpose of the study upon which this book was written, namely to make it possible to "see the APCs through the eyes of ordinary members". There is more in common between various expressions of Black Christianity than meets the eye.

Once the possibility of continuous rather than discontinuous relationship between APCs and other expressions of African Christianity is acknowledged, the challenges of African Pentecostalism may need to be phrased and understood in a way quite different from Anderson's.

Since Anderson is fast establishing himself as a prolific author in this area - with three books and numerous articles within the space of three years - (black) scholars and theologians with an interest in expressions of black South African Christianity can only ignore this and his other publications at their own peril.

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[Reprinted with permission from *Missionalia* 22:1 (April 1994) 61-62.]

BALCOMB, Anthony: *Third Way Theology. Reconciliation, revolution and reform in the South African Church during the 1980s*. 1993. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications. 291pp. No price quoted.

Balcomb examines (the bankruptcy of) the theological interventionism called third way theology which was widely espoused in South Africa during the 1980s. He characterises third way theology thus: "Politics had to be transcended but not too much; issues had to be discussed, but not too enthusiastically; justice had to be done, but not too passionately; the truth had to be told, but not too emphatically" (p.18). As a window into the subject, Balcomb uses the National Initiative for Reconciliation (NIR) started under the auspices of the Africa Enterprise (AE) in 1985 (p.63) of which he was a member. Three characteristics of third way theologies form "the kernel of its concerns [namely], conflict, identity, and power" (p.179).

In response to the rising tide of internal and international protest, South African governments of the eighties dished out "more carrots and less stick" (p.38). This, Balcomb suggests, was the political context, out of which third way theology emerged despite its proponents' claims of political transcendence.

The second chapter explores the dynamics, concerns, theological argumentation and political commitments of South African third way theologies. Third way theology, Balcomb suggests, "was put forward as .... a (truly) Christian theology untrammelled by ideology ... [with] no hidden agendas, no ulterior motives and no political ambitions" (p.66). Theologically, the third way has been explained as something in between the Sadducees and the Zealots (p.71). "Philosophically, the third ways' concerns about [Christian] identity, power, and conflict are all

essentially liberal concerns" (p.75). Balcomb concludes that third way theologians have tended to "uncritically accept aspects of the ideological substructure of liberalism" (p.79).

The NIR becomes the focus of the third chapter. Using the, aims, strategies and activities of the NIR, Balcomb explores the fallacies inherent in the NIR's centrist theology. An event in which the NIR was visited with the curious choice between a "stay-away" and a "pray-away" (with black members of the NIR generally supporting the former while whites generally supported the latter - which eventually won the day) (pp.100-108) is offered as a penchant example of the liberalism inherent in NIR ideology.

In chapter four, an "interpretative framework" for third way theology is submitted by correlating it to, liberalism, Anabaptism, Christian Realism and (Albert Nolan's blend of) Liberation Theology.

The manner in which "the phenomenon of power is treated with (such) strenuous opprobrium by the advocates of the third way" (p.163) is the subject of the fifth chapter. Balcomb examines the reasons behind this pejorative and "mythological" view of power in third way theology. He also attempts to "retrieve the notion of power" (p.169).

Identity and conflict - being the other two characteristic concerns of third way theology - are discussed in the sixth chapter.

Chapter seven begins Balcomb's closing observations, questions and suggestions. The widely acclaimed reform initiatives of De Klerk as well as their extensive ramifications, Balcomb proposes, effectively means that "third way theology" rightly or wrongly, has "triumphed" and now occupies, in hegemonic style, the terrain of the centre. With state co-option of important symbols of the third way, third way theology has become, a "state theology" which is "inappropriate in the context of a burgeoning third world country ... [experiencing] a state of radical political transition" (p.208). The question then becomes, for Balcomb, how best to continue being "prophetic" in these third way times (p.219ff). Instead of using third way thinking as an "excuse for neutrality" can it be used for "freedom to engage in political struggle without being compromised? (p.237), - Balcomb ponders.

An unwarranted sense of awe and defeat - (in the face of the "triumphant" third way) surrounds Balcomb's closing two sections. This begs the question of whether Balcomb's otherwise excellent monograph on third way theologies does not ultimately lead to the "paralysis of analysis". Do we have in this monograph, more than sheer fascination with the phenomenon being studied, even if the author harbours fundamental concerns against the phenomenon? These questions become necessary due to Balcomb's ultimate premise - an acceptance of the "hegemony" of third way theologies. He also expresses fear that prophetic theologies of liberation may simply become marginalised, if they "do not adapt" to the times, as it were. However, many types of Liberation Theologies seem reconciled to a marginal existence without either worshipping the margin or being over-awed by it. Could it be that Blacomb's discomfort with the margin betrays his white middle class background?

His proposed way forward by means of contrasting third way, liberation, and prophetic theologies tends to be reminiscent of third way theological (Hegelian) procedures. Balcomb appeals to the Indian theologian M.M. Thomas for a way forward. He is chosen because although he appropriated and operated from essentially the same theological premises as those of third way theologians, he "consistently shatters its political conclusions" (p.237). One may question whether, in the exigencies of the South African situation in the eighties and the nineties, Thomas can indeed take us any further than our third way theologians have done. While there is nothing methodologically wrong with his appeal to the Indian theologian M.M. Thomas for a way forward, one is not convinced that Balcomb has probed the local turf hard and thoroughly enough. The full weight of collective insights (not just individual contributions such as Nolan (Liberation Theology) and Boesak (Black Theology) from other theological traditions is not substantially brought to bear on the presuppositions of the third way. This results in a situation in which third way theology disproportionately appears like a "giant" among "dwarfs". Despite his penetrating critique of third way theology, Balcomb still wants to sustain the basic theological premises of this theology. The weakest spot in this very exciting book is however its lack of a decisive way forward.

This is an excellent monograph. Anthony Balcomb has submitted - to my mind - one of the most penetrating critiques of the South African theological climate in the 1980s ever (by a white South African). Nobody - not David Bosch, Albert Nolan, Manas Buthelezi nor the South African Council of Churches escape the sharp edge of Balcomb's analytical sword. Some of the chapters in this book are gems that must become prescribed reading in all of our country's academic and theological institutions.

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HOFMEYR, J.W. & PILLAY, Gerald J. (eds): *A history of Christianity in South Africa* (Volume 1). Pretoria: Haum Tertiary, 1994. xxv + 320pp. R81,95.

Eleven historians from seven South African universities collaborated to produce this work. Building on Du Plessis' *History of Christian Missions* (1911) and Gerdener's *Recent developments in the South African Mission field* (1958), the editors present a first volume in an envisaged series - as an entailing presentation of South Africa's "different church traditions ... as they emerged *alongside* each other *within certain key periods* of South African history" (emphasis mine). The intention is to introduce in chronological order, key political events without sacrificing discussion on the "inner life" of the church as well as other factors.

Beginning with a brief account of pre-colonial South Africa's and ending with the topic of Christianity in South Africa since 1948, most chapters (eight chapters in all) are prefaced by a kind of socio-political synthesising abstract.

The declared organising principle of the entire study seems to be the desire to "integrate insights of (these) different perspectives on the past into one story" (foreword). However, no clear set of principles of historical interpretation are elucidated. While the editorial choice of making "key" political events, opting for a chronological rather than a thematic frame-work and the intention of presenting different church traditions alongside each other make practical sense, the particular manner in which they are handled in the entire structure of this book raises a number of problems.

Firstly, it seems that in some chapters, the standard "insights of different perspectives" as presented, in dominant historiographies (for example by Du Plessis, Gerdener and Hinchliff) are accepted without question or qualification. Indeed, as the editors declare in the preface, only two things are to be added; namely, a) updating and b) the introduction of key political events as a frame around which these are to be interpreted.

Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as pure "updating" in historiography because there is a dynamic relationship between today, yesterday, and tomorrow. A lot more than merely adding new and more recent data onto a historical pile of information is taking place when we "update" historical material. Historiography is not merely about historical data and their classification. It is also about our conceptions of the relation between today, yesterday, and tomorrow. However, even in terms of cold and technical updating, one may point out, for example that, while the Swiss Romande Mission and the church that resulted from it (The Evangelical Presbyterian Church) appears in some statistics figures (see pp 306-310) neither the work of these missionaries nor this church in the far northern Transvaal get exposed in the entire book.

Whereas the presentation of an "updated" volume on South African history may be welcome, the proposed introduction of key political events as an interpretative frame, in and of itself, adds little to South African historiography. Although Du Plessis and Hinchcliff (for example) may not have submitted a conscious and detailed socio-political scheme around which their "histories" were written, socio-political events influenced their interpretations of history. In wrapping church historical stories around socio-political events, the contributors to this volume have accomplished little more than previous historians - unless they can persuade us that they have a use of the socio-political in their historiography, that differs substantially from that of Du Plessis and Gerdener.

In accordance with the (mistaken) view that in (merely) updating, proposing a socio-political frame work and the presentation of different church traditions, this approach is innovative. The contributor for chapter one presents Christian beginnings in South Africa in a style and bias that goes neither beyond Du Plessis nor notorious "Apartheid historians". Jan van Riebeeck is presented as having "accomplished much important foundation work" (p.3) and he experienced some "set-backs" when the "Khoikhoi stole (their) cattle". Later the British experienced "disturbances" on the eastern border caused by amongst other things "attacks from the Xhosas" (p.33).

In parts of the book, European male personalities and events in colonial and ecclesiastical history are presented as the prime catalysts in the evolvement of South African church history. Thus the editors suggest that it was the "prevailing socio-political order" (meaning by these Dutch rule, British rule, Anglo-Boer war, Apartheid etc.) that "determined when, where and how even the most indigenous forms of Christianity emerged". An even more serious problem is the apparent air of either neutrality and/or even approval displayed towards these so-called "prevailing socio-political orders". Even Apartheid is described in a chilling sympathetic tone. (p.246 to 250). Amongst other things, it is described as an "adaptable" policy which "through different permutations" had by the late 1970s and early 1980s scaled down to a "pragmatic" level p.(248). It is one thing to plead for recognition of socio-political issues in historiography; it is quite another merely to accept the "prevailing social order" in one's historiography.

Notwithstanding the above, as can be expected with any book that is the fruit of cooperation between several authors, the chapters do not all speak with 'one voice', as it were. Sharp historiographical differences in approach and hermeneutics (compare for example Chapter one and five) exist between the contributors. However, the editorial meta-structure, butressed by the 'abstracts' preceding most chapters stifle the differences. In any case, the volume comes to us as a unit and must ultimately be viewed as such.

This volume is the widest compilation of historical information on aspects of the growth of Christianity in South Africa into a single volume to date. Therein lies its value. It is however, historiographically unimaginative and badly out of tune with most current historiographical, theological and even political developments in South Africa. For this reason, unless there is a radical epistemological and methodological shift in the historiographical meta-structure, I await the promised second volume with some apprehension.

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PHILPOT, Graham: *Jesus is tricky and God is undemocratic. The kingdom of God in Amawoti*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993. 204pp. No price quoted.

This book is the fruit of research whose findings were submitted to the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa for a masters degree. It consists of theological reflections on bible studies conducted in Amawoti - a black squatter area within Durban in South Africa. The author served as "animator" in the bible studies. These bible studies were conducted with a group which met regularly over a period of four years (July 1988 to December 1992). From 1989 (to 1992?), the author and his wife took up residence in Amawoti. The author selected the theme of the kingdom of God as the subject to be investigated in the group (p.129). In the second chapter of the book, Philpot delves into the detail of research theory and methodology. He describes participatory research as "a research process in which the community participates in the analysis of its own reality in order to promote a social transformation for the benefit of the participants, who are the oppressed"(p.22). Accountability is supposed to be to both the 'scientific' community and the grassroots community. The proceedings of the Bible studies were "recorded in shorthand writing by a member of the group, so as to avoid the intrusion of a tape recorder or any strange technology" (p.19). Of the approximately seventy discussions

which were recorded, Philpot "selected thirteen which he judged to be most useful for this particular study" (p.20). Categories that "had emerged during the process of bible study discussions" which the author "judged to be the most appropriate structure through which to present the group's understanding" were later identified by Philpot. In doing this, categories and questions raised by group members were used "as far as possible" (p.27).The "resultant" major themes and actions were later used by the author "to develop a debate with other theologians ... [so as]...to locate the discussions from Amawoti within the larger theological discussion" (p.20). This way, Philpot argues, the impact of the insights of the people of Amawoti are brought to bear upon those who 'do not wish to see them'. However, there were also ways in which the findings "have been made available in various formats" (p.27) for use in the Amawoti community.

Typically, the author chooses to "check" Amawoti insights almost exclusively against Latin American Liberation theologians rather than local theologians . The only South African theological insights which Philpot engages (mostly with approval) for this purpose are from Albert Nolan, Anthony Balcomb and the Kairos Document. In fact the only Black South African theologians appearing in his bibliography is Simon Maimela and Allan Boesak. In his entire book, Itumeleng Mosala is the only Black theologian engaged briefly and dismissed (too) hastily (p. 18.). This study falls within the framework of South African liberal white tradition which has historically preferred to look everywhere but to *Black* South Africa for inspiration and insight. At its most sophisticated, this tradition has appealed in various ways to insights from pockets of 'unsophisticated' blacks locally. In theological circles, the rise of Liberation and Contextual theologies have provided a fertile paradigm within which this can be done with moral impunity - through various uses of the dictum of "preferential option for the poor and marginalised". What is distinctive of this tradition is its refusal to also "check" their research "findings" against the insights of black colleagues in academia and in other art forms.

There is an interesting avoidance of the word "black" (and "white") or even "African" throughout the study. Thus Amawoti is defined not in current idiom as a "black squatter area" but as an "informal urban shack community" (p. 32). Only in page thirty four are the residents of Amawoti described as "black". On this page we also find a rare if not the only instance where the "the oppressed" are identified as "the black people of this country". For the rest, the typical yet ambiguous terms of "the oppressed", "the poor", "the marginalised", "the neglected" and "the rejected" are employed. My suggestion is that Blackness (and Whiteness) is not a dispensable category when research into people of colour in South Africa is conducted. Philpot's intellectualist differentiation between a "socio-economic" and "socio cultural" definition of "the neglected and the rejected" (p.113) serve merely to fog the issue. This differentiation is based on a dichotomy whose assumptions are essentially Western both in origin and epistemology - as such, it is an inadequate tool to diagnose our local situation.

Philpot abruptly acknowledges that even a good research methodology is open to abuse - "particularly ... when a white researcher is involved in a black community" (p.128). He also admits that both the researcher's values as well as his "... involvement with the members of the group during the course of the week" influence research proceedings and findings. Unfortunately, Philpot does not explore the implications of these two momentous observations. Several questions come to mind in this regard. How was Philpot's "whiteness" encountered by the Amawoti group? Or better still, how did the "whiteness" of Philpot encounter the "blackness" of the group of blacks and vice versa? How did these impinge upon the proceedings in the group discussions? Of what significance to the discusion groups is the fact that Philpot was a "relief worker" (see p. 40) in the community? Does the fact that the members of the group were staff members (p.19) in the relief organisation in which Philpot also worked (and probably held a position senior to theirs) matter? Is it of importance that this bible study group was a 'project' (p.42) of a community development organisation which employed all the participants? All these and other questions have been subsumed under the virtuous slogans of Philpot's allegedly ground-breaking research methodology. Philpot, we are supposed to believe, was "an equal participant in the group" (p. 22).

In many ways, Philpot's procedures in the study violate most of the fundamental principles and traits of his "participatory research model" as outlined by him in the second chapter. If the (Amawoti) "community participated in the analysis of its own reality", it would seem that Philpot constructed the questions (most of which were neither original to him nor the Amawoti community but steeped in traditional Western theological inquiry about the concept of the kingdom of God), themes and categories (p.20) almost single-handedly. He himself almost admits this much at least with the "selection of the topic for investigation - the kin-dom of God" (p.129).

What did the Bible study group (and Amawoti community at large benefit) from Philpot's bible study group? For the community: An Easter march (p.110), a video of the march, the printing of T-shirts with sayings from the group, a pamphlet with the group's reflections on the Lord's prayer (p.27) plus Philpot adds, "a few members took on leadership positions in the community" (p. 130) as a result of their involvement in the group (?). These benefits are a far cry from those promised by Philpot's participatory research which is supposed not only to be "accountable to the participants" but aims at "transferring power" form the oppressors to the oppressed.

My verdict is that contrary to the avowed principles of participatory research, Philpot and his "scientific" community come out of the bible study experience with more concrete and material gains than the people of Amawoti.

While it shares in the idealisms, romanticisms and hypocrises of other similar research methodologies currently in circulation (especially in studies into indigenous expressions of Christianity), Philpot's is not presented as intrinsically faultless. His book is especially relevant to those who are interested in dialogue between *white* South African Contextual/ Liberation theology and Latin American Liberation theology.

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[Reprinted with permission from *Missionalia* 22:1 (April 1994) 82-84.]