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EDITORIAL

ARTICLES

- The Dialectical Relationship between Culture and Religion in the Struggle for Liberation by
Ranwedzi Nengwekhulu 1
- Popular Religiosity: A Liberative Resource and a Terrain of Struggle by
Dr. Takatso Mofokeng 14
- The Agenda for a Black Womanist Theology in South Africa by
Ms. Jacqueline William 24
- The Future of African Theology by
Dr Gwinyai Muzorewa 36

BOOK REVIEWS

- Theology and the Black Experience: The Lutheran Heritage interpreted by African and African-American Theologian** by Pero A. and Moyo A. (eds.)
Reviewed by Rev. Mark Hestenes 53
- Matriachs, Goddesses and Images of God: A critique of a Feminist Theology** by Susanne Heine.
Reviewed by Prof. Marie-Henry Keane 55
- Trinity and Society** by Leonardo Boff
Reviewed by Dr. Takatso Mofokeng 59

EDITORIAL

This second volume of our journal for this year offers a mixture of very interesting articles which are related in a special way. They are all concerned with one or more forms of oppression and struggle against it. They are also breaking ground in or lifting up one or other area for theological attention. They deserve careful attention.

Ranwedzi Nengwekhulu has written about culture and religion as they relate to liberation in a very fresh and provocative way. He shows how they can both be used for the advancement of the cause of the oppressed or against it. One cannot but reach the conclusion that these phenomena have to be taken seriously by those who are committed to the cause of the people and involved in theology. In the past, most Marxists dismissed the relevance of culture and religion in the struggle to create a socialist future. In South Africa, culture and religion have been used to divide black people and perpetuate domination over them. Consequently many black people who were committed to change found themselves without a choice. Nengwekhulu's presentation will hopefully show that there is a way out of this dilemma.

Takatso Mofokeng reopens the debate on the relevance of popular religion in the search for justice in South Africa. He identifies a new form of popular religion that has been very forceful in mobilizing the oppressed in the 1970s and the 1980s. He also shows that the same popular religion has to be defended against cooptation and use against the struggle of the oppressed. It is, according to him, not only a liberative resource but also a terrain of struggle.

Jackie Williams enters the debate on the agenda for a Black Womanist Theology from a fresh and provocative angle. She first presents the Story of the Black Woman and the religious songs she sings when she is in reflective worship in the Black Church. Her argument is that attentive listening to these songs and hymns yields a full agenda for a Black Womanist Theology. This is a very important effort.

Gwinyai Muzorewa continues to give attention to African Theology. This time he engages in a radical critique of the imprisonment of this theology in a conceptual world which will frustrate its efforts of freeing the religious heart of Africa.

THE DIALECTICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE AND RELIGION IN THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION.

by Ranwedzi Nengwekhulu*

INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this paper is to attempt an analysis and assessment of the dialectical relationship between culture and religion and the impact of this relationship on the struggle for liberation.

THE MEANING OF CULTURE

The concept of culture and the concept of human beings are indissolubly and intimately woven together. In the historical process of human development, culture is both the product of human labour and the living expression of what humanity has achieved. It is therefore not only the result and concretization of the development of humanity itself but also the index and hallmark of the socio-economic, political and technological progress of human society. Thus as a philosophical concept, culture is correctly viewed and interpreted as a specific type and dimension of human activity, that is, as the complex expression of human development. It is the active, and in most cases, materialized and concretized embodiment and realization of human creativity, the self-realization of human beings inherent capacities. Culture therefore expresses the degree and level to which human beings are in control of their relationship with the natural world.

But because culture is a product of human creation it is therefore profoundly human in character. Thus culture as the object of human creativity, is inseparably bound up with its creator, the human being the subject. For this reason culture is the repository of the noblest human values. In philosophical literature, the concept culture usually possesses three basic meanings but all three meanings are intimately connected with human creativity. Each one of them is merely a dimension of the whole, but registers a particular characteristic or feature of culture, that is, the specific way in which and degree to which it is the essential embodiment of human beings.

Used in its broadest and widest sense, culture is the totality of the results of human labour, that is, the results of material and spiritual activity of human beings. As the totality of material and spiritual wealth created by human labour, culture is the development of human productive forces, the development of the richness of human nature as an end in itself.¹ Used in a narrower and more specific sense culture refers to what is generally called spiritual culture. This includes philosophy, science ideology, art literature, religion educa-

tion etc. Summed up together all these components of spiritual culture are normally expressed in and through concepts of spirit and spirituality which reflect human intellectual and emotional dimension and capacity, both conscious and unconscious. It could therefore be said that Philosophy, Science, art, literature et cetera are all products of human intellectual and emotion powers that is, spiritual powers, the creation of human mind and heart. They reveal the highest level of human creativity. The third dimension of culture is what is generally called artistic culture which is in reality the figurative objectification of artistic creativity. Thus the figurative objectified artistic culture takes the form both of material products and direct human activity.

Culture, understood in any of the three meanings described above both material and spiritual, having being created by human beings and given objective form by human creativity has however relative autonomy and acquires its own independent life governed by definite laws of social development. It is therefore not a mere epiphenomenon of which the economy is the reality. No crude reductionism. But despite this relative autonomy, culture remains rooted in the material aspect of social life which have a profound influence upon its content. The mode of production of material life therefore constitutes the basis of culture and its development. Thus fundamental changes in the mode of production are accompanied by changes in the content and completion. Culture therefore is dynamic, and not static.

Viewed from this perspective and such an interpretation of culture means that the creation of any cultural product is always bound up with the material world and the spiritual capacity of the human being.

But while human beings, the creators of culture, are mortal, culture and its products are generally speaking immortal.

Culture and its products accumulate over the course of historical development of humanity. Thus the cultural wealth of society is the result of human activity; human labour, in history, for human development in all its various dimensions, takes place in the process of labour.

But more importantly also human development takes place in the process of mastering the existing, accumulated cultural wealth demonstrating the dialectical and symbiotic relationship between culture and its creator—the human being. This cultural exchange between the subject and object is natural and inevitable. Cultural development is a process of its past, present and future not in isolation but as a totality. But each historical period or era produces its

own version of culture. Cultural development and change takes two forms:

Cultural development and continuity and cultural development and discontinuity. Cultural continuity in development relates to the stage of slow, imperceptible cultural accumulation which does not affect the quality of culture but merely introduces insignificant quantitative changes in culture.

Discontinuity in cultural development is a stage of radical and fundamental qualitative change in culture and cultural norms, a historical moment or period during which the old culture and cultural norms disintegrate and give way to new culture. Thus the reluctance of those who refuse to accept cultural change may be due to their fear of any future which might radically alter the existing state of affairs. To those immersed in the status quo as to be part of it in mind, in values, in expectations, and in habits, any cultural change spells chaos and disaster. That is why they cling to the present. Yet the essence of culture is to be found in dynamic and progressive change. The timid defenders of the present construe and see cultural change and the advent of a new culture in terms of the forms of order of the present world. Hence cultural change is seen as mere cultural confusion and cultural deviance, a story of social degeneration. But cultural development and change is not metaphysical but empirical and concrete. It is determined by both objective and subjective conditions which exist in the society but which are formed historically and are therefore not ready-made.

It is the objective conditions, the material conditions which influence cultural change rather human will and caprices.

So far human history has produced four major phases or epochs of human society each with its own culture, norms and customs, philosophy, ideology et cetera. These are the communal society, slave-owning society, feudal society, and capitalist society. The fifth epoch in the history of human society, the socialist society is still largely under experimentation.

This notion of culture differs fundamentally from the Parsonian notion of culture and social development which views culture and social development in static forms. And the main weakness of Talcott Parsons' structural functionalism, as an explanation of society and its culture, is that it lacks the sense of history or indeed any interest at all in cultural history. It remains stuck in the immediate and the reification of the status quo conceptualized outside the realm of the historical process.

This notion of looking at culture and cultural development also differs from the metaphysical notion of social development and cultural change. For metaphysics interprets social development and cultural change as simple repetition of what already exists and does not recognize the emergence of the new culture.

But cultural development is historical and the cultural history of human society is expressed in the human being's mastery of nature by the discoveries of science and advance of technology from the stone implements to molecular biology, agricultural chemistry and the micro chips et cetera. It is this recognition of the obsolescence that overtakes every culture which defines culture as dynamic.

THE MEANING OF RELIGION

It is generally accepted that the basic feature of religion is the belief in the supernatural. In other words it is a form of explanation concerning the origins of human beings, their relationship with the natural environment, the nature of human beingness et cetera. Viewed from this perspective religion can be seen as a reflection of the human being's ignorance of the true and concrete of natural and social phenomena, resulting in the assumption that the universe and all that exists on it is the product of terrestrial and supernatural forces beyond human comprehension and whose existence is therefore only possible through revelation.

It is this belief in the supernatural which led to the ascription of supernatural properties to nature's forces and made them into gods and spirits, devils and angels, et cetera, and the belief that if these imaginary beings were not appeased, they could inflict harm and suffering on them, while if placated and worshipped they would protect people. This is how religious worship seem to have arisen; a combination of prayers sacrifices and other rites.

This brought into existence priests, sorcerers, pastors, et cetera and also various religious organizations etc.

Such a view of religion means and implies that religion is part of the history of human society. In other words it is an integral component of the cultural history of society for, viewed broadly culture embodies religion.

The birth and development of religion is determined by the nature and character of the social system and its cultural norms ethics customs and usage. The system of social production and its relations dictates the birth, formation and content and form of religion. No stage in the development of religion is the result of arbitrary

invention but is the products of its age. But the mode of production as a whole and production relations in particular not only determine the origins, form and content of religion but also the limits of its possible variants within specific historical conditions.

Thus all the basic forms content and variant of religion known to history are organically linked to the social system and structures they reflect as their own social roots. Hence in cases where the social system and structures reflected by religion are the social roots of the religion itself, the links between religion and these structures are stable.

But as with all forms of superstructures of society religion enjoys relative autonomy from both the social structures and culture. And this relative autonomy increases as religion acquires a longer and longer history. This relative autonomy permits religion to exercise vigorous and qualitative considerable retroactive influence upon the socio-economic system and its structure which, ironically, assisted the birth and formation of religion and are in fact reflected in it. But in the process of this retroactive influence, religion is in its turn reflected in other socio-economic system and its structures. And in the process of the retroactive influence religion undergoes fundamental qualitative changes and also increases its range and sphere of influence to a considerable degree. But the degree of religious influence varies in different periods of historical and social development, depending primarily on the place religion occupies in the social system. These variations may also be caused by various concrete or material conditions existing in various societies existing in the same historical periods. But more importantly also is the fact that the dialectical relationship, that is, the symbiotic interaction between religion and culture and the entire socio-economic system gives rise to distinct components which appear as autonomous units within the framework of religious consciousness.

The rise and development of religion therefore occur as a result of close and intensive interaction between religion and the socio-economic system.

Seen from this perspective, religion then become a complex system of norms, customs ethics et cetera, produced by the socio-economic system in order to explain social reality, especially those aspects of the universe human mind fails to comprehend. It is therefore not something that is produced externally and imposed on society from without. To understand religion in all its ramifications and the role it plays in society, a dissection, analysis, and understanding of the socio-economic system, its mode of production and the accompanying relations of production is essential if not crucial.

THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF CULTURE AND RELIGION IN THE SOCIETY

The role or function of culture and religion in the society is determined by the socio-economic system and material or concrete conditions obtained within the society. For the material conditions do not only determine the origin, content and form of culture and religion within a given society, but also the role that these two super structural elements of society play within the society.

But although the role of culture and religion in society is determined by the material conditions existing in the society, both culture and religion do not remain passive in relation to the material conditions. They also in turn actively influence, and facilitate the development of material conditions. It follows, therefore, that the role and function played by religion thus this interaction between the socio-economic conditions, the material condition which make the relationship between the structure and in this case material conditions on the one hand and culture and religion on the other, a dialectical relationship. Implied here is the notion that the role played by culture and religion, although ultimately determined by the material conditions existing within the society, also influences the development of the material conditions.

But just as the material conditions play a crucial role in determining the role played by both culture and religion, culture also plays an important role in shaping the completion, content, form and role which religion plays in the society whilst religion in turn also influences the role played by culture in shaping not only the content, and form that religion adopts in the society but also the function it performs. There are two main functions that both culture and religion perform in the society in which they exist. In other words they are determined by the objective conditions prevailing at the time. Thus depending on the nature of prevailing objective conditions and the nature of the mode of production and its attendant production relations, culture and religion can become instrument of and justification for oppression and exploitation or instruments of liberation and freedom.

CULTURE AND RELIGION AS INSTRUMENTS OF AND JUSTIFICATION FOR OPPRESSION AND EXPLOITATION

Throughout the history of human society, with the exception of the era of communalism, culture and religion have been used not only as instrument of oppression, exploitation and domination but also as justifications for these inhuman actions by one human being against another. This is especially so in a class divided society in which the dominant and ruling class uses culture and religion not only to articulate its interests but also to promote and defend these

interests. In other words, culture and religion are an essential component of the mechanisms for control, oppression, exploitation and domination which the ruling classes in all societies and in all epochs use and have used consistently. But the application of culture and religion by the dominant classes with the society, as instruments of oppression and exploitation, is sustained and mediated by a network of institutions which are actively involved in the performance of a process of transmission of cultural and religious norms, customs, ethics and usages which perpetuate and reproduce the culture and religion of oppression and exploitation from one generation to another, and from one historical epoch to another. Institutions involved in this process of the reproduction of culture and religion of oppression and exploitation include, among others, the family, schools, the mass media et cetera.

The dominant classes are able and have been able to harness culture and religion for the promotion of their interests because the class which controls the means of production, the state and all its varied apparatuses is in a position to control not only the production of the dominant ideas within the society but also the cultural norms, ethics et cetera which help in the substance and consolidation of the status quo. For class domination cannot continue and reproduce itself without taking a leading role in the production and dissemination of cultural and religious norms compatible with the socio-economic system from which it derives its very existence.

Thus in a class divided society national culture and religion mean the culture and religion of the dominant or ruling class. But it is in the class interests of the ruling class that class culture and class religion are presented and articulated as national social phenomena.

For this minimizes the change of revolt and opposition from the dominated classes. And because of the national camouflage in which both culture and religion are presented in class-divided society, the result is that any cultural oppositions becomes cultural deviation and any religion becomes heresy. And the fear of being labelled a social or cultural deviant and a religious heretic in most cases compels individuals to conform to the existing cultural norms and religions dogmas and internalize them as the national cultural norms and national religious dogmas.

Intellectuals of the ruling class constitute the dominant intellectual force in the production, articulation and dissemination of the cultural norms and religious dogmas of the ruling class as well as in their consideration within the socioeconomic status. They are the cadres of the ruling class who articulate the cultural and religious sentiments, illusions, modes of thought and view of life of the ruling

class. That they may in general not be conscious of the fact that they are performing the role of producing and disseminating norms, customs and religious dogmas on behalf of the ruling and exploitative class does not contradict the fact that this is the function they perform. After all the production and dissemination of culture, cultural norm, and religious dogmas etc, occur within the production, process and its relations of production and they are therefore formed historically.

Thus in a class society the role of culture and religion is determined by the class nature of the society and the completion this role takes is determined by the content and intensity of the class struggle.

THE SOCIO ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ROLE OF CULTURE AND RELIGION

It is perhaps in the field of politics that both Culture and religion have played and continue to play a central role in the oppression and exploitation of the masses of people, society, with religion occupying the most conspicuous position in this process, In this respect Christianity emerges as one of the world's religions whose role in supporting and justifying the dominant interests of the ruling classes is indeed very conspicuous. And it has done so in response to fundamental changes in the socio-economic and political structure of the society.

For instance during the era of the slave owning society religion justified slavery. It sought to depict slavery as some form of punishment imposed on some human beings by God. St. Augustine, in his City of God, put this view very eloquently when he observed that. The prime cause, then, of slavery is sin, which brings man under the dominion of his fellow — that which does not happen save by the judgement of God. With whom is no unrighteousness, and knows how to award fit punishment to every variety of offence — and beyond question it is a happier thing to be the slave of a man than of a lust — and therefore the apostle admonishes slaves to be subject to their masters and to serve them heartily and with goodwill so that if they cannot be freed by their masters, they may themselves make their slavery in some sort free —¹⁾

Justified in this manner Christianity gave the slave masters the opportunity to exploit, abuse and dehumanize slave with impunity. For if slavery was a form of punishment visited upon some people within the Society then the slave masters had the blessing of God to consider slavery a normal societal institution. But of course slavery was neither an imposition from God nor a form of punishment but rather a product of society at a certain stage in its development. It was produced by changes in the system of production process and the

social relations of production. But the religious justification for slavery was not confined to Christianity. It permeated all religions from Greco-Roman "paganism" Buddhism, Shintoism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, Mithraism to African religions.

But since the role of religion is determined in the last instance by the mode of production the political role it plays in the society changes with the overthrow of the old mode of production and its production relations.

Thus when the slave mode of production gave way to the feudal mode of production religion not only justified the new feudal politics and its domination of the serfs, but also turned against slavery and condemned it as unreligious and in the case of Christians as unchristian. And when feudalism gave way to capitalism religion also adapted itself to the new mode of production. It adapted its terminology and its dogmas in order to suit the political dogmas of the era of capitalism.

But religion not justified political oppression and domination, it also counselled the oppressed and politically dominated to submit to the will and caprices of those in power. And Jesus Christ seemed to provide authoritative basis for this when he remarked:

Render therefor unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are Gods."²⁾

And St. Paul in his letter to the Romans, had written, perhaps the most influential political pronouncement in the New Testament when he commanded:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisted the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves are damnation — For he is a minister of God for their good. But if thou do That which is evil be afraid for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil but also; for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. "³⁾

This commandment of St. Paul became accepted as an authoritative Christian doctrine and the foundation stone for the political doctrine of the divine right of kings, and the doctrine of the

obligation of civic obedience which became an accepted Christian virtue which no Christian was supposed to question and oppose. For civic obedience to secular authority was equated with Christian obedience to God's rule. And this notion of the kings being the anointed princes of God gave political leaders in the then Christendom the licence to rule or misrule with impunity. And during the era of absolute monarchy in Europe the doctrine of the divine origin of Kings became the crucial instrument by means of which the monarchy and the aristocracy warded off rising opposition from the trodden masses of the population. But whilst the doctrine of the divine origin and right of kings was more nakedly touted around up to the late nineteenth century, it is still widely used today to provide an acceptable ideological screen against oppositions and revolution in a more sophisticated manner.

This is especially so in modern theocratic states both Christian and non-Christian. In other instances the notion of the divine origin of political leadership is reflected in the prefixing of certain states or political parties by names such as Christian Islamic et cetera.

In certain instances religion has played and continues to play an undisguised role of being the instrument of political oppression and domination. These have taken the form of, amongst others the state church as in Britain, Italy Spain Norway and Islamic States.

Thus throughout the history of human society religion has always played and continues to play the role of an instrument of political oppression and domination by providing an acceptable ideological justification for political oppression.

While it is in the field of politics that religion has displayed a more conspicuous profile, its role as an instrument of economic exploitation was and is no less significant. Indeed its very support for slavery and feudalism was a clear religion supported the economic exploitation of the subject classes within the society. This is perhaps more clearly demonstrated in Judeo Christian dogmas.

Consider for instance the statement in the Old Testament.
"For the poor shall never cease out of the land"⁴⁾

Or the supposed granting of the power of domination and exploitation over the strangers to Judah;
"And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers."⁵⁾

And during the Reformation Protestantism age substance to the rising capitalist mode of production, for Protestantism, capitalist

economic activity with its attended evils for the labouring class was seen as having been consecrated and as having spiritual value and its insistence that systematic hard work was God ordained. Thus labour irrespective of its nature became, for Protestantism, attributed with religious and ethical virtues. Thus for Protestantism the capitalist accumulation was only condemned if it led to idle luxury but where material profit was amassed through the ascetic pursuit of duty in a calling it was not only tolerated by also highly morally recommended and encouraged. But even today the church both protestant and Catholic as well in other religions continue to condone directly and indirectly the brutal exploitation of the masses both in the developed countries and developed countries.

A classic case of religion being used as an instrument of political oppression and domination in South Africa where the Church of all denominations not only provided religious and theological justification for black domination exploitation and dehumanization but also consciously collaborated with all successive white regimes right from the early days of raw colonialism until perhaps fifteen years ago when some denominations began to openly challenge the socio-economic and political status quo.

CULTURE AND RELIGION AS AN INSTRUMENTS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

But whilst the history of religion has largely been the history of religion as an instrument of political oppression economic exploitation and social degradation both culture and religion vehicles for the struggle for liberation freedom and democracy. They have done so both directly and indirectly.

This was especially so during the era of classical Christianity whose basic texts were spiced with passages which provided inspiration to the masses. For instance traces of this is found in St. Paul's letter to the Galatians when he remarked.

There is neither Jew nor Greek there is neither bond nor free, There is neither male nor female for they are all one in Jesus Christ. ⁶⁾

And of course Jesus Christ himself provided some inspiration of the poor, the down trodden, and the subject classes by presenting himself largely as a redeemer of the poor and the oppressed etc.

And typical of this image was his sermon on the Mount which ever it was first delivered, provided some fountain of hope for the dominated till today.

In recent times, instances of religion playing an important role in the struggle for freedom have become common. In most cases however the church establishment has remained largely unresponsive to the needs and cries of the oppressed and exploited. Where it has raised its voice the sounds have largely been muted.

In the same way religion has been played positive role in the struggle for freedom, culture has also been used as instrument of liberation, providing the basis for resistance in a variety of ways.

In Africa this was demonstrated by the rise of negritude in the 1940's and 1960's and black consciousness in South Africa from the early 1970's till today.

The significance of culture in the struggle for liberation in South Africa has been aptly summed up by Steve Biko, when he observed.

Our culture must be defined in concrete terms. We must relate the past to the present and demonstrate evolutions of the modern black man. There is a tendency to think of our culture as a static culture that was arrested in 1652 and has never developed since the return to the bush concept suggests that we have nothing to boast of except lions sex and drink — We must seek (through our culture) to restore to the black man the great importance we used to give to human relations. A culture is essentially the society composite answer to the varied problems of life. ⁷⁾

And Frantz Fanon has this to say about the role of culture in the struggle for national liberation.

The claim to a national culture in the past does not only rehabilitate that nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture. In the sphere of psycho-affective equilibrium it is responsible for an important change in the native. ⁸⁾

The advent of liberation theology and more specifically black theology was in response to this kind of message, namely, that both culture and religion could in the hand of the oppressed, exploited and dehumanized, become potent vehicle of liberation freedom and democracy.

But in the hands of the dominant class religion and culture become vehicles for political domination economic exploitation and social degradation. Hence religion can never remain detached from class interests and class struggles. As Engels put it more than a hundred years ago:

In the so called religious ward of the 16th century very positive material class interests were at play and those wars were class wars. If the class struggles of that time appear to bear religious earmarks if the interests requirements and demand of various classes hid themselves behind a religion screen it little changes the actual situation and is to be explained by conditions of the time (During) the Middle ages. The clergy retained a monopoly of intellectual education — and education itself had acquired a predominantly theological nature. In the hands of the clergy, politics and jurisprudence, as well as other sciences remained branches of theology and were treated according to the principle prevailing in the latter. The dogmas of the church were at the same time political axioms, and Bible Quotations had the validity of law in every court, This supremacy of theology in the realm of intellectual activities was at the same time a logical consequence of the situation of the church as the most general force coordinating and sanctioning existing feudal domination.

It is obvious that under such conditions all general and over attacks on feudalism, (were) in the first place attacks on the church, all revolutionary, social and political doctrine, necessarily become theological heresies. In order to be attacked, existing social conditions had to be stripped of their aureole of sanctity.⁹).

FOOTNOTES

1. St. Augustine City of God, P187
2. Matthew 22-21 of Mark 12-17 Luke 20,23.
3. Romans 13,17, (f) Peter 2, 13-17.
4. Deutoronomy, XV, II.
5. Isaiah, LXI, 5
6. Galations, 3,28.
7. Biko S. Black consciousness and quest for a true Humanity in B. Moore (ed) Black Theology, C. Hurst and Co. London. 1973, P45.
8. Fanon, F. the wretched of the Earth, P170.
9. Angels, F. The peasant war in Germany, PP50-56.

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POPULAR RELIGIOSITY: A LIBERATIVE RESOURCE AND A TERRAIN OF STRUGGLE.*

by Dr. Takatso Mofokeng*

1. POPULAR RELIGIOSITY- A RESOURCE IN SOCIAL STRUGGLES.

1.1. Introduction

Popular religiosity is, like all religion that has emerged in the social history of societies, a social product (Berger,P.L. 1973,13ff). It is, however, at the present stage of the historical evolvement of societies, no longer possible to determine which came first, society or religion. What is apparent, however, at this stage of history is that religion, in one form or another, is so deeply entrenched in most social formations that it seems to have preceeded the earliest human social formations and is able to outlive even the oldest of them. We are by so saying, not denying the impact of religion in the further moulding and reforming of social formations. It admittedly exercises a considerable influence depending on the society in question. It is more influential in some societies than others.

Our own operative position on this matter is that religion is undeniably a product of society. But since society as we know it is not a homogeneous entity, it would be grossly insufficient to describe it only as such. We are, as a matter of fact, obliged to go further and add that, if we view social formations in terms of people's relations to the means and processes of material production, distribution and consumption, we have to accept that society consists of different classes, and that every class would therefore have its own religion. If, as it's the case in many societies like South Africa for example, the dominant religion (Christian religion) is an imposition, then that dominant religion in society will invariably exhibit all the characteristics of a religion of the dominant classes in that particular society. And if it is true that, as Marx says, the history of society is the history of class struggle, then contemporary religion will not only be a social product. It will be the social product that invariably emerges in the class struggle that rages in society and has its place and role in the cutting edge of societal processes as that society continues to be transformed. It emerges in the course of the struggle of a particular group or class to exist, to redefine its place in society and produce the means of subsistence as well as make sense of its existence.

2. POPULAR RELIGION IN SOUTH AFRICA.

2.1 Popular religion-old and new.

Religion as we saw above, can exist in a loosely or formally organized fashion or in an informal fashion depending on the relations of

domination in society. If the colonized people are completely dominated, their religion will be fully organized according to the pattern imposed by the colonizer. (That is necessary for monitoring and control.) If the colonized people are not completely dominated, that is, if they have some social space to do as they wish, their religion will always be loosely organized because they do not need to monitor and strictly control their religion like besieged people.

In organized societies, and during our age, most religions (in our case, Christianity) are highly organized, with hierarchies and institutions. Not too many forms of religion are not formally organized because most of the inhabited world is inhabited in an organized fashion. One of the types of religion that are not highly organized and have a place only at the fringes of a world of religions even though it operates at the heart of society, is popular religion as a religion of the poor masses.

In South Africa popular religion can also be understood in terms of the above mentioned theoretical frame of reference. As a matter of fact, many writers (from B. Sundkler to I.J. Mosala) on the African Independent churches (the traditional South African institutional home of popular religion), are agreed that the overwhelming membership of these churches are from the lower working classes of the black population be they urban industrial or rural agricultural workers.¹ This religion appeals more to these classes than it does to other classes of black people. In itself popular religion provides resources that enable the groups of classes referred to above to survive the stressful social, economic, political and psychological contradictions of an emerging industrial society that is permeated by aggressive racism. It also gives meaning and strength to the struggle of these weakest and most vulnerable sectors of the black population to exist, survive and go on with their daily struggles.

In South Africa, popular religion arose historically in the earliest unpleasant colonial meeting between European colonizers who used colonial Christianity to reduce the costs of conquering and subjugating the African population.(Magubane,B.M.p.55ff.) It arose in that social context as a means of cultural resistance to incursion, dispossession, subjugation and social disruption at that particular period in the social history of our country. As the social history of our people and our country continued to change and new challenges presented themselves, this religion also changed.

Its relevance and effectiveness should as such not be measured only in terms of challenges facing Black South Africans today nor in terms of the goals they are presently pursuing, but rather also in terms of the challenges which faced the indigenous population

and the goals which they had set for themselves at the time when a particular form of that religion emerged and rose to prominence. As I.J. Mosala correctly puts it, "Man's understanding and positing of divine reality must of necessity correspond in some important ways with the level of development of historical society. Many analysts of this religion make a twofold mistake to our mind, of firstly universalizing and eternalizing social challenges and goals of a particular historical era and secondly, assessing popular religion of another era in terms of those challenges and goals that are obviously foreign to the historical period in question. The result is a dismissal of the relevance of that religious manifestation. Other analysts do the opposite. They universalize a particular type of popular religion that emerged during a particular era and use it as a framework for dealing with different challenges and goals of another period in the social history of a people. The result is also a rejection of any new form or type of popular religion that emerges as a more meaningful accompaniment of a new social struggle.

The above problem has affected the theological debate in South Africa for some time. It has led to some analysts of religion insisting that the African Independent Churches, the traditional home of popular religion in our part of the African continent, should be accepted by all Black theologians as a useful context for theological reflection for our time and place. They are consequently surprised that all prominent Black Theologians disagree with them on this score and instead assert that these churches cannot form our context for theological reflection and that the result of their theological reflection cannot be African Theology as we generally know it. They are also surprised that Black theologians would not accept those churches as the exclusive sources in the formation of Black Theology.

What needs to be remembered is that, as a social product of a people who exist at a particular epoch or period in history, every popular religion bears the characteristics of that historical period. It, in turn gives a distinct mark to the comprehensive struggle of its adherents as they define their struggle during that particular historical period. It also bears the mark of its geographical and socio-cultural and political location. This location distinguishes it from other popular religions in other times, places and countries. It is well known that in the social history of South Africa this religion has manifested itself in different forms at different historical periods. Of the many forms of its manifestation, the African Independent Churches' religion is the best known to researchers of African traditional religion.

There are other less known and less recognized forms of this religion that are more modern and more effective at the present historical

period and that exist in tension with the religion of the African Independent Churches. Like the African Independent Churches, (AIC) they too emerged as modern forms of cultural resistance to the intolerable brutalities of a racist and capitalist social order of society. They are openly committed to overthrowing the present inhuman order and bringing into being a nonracial and nonexploitative social order. Unlike the former churches and their religion, they are more visibly confrontational and their theology more abrasive and consequently more effective and popular among very large sections of the politically conscious and active black Christian people. These religious formations are consequently starting to chip away at the outer edges of AICs as young people start to experience a religion that is reconcilable with their socio-political commitment and practice.

This religion has emerged as a timely and necessary solution to the dilemma which was facing the African Independent Churches and which leads to their inability to penetrate the black youth, especially the student sections, namely how to respond to the growing and justified critique of their lack of revolutionary relevance in a situation that cries out for it. It also succeeds to provide a haven as well as spiritual resources to those revolutionary workers who are presently at the forefront of the struggle against apartheid capitalism and its state but would not contemplate abandoning the Christian religion or making the choice between it and Marxism. (By the way, we have always been puzzled by a strange phenomenon of the lack of unity among the African Independent Churches as well as their rapid proliferation as churches of the lowest classes in society and their susceptibility to frequent splits on the one side and the coherence, unity and revolutionary vigour among their membership in their industrial organizations (trade unions) and activities. We have been asking why the workers who constitute the overwhelming membership of these churches and adherents of their religion are unable to stick together in church while displaying a remarkable amount of unity when engaging in industrial confrontation.)

The 1970's and 80's have ushered in a new revolutionary popular religion that operates within the context of the struggle for liberation as it is waged on the factory floor, in the classroom, in the city streets and dusty black townships. It is communicated through new hymns and choruses with a liberative content that places God and Jesus Christ at the frontlines of struggle where the crudest brutality of the police and the army is experienced. Its places of gathering are the soccer stadium, the steps of a cathedral, the open street, the small township house, the community hall, in front of prison gates or even in front of an advancing "hippo" (a police and army

vehicle) short, any place where black people gather to bring God into their struggle. The singing of freedom songs to the rhythm of modified African dance movements (toyi toyi) which come from the depths of the black ghetto's of our land, is an integral part of the new liturgy. Like the well known AICs, the theologically untrained industrial workers and peasants form part of the large force of its religious leadership. Unlike the A.I.C's religion, it is already showing an ability to unite and keep the struggling black working people of South Africa together and provide them with the necessary religious dynamic language, symbols and values as well as defend and legitimize their dreams and aspirations against a powerful and vicious state propaganda apparatus.

What may soon give cause for concern is the durability of the high profile leadership role that is played by some powerful leaders of historical churches in some formal occasions where this religion is practised. While their integrity and commitment to the socio-political goals which are supported by this religion may be beyond question, it remains to be seen how long they will successfully withstand the tension of operating in two mutually exclusive religious contexts. It is also a question as to which side they will choose if and when forced by their institutions to do so.

It is important to note that while the historical churches are providing the high profile leadership we referred to above, they are not the alternative home for this religion. They are not a substitute to the African Independent Churches churches we have been discussing. They too, as impositions with much doctrinal irrelevancies, liturgical rigidity and inflexibility, as well as very little space for innovation, are not a suitable context for this revolutionary popular religion. This is the only conclusion one can come to when one notices with amazement how even the powerful leadership of these churches abandon them and their official theology for the periphery of the established church where this popular religion locates itself, when it is time for a revolutionary religious practice. There is a general dissatisfaction about the above state of affairs in the established churches and a resistance to the tendencies of these churches to co-opt, and redirect whatever falls into their clutches instead of accepting the critique that is represented by this religion and transforming themselves, their theology, symbols and liturgy. The frequently given official support to the liberation struggle on the part of some of these churches is not enough to remove this resistance and suspicion. The ecumenical flavour and colouring of this religion does also not permit for such an institutional change of context.

It is the religiously neutral but politically well defined space outside of the official churches, be they Independent or Historical, that con-

stitutes the context for contemporary popular religion of liberation. Here on the fringes of the institutional Church, on small soccer fields and huge stadia, in the open air, in the commuter trains that ferry the huge army of black industrial workers to work, in the small homes and shacks of workers, in the streets where committed people lock arms together in face of the vicious police and army of the racist state, there is more than adequate freedom to practise a religion that brings together and merges elements of traditional African religious practices like dancing and a high emotional spirituality, liberative elements of African culture, like a strong sense of solidarity and sharing and a theology with a distinct political, economic and social agenda. This religion is rationally informed and this we wish to emphasize, by a social analysis of society that is critical as well as appreciative of the positive role of religion in society.

This is where the line of demarcation between the new revolutionary religion in South Africa and AIC religion in other parts of Africa as well as South Africa lies. When we criticize African religion and theology, as we have done before, it is on the basis of this above mentioned role of religion and culture. To us, religion does not exist for itself. It serves a clearly and consciously defined purpose of making people human and the world a peaceful and just home. Culture is also not the central concern of religion nor the goal to be pursued and realized. It is a source from which we tap what is needed for the enhancement of the struggle for liberation and justice.

2.2. Popular religion, mobilization and struggle

In a class and racist society, popular religion as a religion of the oppressed black people who constitute the overwhelming majority of the population, has to operate on the side of the oppressed and with their interests at heart and perform several functions.

Operating in the sectors of the population with a low level of literacy and lack of formal analytical skills, makes it incumbent upon the religious protagonists to utilize the tools of such religion together with formal sociological ones and publicly, in a prophetic fashion as well as that of the African songoma (spirit medium), analyze the societal processes and dynamics in order to enlighten the oppressed through the medium of a religious language they understand. It is necessary for them to clearly understand what God says about their situation and conditions of enslavement as well as God's involvement in social struggle and their place, role and participation in the light of God's involvement in their social struggles. This analytical work constitutes part of the sermon of the preacher.

All the preachers of this form of popular religion perform this function as a matter of necessity. Popular religion also functions

polemically in a religious field where the religion of the powerful and the rich claims hegemony. Its claims of exclusive ideological rule over the hearts and minds of the oppressed and dispossessed have to be challenged and denied openly and in public. In such circumstances, it is part of the struggle for religious freedom which is fought simultaneously with that for concrete freedom to enter this terrain and contest the exclusive claims of custody over religious truth that is made by the religion of the oppressor. This religious polemic against the religion of the powerful and the rich also serves as a necessary process of deligitimation of the right of the powers that be to rule with God's blessing. It strips their power of all religious protection, thereby removing all fear and respect for it. When popular religion, as a religion of the huge masses of oppressed people who are hungry for freedom, it can invariably become a very successful instrument of mobilization and legitimation as well as a source of cohesion and empowerment in the struggle for liberation of oppressed groups and classes.

3. POPULAR RELIGION: A TERRAIN OF STRUGGLE.

There is historically, overwhelming evidence to the fact that historical Christianity, conservative and progressive, as a Christianity that shares a common history of imposition on the colonized and dominated people also shares a common intolerance of every indigenous effort at religious creativity. Both wings of colonial Christianity have a hegemonic intolerance of other religions in their conquered spheres for influence. They consequently regard popular religion that exists as a cultural creation of conquered and vanquished people, as a great threat and a challenge to their long established regimes of truth and territorial spheres of influence and will oppose it as fiercely in the name of orthodoxy, as the state does, in the name of religious uniformity, law and order.

As we have just pointed out, these two powerful social institutions (the racist state and the historical church) provide different reasons for their common intolerance of popular religion. That the reasons for intolerance are different, does not make any difference as far as their actions on the religion of the masses are concerned. They both dislike it and combat it, using different means because they are both powerful institutions with a long history of periodical cooperation in certain ventures, in societies with a colonial past. In South Africa, Christian churches and other religious forces and institutions that are ideologically aligned to the state and share common material interests among themselves with the state, namely: maintenance of white superiority in politics and economic sphere, have operated against popular religion of the masses because it posed as a prophetic threat. This is among other factors, what prompted the emergence of the Kairos document with its severely

critical analysis of the church and theological situation and fierce attack on the theology of the church and the state.

We should realize that popular religion as a means of psychological and spiritual survival under conditions that are adverse to the survival of the weak and poor in society, will obviously be viewed with great suspicion by the powerful. As a form of cultural resistance to an order of society that does not promote the welfare of the underdogs it will inadvertently attract the attention of the state that is always coopted by the powerful ideological and economic forces in capitalist societies. The state is able to see very clearly that it does not perform an ideological role that is reconcilable with the one reformed by the institutionalized churches nor operate with the same kind of rules and regulations that allow for easy monitoring and control. As a religion that is not highly rationally organized like the historical churches, it is also difficult to bring under state control and manipulation because its programmes and course of action are not very predictable.

In South Africa the state has decided to make a direct entry into the sphere of religion, thereby violating its own rule of the separation of religion and politics. The purpose for this entry is nothing but to contest and, if possible, win the ideological space in which popular religion informs and controls, as it were, the hearts and minds of the lowest people in South African racist and capitalist society. This programme is carried out with a two pronged course of action. The state has launched a widely and highly publicized campaign of criticism of mass religion and its high profile leadership in a well calculated effort of deligitimation. It is clear that the ultimate aim is to cut off this mass religion from mass political action in order to deprive the latter of religious backing by the large force of black Christians.

The next form of state combat in which some conservative churches lended a hand to the state was that of trying to win over some elements of formally organized African Independent Churches (AICs) to their fold and using them against the other black church people and religious organizations. We have recently seen the appointment of bishops in the AICs who are well disposed to the government and their very swift rise to powerful positions within these religious organizations. They have access to state run and controlled television and radio which other black mass religious organizations do not have. They use religious language for the benefit of the racist state and against the best interests of our oppressed people. They also use the state communications media to delegitimize the struggle for liberation and cut off the connection between black Christianity and its social base in the black community and replace it

with a reactionary piety with no social commitment to the struggle of the oppressed. The former state president P.W.Botha cultivated cordial relations with some AIC leadership and actively participated in some of their huge religious festivals which were televised. In that way, an attempt was made to bring popular religion within the ideological network of the state as well as link it with the governments' social programmes which are unpopular among the black masses. The state is giving financial encouragement to the formation and facilitation of black gospel musical groups with the aim of co-opting black religious music for use against black people's historical project of liberation.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The above exposition on popular religion leads us to several conclusions, some of which are the following.

4.1. Popular religion is a very significant phenomenon which cannot be wished away nor ignored by those who are committed to the course of justice for the oppressed and the poor.

4.2. The oppressed will not be left alone to develop their own religion and forms of worship.

4.3. Popular religion as a growing force in the ongoing ideological contest, will never be free from attempts to co-opt it for use as an ideological weapon by the powerful in society.

4.4. That Steve Biko was right when he said that the most potent weapon in the hand of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. It is therefore imperative for the mass organizations of the oppressed to develop ways of actively defending and protecting popular religion against co-optation and manipulation by the enemies of the oppressed.. They should regard popular religion as a liberative resource that can be harnessed to facilitate the process of liberation as well as a terrain of struggle for control of ideological resources of the oppressed.

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**TOWARDS A WOMANIST THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION IN
SOUTH AFRICA: BLACK DOMESTIC WORKERS
AS A CASE STUDY
by Jacqueline William***

WHO ARE YOU? Who are you? I am a Woman Who bears the children Who brings the children up in this country.

What is your profession? I've got one important role to play not a profession I am a mother

My children are doctors Nurses, academics, farmworkers of this country Ministers of Parliament, soldiers and police, to name a few and I must be brave

Why must I be brave? When my child is forced to overwork himself When my child is made a slave When my child cannot decide for himself When my child is forced to join the army and fight for this country where his rights are not respected When my child is turned into a dog That bites the hand that feeds it It must give support I am a woman Who builds the nation Who is not afraid to shout forward to the freedom of my children

I am a woman who marches on to Pretoria on the 9th August

I am a woman Who is still fighting Cause I am a brave Woman

My offspring are stronger than me For they have sucked fertile milk from the bravest of the brave women In poverty and in richness and in war I am still a woman And I will remain a brave woman

My role shall never be changed I am a woman Who is not afraid to shout

Forward to the freedom of my children! Forward to the people's liberation! Forward to the freedom of our country!
(Roseline Naapo)

I would like to suggest that the following questions put so well by a fellow South African are often at the back of the minds of black South African women as they are involved in the struggle on a day to day basis.

I wonder which of the many oppressions in my femaleness and in my blackness weight 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?

It is also true that different people come to different answers as they struggle with these questions. The answers depend on the dominant consciousness of the person at different moments in the struggle for liberation in South Africa.

Most literature that looks at the conditions of the domestic worker within the South African context would agree with the following statements:

Domestic workers and farm workers are the most oppressed and most exploited group of all workers in South Africa. They are not protected by any laws and employers can therefore pay them and treat them as they please.³ There is no minimum wage for domestic workers. Wages are decided by the employers and they vary a lot. In 1981 the average wage for domestic workers was about R32,00 a month (If the cost of food and housing was included it increased to R59,00).

If the above is true why do black women in South Africa continue to do these degrading and dehumanizing jobs? The basic reason is that the South African socio-political system is built in such a way that the minority white South Africans have tremendous power over the bodies of black people, their land and also all other resources in the country, whether they are economic, religious, political or social. Furthermore, the educational system and its possibilities for black people in South Africa are built in a way that makes it very difficult for black people to move out of these service roles. These prescribed roles have been legitimated by White Theology and education. The gospel that first came to our shores with Dutch and British colonialism was a gospel that justified and legitimised colonialism, imperialism and European superiority. Despite their barbaric methods and attitude the colonisers firmly believed that what they were bringing to this part of the world was civilization and the basis of this civilization was the message of Jesus Christ.⁵

The purpose of all the social economic, political and religious structures was to ensure a smooth and efficient way of dispossessing black people of their land and exploiting them. This was very successful, and by the middle of this century 87 percent of the land was in white hands and only 13 percent was and still is at the disposal of the black majority that comprises 79 percent of the nation. This meant that people were forced from their land into ghetto's and absorbed as labourers into the capitalist economy in whose interest is not the well-being of the people of South Africa,

but maximization of profits for the world capitalist market system. Besides being taken from their land laws were put into the South African statutory books that restrict the movement of black people in a very real and effective way. All these restrictions have made black people feel like strangers in their own land.

Besides being alienated from their land black people's education was created, not to promote their interests but so that they could be of service to the white minority. We see below the kind of mindset that went into creating education for the indigenous people:

The school for the children at (Teopholis) must eventually be of advantage to us, as they teach them to speak, read and write English. They will, if taught industrious habits, be useful to us as servants. ...it is altogether an interesting sight, so many little black creatures brought into a state of civilization and improvement.⁶

White rule since especially the earlier part of the first half of this century has been particularly devastating to the rights of women. This damage to the rights of domestic workers (black) was not a marginal or indirect consequence of the simple process of industrialization and urbanization, but a result of deliberate policy and calculations.

About a century ago most of the black South African women were rural women, involved in agriculture. They ploughed land, grew crops and cared for their children as well as made the things they needed for their homes.⁷ With the discovery of gold in the Transvaal, urbanization began to take place in a very rapid fashion. This meant that more and more men were needed in the mines. To facilitate the capitalists (indigenous people at this time were still on their land and could live off the land as they had done for centuries before). Those in authority began to enforce laws on the peasants that forced them off their land. The indigenous people had to pay hut and cattle taxes. This they were not allowed to pay in kind but with money which they could only get by working within the capitalist system. Stringent and harsh laws were enforced which forced the peasant from the land. More and more men left the rural areas, to work in the mines but they were not able to take their families with them. (This was against the Law).

These government labour policies treated these migrants as single men and therefore with no benefits going to their families. They could also go only to places which were allocated to them by the authorities. Their wives could only visit them with special permission. Many of the women went to the towns and cities anyhow. They did this at great risk of imprisonment. When women did arrive in

the cities, the only jobs available for them were those entailing domestic work.

In the 1930's life in the rural areas became more oppressive and intolerable for several reasons. One of the key reasons being the gross exploitative Land Act of 1913, and 1933. Very few rural people could survive by farming. They had to rely on money to buy food and other things but there were not many paid jobs in the reserves. And the money black migrant workers earned in the town was too little to support their families in the rural areas.⁸

During this time black women moved into the urban areas in large numbers. (Even now, the only job that the rural peasants (women) can get in the cities is that of domestic work). Many of these women were not in the cities legally and therefore stood continuously in danger of imprisonment. The men who came to the cities earlier were classified legally and treated as single persons and had to live in single men's hostels. The state did not provide any housing for black South African migrant workers as families, forcing black South African women to seek shelter illegally. The discriminating nature of the law forced white people who required their services to act as if the black South Africans were not part of the town community.

Most women who came to the cities were then forced to do domestic work because white homes were the only places where they could have a job and accommodation at the same time: "sleep-in jobs". Because of the above, the relationship between domestic workers and their employers whom they called ("Master" and Madam" even to this day and their employers call them "boy" and "girl") is very oppressive. The conditions of their employment are not protected by the law. These women work very long hours. It looks like a modern day type of slavery. One worker had the following to say about the work schedule in 1984.

"I work very hard. I must start work at seven o'clock in the morning and I finish at 8.30 pm after they have finished their supper and I have to wash up the dishes. Every Friday I have to work until 10 pm, because my madam has people for supper. On Saturday nights I have to come in and look after the children, because the madam and master go out. I don't get paid any extra money for doing it."⁹

There are also those women who have to start their day even earlier than this. These women who do "sleep-in" jobs live in the backyards of their employers and are on call for 24 hours a day. They also do not get much time off. Most domestic workers agree that they do not have much time for themselves, especially during their working day. The following statement by a worker is more or less

universal.

“I stop to drink a cup of tea in the morning for five minutes. I don’t eat any breakfast. After I finish cleaning at 1.00pm I cook my food and eat lunch. I must be back inside the house at 1.30 to wash the lunch dishes. I eat supper after I knock off.”¹⁰

Most of the domestic workers get either the whole of Thursday off or half of it.

This is an important point, because it is on this day that the mothers’s unions in most of the black churches meet. It does not matter at all in which denomination you are. These mothers union groups are normally interdenominational.

In a survey done amongst domestic workers they came to the following conclusions. Most of these women are not satisfied with their jobs and their lives. Most of these women feel that they are the slaves of their employers. They feel pushed around. One writer comes to the following conclusions after an indepth study on domestic workers’ situation:

“While there is much in the domestic servant’s situation which is suggestive of slavery this study suggests that domestic servants are most accurately to be viewed as trapped workers. They are trapped in a situation of subjugation and immobility within which they are subject to intensive exploitation. Such exploitation is evident in the low wages which ensure physical survival but little more their long hours of work and lack of paid holidays; their deprivation of family and social life, their low status; lack of job satisfaction; unsatisfactory relationship with their employers absence of legal protection; and lack of collective bargaining and workers rights this objective exploitation is expressed in the workers sense of being a slave of relative deprivation of leading wasted lives which they are powerless to change.”¹³

She ends this part with the words of Thackeray in his novel *Vanity Fair*: “The worst tyrants for women are other women.” And then concludes with the following words: (In her ninth chapter she deals with the self image of the domestic worker.)

“Certainly the institution of domestic service allows for a measure of domestic tyranny, however it is not individuals that this study is attacking. These domestic tyrants are also in a very real sense, victims of structures.”¹⁴

BLACK WOMEN AND CHRISTIANITY

We shall now look at Christian songs which these women sing.

(It is important to note that most of the mother in the women's group of the black churches are domestic workers).

SONGS and HYMNS

A. Translation:

usemhlabeni while on earth Baweledi, baweledi baweledi they are across (the river) Ikanan, Ikanana, Ikanana Canaan, Canaan, Canaan Usebenze, usebenze, usebenze, work, work, work engunaphakade Which I love Itemba lam My trust Ndonyuka nalo I will rise with it Ndingene endumisweni And enter into the kingdom.

B.

Uthando luka baba The love of the Father Lunjengolwandle bo Is like the ocean Lubanzi lujulile It is wide and deep Luyazeka yini pho You can not tell Lwafinyela kimi It came to me Ngisesemhlabeni While I was on earth Alwase lwangadlulu It never passed me Lwangisindis It saved even me. Obaba niujabonga Oh Father I than you nangenhliziyo yami With all my heart Sengiyavuma ngati I now agree Ungusindisi wam With love in my heart Ngizo kwethemba njalo I will always trust you

Ngisemhlabeni As long as I am on earth Ngizoukhonza futhi I will also worship you ngothando enwiziwen with love in my heart

C.

Uthando lwakhe, uthando lwake, (hisher) love is wonderful Utandi lwakhe luyamangalisa

Sihambanaye We go (walk with itherhim sihlala naye We sit with itherhim Silala naye We sleep with himither Sivuka naye We rise with ithimher

D.

Igama lika Jesu Kristu malibongwe Igama lika Jesu Kristu malibongwe Malibongwe malibongwe Malibongwe malibongwe

Translation:

The name of Jesus Christ should be praised The name of Jesus Christ should be praised Should be praised, should be praised Should be praised should be praised.

E.

Senzenina, senzenina? What have we done, what have we done? Senzenina, Senzenina? What have we done, what have we done? Senzenina, senzenina? What have we done, what have we done?

Senzenina, senzenina? What have we done, what have we done?

Sono sethu babumnyama Our only sin is that we are black. Sono sethu babumnyama Our only sin is that we are black. Sono sethu abumnyama Our only sins is that we are black. Sono sethu babumnyama Our only sin is that we are black.

F.

Thuma mina Send me Thuma mina Send me Thuma mina Nkosi yam Send me my Lord Ngiya vuma I agree Ngiya vuma I agree Ngiya vuma Nkosi yam. I agree my Lord

G.

Ngenendwawo yam I have my place Ndawo Yam ndawe yam My place, my place Ndawe yam My place Ndawe yam yokuthandoza My place where I can pray. Yiyo le It is here Yiyo le, yiyo le It is here Ndawo yam, yukuthandoza My place where I can pray Ndiwe thuba lam I have my time Thuba lam, thuba lam My time, my time Thuba lam My time

Yilo leli This is it Yilo leli, yilo leli This is it, this is it Thuba lam lokhuthandasa This is my time to pray

Thuba lam lokhuthandasa This is my time to pray Ngino Jesu wam I have my Jesus

Jesu wam, Jesu wam I have my Jesus I have my Jesus Jesu wami engimthandayo I have my Jesus whom I love

Nguye lo He is here Nguye lo nguye lo He is here he is here Jesu wam, engimthandayo Jesus whom I love.

H.

Tshollela Moya Pour down your Spirit wa hao Jesu On us Jesus Tshollela Moya Pour down your Spirit Wa hao Jesu On us Jesus

Dipelong tsa Oh pour it Rona Jesu into our hearts, Jesus Tshollele Moya Pour down your Spirit Wa hao Jesu On us Jesus

I.

Baya khala baya khala They are crying Emakhaya at home

Khulunkhuli upetwa God we are starving Indlala zethu

Shipa mandla okusebenzela Give us strength to work Ingani zethu For our children

zafa zaphela we-bakithi Oh my God our Children Ingani zethu our dying

Lalelani lalelani we ma Africa Listen listen Africa

Sebezeduza sebezeduza They are near they are near bazo buya they will come

J.

Ha le mpotsa tsepo yaka I you ask me from whence Ke tsa re he Jesu Come my hope, I'll say Jesus Kelapetse ho mongale I miss my master (Jusus) Ha hae e haeso His home is my home

Le re ke boneng ho yena You ask me what I have seen in Ke bona phomolo Him, I've seen rest. Thabo e leng ho Morena They joy that is in the Lord Ha ena phetoho Never changes

Kana ka nyorelwa botle I cone longed for perfection Ra tswatswa ke botla And I was searching Ka tsielwa ke ntho tsohle Everything confused me Ka fellwa ke matla I was powerless

Jwaka ke kgotswe ka mehla Now I am finally convinced Mohau wa Modimo Of God's Mercy Ke gadile ha iketla I am at ease Thehepong ya hodimo In his trust

INTERPRETATION OF THESE SONGS AND HYMNS

Song G speaks about a space, a place and a time when these women pray to their Jesus. Why place, space and a time? It is also written in the first person possessive case. This is very unusual because these women are generally very family oriented in their daily life, and are also willing to even die for their kin. This emphasis on space, time and a place is very paradoxical, because these women in their daily life do not have time for themselves. The blatant fact about the life of a domestic worker in South Africa is that all of the time of their lives is taken up with the whims and needs of the white people. Besides not having time for themselves their ability to have physical space also depends on how obedient they are to their employers. This preoccupation with time and space is very real, it comes out of their lives that are crowded with others. It also comes from a group of women who have not only been marginalized in society, but nearly made invisible in their own communities because they are very seldom with their own community. They spend most of their daily life being looked down upon. This issue of space is not only an issue with which domestic workers struggle. It is related to the struggle of all the black people in South Africa. We are hungry for our land. It is a known fact that 87 per cent of the land in South Africa is in the hands of the white minority and the rest is allocated to the black majority. We are a people who crave for space. Lack of housing is a burden and a fact of life in our country ever since urbanization because of the oppressive laws against black people.

This lack of space and time for the self in community is an issue that a womanist theology needs to address if it wants to be relevant to black women. A theology of land needs to be created. This is an issue that has been raised by black theologians in South Africa but not in a systematic fashion.

Another issue raised in this song is its emphasis on the "here and now". It is not about having time and space in the "life hereafter". It is dealing with time and space in the "here and now" and is claiming, in the spiritual realm, this earthly realm, that which they do not physically have, to help them survive this very life-denying life.

Song J is another variation on this topic. Some of the key words in this song are: rest, home, hope, powerless and trust. This idea of seeing a home, of having a home in which a person can find rest and feel secure is a theme in this song. It is interesting to see how the song answers the question in the first stanza concerning hope. Hope is linked with having a home, a home with Jesus who never changes. The issue about Jesus' changelessness is in the second stanza. In South Africa black people can own the house they are in. But until very recently, the land on which the house stands could not belong to the owner of the house. All these small laws in the statutory books of South Africa are there to cause more insecurity in the already insecure lives of black people. Once more, these women are claiming that security in their religion. They are claiming it from their Jesus who is concerned about their time and space.

The idea of trust in these songs is very important. From this random sample of songs we have four (A,B,G and J) out of the ten songs dealing with the issue of trust. Why this preoccupation with trust? It is my understanding that the relationships between the domestic workers and their employers are not based on trust. There is a deep sense of distrust between these different groups. A distrust on the side of the oppressed workers, because of their experience of exploitation, dispossession and exploitation from the hands of white people. This distrust on the part of their employers is manifested because they know how they are not treating black people justly and consequently expect them to revolt or protest. In the general South African society there is basic distrust against the political, economic, religious and social systems. These songs raise the issue of trust because human beings have a basic need to trust and to be trusted. It is only in this relationship of trust that a person and a people can have "rest".

The "rest" these songs are taking about is not rest in a psychological sense. It is rest that has some physical dimensions to it. They need to rest because they are overworked and their bodies

are in need of rest. These women are talking about something very physical. In their songs we see a theology that deals with the body in a very real and day to day basis. Take for example song C. This song deals with a God whose love has to be seen in those ordinary events in life, like sitting, walking, sleeping, and rising. There is no time to find God anywhere else . God is in every moment of life. God is embodying their lives and they are embodying God's life.

Song E and I are lamentations. They are very popular, not only in women's groups but also in the black nation as a whole. Song E is a very sad song. It talks about the particular sin that we as black people have committed that is putting this oppressive curse on us. As the women are searching for our sins, they can come up with nothing but the fact that their blackness is their only sin. This song refers to crisis of identity. How do we deal with something so natural to ourselves: our blackness? Is it a curse? Is it inferior? The song does not answer these questions. It only raises the issues related to blackness in South Africa and leaves them with the community to deal with. A womanist theology needs to take this issue of identity very seriously if it wants to be relevant to black women.

The second song of lamentation I, deals with the death and starvation that Apartheid causes. In this song when reference is made to those who will be coming back, it is speaking about those young people who had to go into exile as well as those comrades who were imprisoned for their political activities by the South African authorities. Dr. Nelson Mandela is an example of one of the imprisoned ones who are referred to in this song. So, even if this song is a lament, it is also a song of hope. A hope that these sons and daughters of South Africa will be coming back to be part of the freedom of the people. It is interesting to note once more in this song that those who sing the song are asking their God to empower them to "work" for their children. It is not an escapist theology. It is a theology that takes seriously the concreteness of the power of God through the Holy Spirit in their every day lives. This would suggest that a womanist theology in South Africa needs to take the concept of "Emmanuel- God with us- in our midst seriously.

The last point that I want to make by looking at these songs is their concept of the Holy Spirit. Any theology that does not take the reality of the Holy Spirit in the lives of these women very seriously will not be able to understand or speak to the faith and life of black women in South Africa.

In conclusion, we wish to summarize by saying that a theology that wants to be relevant to black women in South Africa needs to address the following issues:

(a) Land; (b) Identity; (c) Interpersonal relationships; (d) Hope; (e) Emmanuel — God with us; (f) God's power in the 'here and now'; (g) The Holy Spirit as a source of power; (h) Work.

It is only as we take the above seriously that we can have a theology that will operate as a tool of empowerment to women in the struggle for liberation of Azania.

NOTES:

1. See Speak: no 25, 1989. This is a poem written by a South African Woman. Rosaline Naapo. p. 2.
2. Laurretta Ncobo, p. 1.
3. Working Women. p.30.
4. Ibid.
5. A. Nolan. p.1.
6. Jacklyn, Cock. 1979. p. 19.
7. Working Women. p. 15.
8. Ibid
9. Ibid. p. 31.
10. Jane Barrett. p. 31.
11. Ibid. p. 32.
12. Ibid.
13. Preston-white. p.
14. Jacklyn. Cock. 1983. pp. 279-299.

*1. R./Rand, which is the South African currency. At the moment there one dollar is about two and a half rand. Before the eighties it was quite strong compared to the dollar, one to one. In 1981 it was about one dollar and twenty cents to the rand.

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THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN THEOLOGY by Dr.Gwinyai Muzorewa*.

INTRODUCTION:

While some theologians are still working hard to establish the origins, source and method of African theology others are interested in the future of the enterprise and that is now. It lies in the present imaginative African interpretation and application of the gospel. African theology is emerging from a new African hermeneutic because the questions it addresses are African and the answers have to speak to the African situation in the light of the Word of God. When a theology that is relevant to the African social context is evolved, then we have an authentically African Christian voice, whose primary responsibility is the African situation and accountability to God.

African theology must be defined in a Third World context using a Third World language and idiom. The Western oriented traditional Christian theological language has not adequately met the needs of the developing nations. That is why it did not challenge colonialism, slavery and imperialism which was at its peak at the time that missionary ventures were also at their highest point! In fact, in some cases the missionaries exporting western theology rode in the same vessels to Africa with the colonialists. The former came to preach the gospel (which liberates), while the latter came to colonise, enslave and exploit. Furthermore, the missionary was often charged with responsibility to pastor both the colonialists and their subjects. Here the missionaries wasted the opportunity to preach human equality, dignity and justice. In retrospect we can certainly perceive how Western theology was completely irrelevant to the African situation. So we need now to do an African theology that meets the needs of the people who are struggling daily to recuperate from colonial and foreign economic, legal and government systems planted by the white people.

In fact the Christian traditional theologies have tended to be very dominant and they do not speak for the oppressed and marginalised. It is only within the last three decades that Christian theology has addressed the concerns of the oppressed and the poor through various liberation theologies in Latin America, North America, Asia and Africa and some of this has had to deal with the liberation of theology itself from the traditional Christian doctrines which themselves can be oppressive.¹

African theologians feel that they are beyond the stage of quibbling over the definition of African theology.² What we are doing now is to concentrate on developing relevant theological doctrines that

speak to the soul of the African people. Such doctrines can only form a genuine content of African theology if they enhance the African life wholly. Our theology cannot neglect any aspect of life because the African world view is comprehensive.

While there is much written of African theology, very little has been written on "The Future of African Theology."³ True up until the beginning of the 80's African theology has mainly been concerned about its definition, nature and method. However, the past and the future also help to sharpen the definition of the present, hence this prognosis. Therefore a discussion on the future of African theology is quite appropriate at this point.

J.H. Cone's article which was presented at Accra in 1977 at the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians was prophetic.⁴ Until then and since then, to my knowledge, there is not much written on the subject as yet by an indigenous African.⁵ It is our estimation that all African theologians should be challenged by these words: If by African theology we mean an interpretation of the Christian Gospel in the light of the political and cultural situation in Africa, then it is obvious that the future of this enterprise belongs primarily to Africans alone."⁶

This emphasises the importance of a contextual approach to theology. Africans primarily are charged with this responsibility. However, this need not brand African theology "exclusive" since Christianity should be and is inclusive. But as far as a theological perspective goes, we believe that any genuine universal theology must come from local observations, reflections, articulation and even speculation which may manifest themselves in other parts of the world.

The definitions offered by various theologians may be helpful in understanding what is presently regarded as African theology. However, most of these definitions tend to stifle the development of the "future African theology," because they tend to point away from our contemporary social context in Africa.⁷ Shortly, I shall offer a definition that prognosticates African theology as I envisage it.⁸ My definition basically affords a theological continuity with traditional theology in Africa without itself being a thing of the past. We do not advocate returning to the past but at the same time we cannot divorce ourselves from God's revelation just because it is pre-christian. In fact a backward drift is unnecessary because what God reveals continues to live.

In addition to a new definition of the future African theology, I also suggest three elements that I believe will constitute a future African

theology:

- 1) a contextual indigenization and universalization of the Gospel,
- 2) an African hermeneutical principle, and
- 3) an African Christian authentic expression of the faith and the consequent commitment.

It is fairly obvious that if African theologians attempt to advance into the future using borrowed theological concepts and tools such as Western Philosophy, they can be sure to distort the possibilities that the future has in store for them. I believe that African theologians need to review some of the tools they have used since the rise of African theology as well as consider other tools they could use in order to ensure originality, continuity, authenticity and relevance. The problem with the present definitions is that they have been inherited from the Western Christian tradition. These naturally were not intended to serve African religious needs. And consequently using borrowed theologies will only help Christianity to remain foreign to the African people. This reduced the degree of commitment to Christ among the African believers.

THE DEFINITION OF A FUTURE AFRICAN THEOLOGY

a. The Present Definitions

Because the African is first a human being and then a believer, a realistic and pragmatic definition of African theology must first reckon with the fact of human existence, rather than confession of faith. In placing human existence prior to faith, African theology focuses on the importance of belief in the Power that creates and sustains the African people. After all, does our Christian faith not serve to ensure our eternal survival? Christ came so that those who believe in Him may be empowered to overcome any destructive forces that threaten eternal, spiritual as well as physical survival. Human existence is what God gave and loved first, then gave Jesus Christ the founder of Christian faith.

Indeed, even the religious sense of absolute dependence on spirits and divinities is based on the premise that survival comes first. Since many Africans live at a subsistence level, most of their actions are motivated by the will and desire to survive both physically and spiritually and then spiritually. This is the human situation to which Christian theology must speak in Africa, and seek an answer to the question of human survival in both forms.

It is for this reason that African theology must speak for the poor and the suffering masses. I content that any definition of African theology that does not focus on this note of a wholistic survival, is mere intellectualism that only seeks an academic status and approval and does not serve any salvific purpose for the African.

Unfortunately several definitions on African theology lack this essential pragmatic dimension. Therefore they must be marginalised.

Before we scrutinise some of the definitions, we need to make clear what we mean by a definition. We refer to a statement that expresses in the fewest and clearest words possible the core of what African theology is. Such a statement must certainly constitute the key to what theology is, as well as its perimeters and or theological horizon. A definition marks, as it were, the boundaries within which all our theologising is done. For me, this is what a useful definition ought to do and to be. It is on the basis of this understanding that I critique the present definitions, and construct what I believe is an adequate (though not definitive) statement. Now, let us review selected definitions.

For instance to simply say that African theology is, according to John Mbiti, "a theological reflection and expression by African Christians" fails to describe what is actually happening in African Christian communities.⁹ Such a definition is very general and fails to define the core and the perimeters of African theology which would distinguish it from Western traditional theology which has remained "a resident alien" in the hearts of the majority of the African Christians.¹⁰

The major problem we experience with this definition is that it does not seem to be based on an African epistemology since many African Christians are academic and theological products of the West. Most Africans are currently turning to the traditional religious beliefs for clarification on Christian doctrine because the former speak to the African in a more concrete and spiritual manner than the latter in its current form. Also, the movement from the mission churches to an indigenous African Christianity is due to the fact that Christianity has, by and large, remained "alien" to the African believers. Christianity is "alien" when the gospel is presented with Western cultural presuppositions. When this happens, it is necessary to screen the cultural sheath so to speak and remain with the essential gospel and present it within indigenous cultural presuppositions. We realise that this process is not as easy as changing clothes but it is absolutely necessary that it should be done.

Also, such a "theological reflection" is not only artificial and specifically academic but is abstract. It lacks the survival dimensions when it is done by people who are not struggling to survive, because they do not have this experience. I contend that such a definition does not stem from the African soul if it is based on Western Philosophy. Furthermore, it seems to emanate from a non-African cosmology. The mind which does the reflection has been trained to operate with western cultural values which are primarily

good for the Westerners. However, this is not to reject everything that is western. An African could benefit from Western tools provided one uses them with discretion. One has to make a conscious effort to discard a western world view and operate with an African one.

A useful definition of African theology is one that represents a theological continuity between African traditional religion and Christianity because that is the spiritual journey which the soul has travelled and must journey through. African theologians who are drawing theological raw material from traditional religion inevitably reflect on the meaning of both revelations in order to construct a theology which is relevant to them.

Furthermore, Mbiti's definition does not say what the African Christian reflects upon. But if we assume that it is "a theological reflection" upon the Christian faith, a difficulty arises because African Christian believers are employing their traditional ways and concepts of God in their Christian worship. For example, the use of traditional instruments is becoming more prevalent in the church today than two decades ago. Also many Africans have not set out to define God because they rely on their traditional knowledge.

Therefore, since most Africans believe that they can better understand the faith through the framework of their indigenous religious beliefs, there should be traditional religious ingredients in the definition of African theology. It seems to me that including some traditional religious ingredients in the definition of African theology is one effective way to create a genuine Christian theology which reflects African thinking. It is self-evident that Christianity took hold in the west because the gospel from the East was planted in the matrix of Western Philosophy, Psychology and culture. Mbiti's definition does not take cognisance of African traditional religious beliefs although he knows that these beliefs still inform many African Christians. Lastly, Mbiti does not mention the scriptures (unless Mbiti assumes the use of the bible).

If African theology is 'a theological reflection' upon what God is doing among the Africans, then the element of survival must be highlighted because the majority of African people live at a subsistence level. Survival is their greatest concern. They believe that God helps them to survive. Most of the events in African life are to be interpreted in terms of whether they enhance life. Therefore any serious theological reflection has to involve what God is doing to make it possible for the people of Africa to survive.

Both Christian and traditional believers share the common concern for survival. Therefore what God is doing in history among the

Africans, must be interpreted in terms of survival not just Christian doctrine. Such an African interpretation of survival constitutes a new and important element in the doing of African theology. To my surprise most of the present definitions of African theology do not even mention survival. When it is mentioned it is placed in the extreme periphery as if it is incidental.

Another artificial concept which is used in an attempt to define African theology is the phrase "African Christian Communities."¹¹ These communities are first concerned with survival and Christianity is hoped to enhance it. The Christian religion in the African context is understood to be a means to make survival possible. Consequently survival, not Christianity, is the basic cause of morality or immorality as well as reflection in an African community whether it calls itself Christian or traditional.

The so-called "Christian action" alone cannot be a sufficient basis for African theology because the current Christian code of ethics taught in our theological seminaries for instance, was established in the West to suit and regulate the demands of western culture, not African. In many cases, western morality is different from African morality, e.g. the idea of individual versus corporate responsibility. Therefore, an African community that supposedly operates on "Christian" principles (by which is meant "Western code of ethics") may in fact be living on a double standard because there is also an affinity for traditional cultural practices, especially in times of crises.¹²

The question we have to raise is: can such a theological reflection based on alien religious principles and ethics be authentically African? I contend that the definition of an African theology must be based on a realistic starting point, i.e. where the people are, rather than where they are not, or where they could be. Unless that musical note of religiosity is struck, "Christian" theology cannot touch the hearts of the millions of African "believers" even though they may fill the church registers and come to worship Sunday after Sunday.

The African indigenous church movement is considered a source for African theology mainly because it draws most of its insights from the traditional religion and culture when it indigenises the faith. Traditional religion acknowledges survival according to an African definition of the concept as its sole *raison d'être*. Therefore the above movement is a dependable source of an African theology because it is informed by both the needs of the African soul and the Scriptures. And the latter is being interpreted and appropriated by the former.

The traditional knowledge of God and the Bible are the major source of African theology which is constructed within African experience. When theologians draw on these two basic sources, the most likely result is a theology with an African perspective. The African who is primarily concerned about survival needs, is in a better frame of mind to reflect on what God is doing to enhance human survival on the continent than one who first strives to observe principles of Systematic Theology. I believe there can be no meaningful Systematic Theology without experiencing God.

God speaks to every people directly or by means which are recognised by the community to which communication is intended. But as long as Christianity is "alien," it is erroneous to base an African theology on Christian expression because such an expression is irrelevant to the needs of the African.

Another reason why an African theologian believes that the Bible and not western Christian heritage remains the most viable source of theology is that the Bible message relates to believers at their survival level. The Bible is a written history of a people who were trying hard to survive, people who believed that they survived only through the hand of Yahweh. For instance, the crossing of the Red Sea,¹³ the feeding of the four thousand,¹⁴ the raising of Jairus' daughter¹⁵ and the resurrection of Jesus Christ himself,¹⁶ illustrate how the Bible is a series of struggles where God intervened and enabled the respective communities and individuals to survive. Most of us Africans tend to identify with those desert experiences.

We must remind ourselves that although traditional religion is not informed by the special revelation (the gospel), it is traditionally held that the former remains one of the most viable sources of theology in Africa. As a matter of fact, saying that leaves us with many questions. For instance, if the God who revealed himself in traditional religion (which I wish to label general revelation) is the same as the one who revealed himself in Jesus Christ (which is generally held as special revelation) then, what sense does it make for one to convert from traditional religion to Christianity?¹⁷

Another question related to this is why theologians tend to use traditional religion only as a major part of the raw material for African theology as if to suggest that general revelation is inferior to the special revelation? It is not true that all first hand religious experience is raw material at least initially?

If the God who reveals himself in the general revelation is one with Jesus Christ (John 14:10), what do Africans look for in Christianity that they do not already have in traditional religion? The ultimate

question is, can African theology be both genuinely true to African tradition and Christianity without contradiction or compromise? These questions need to be addressed at some point.

Regarding the revelation, the questions raised is based on the presupposition that traditional religion is a "self-contained system of beliefs." It is too important to put in the periphery. I am also calling into question the Western traditional interpretation of the Trinity¹⁸ and that of the Incarnation.¹⁹ These two doctrines imply that to know the Father is to know the Son because the two are One. (I have dealt with these two doctrines in my essay on the doctrine of God)

If the quest for an African theology is a concern to create a theology and a faith that Africans can relate to naturally, why do theologians choose to assign an inferior rank to traditional religion? In most African patriarchal communities the son is only known with reference to his Father, not vice versa. Similarly, for Christianity to be really indigenised it has to be expressed through the African religious concepts since we are really seeking to understand the function of the Son through our knowledge of the Father. That is consistent with the African logic in establishing kinship relationships. So, African theologians may wish to do Christology in the light of, firstly general revelation, and then special. But is this not what the Bible does in fact? John 3:16 begins: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son ..." Logically speaking, the sentence presupposes our prior knowledge of God, and then what God did. We can truly understand what God did when we know who God is first.

However, the doctrine of the Trinity teaches that the Son and the Father are one and God is Three in One. The question that needs to be answered is this: Why do Africans convert from traditional religion (knowledge of and belief in God) to Christianity (knowledge of the Father through the Son)? When God acts in history He may be identified as the Holy Spirit, the Father or the Son as far as the Christian is concerned. But for the traditionalist, God is God. It is not true that what matters is the divine action only and not necessarily the mode of being involved because the THREE are ONE. Our major African theologians should tell us why the special revelation is to be preferred to the general revelation when our people relate a lot more readily to the latter and both are one anyway? My fear and suspicion is that the true answer lies in Africa's colonial mentality which will take a long time to get rid of. Most African Christians have been led to believe that any knowledge of God they had before Christianity was nothing more than superstitious belief which does not really help in any way. True saving knowledge of God could only come through the gospel.

I have also asked what it is that Africans look for in Christianity that is not found in traditional religion more than material artifacts that are often presented in the same package with Christ. A chapter on "The Planting of Christianity" in my book *Origins and Development of African Theology* demonstrates that materialism is a major attraction. Most Westerners cannot imagine an "abundant life" without abundant materialism. But most African traditionalists believe that if one's "spirits" are on one's side, one "shall not want."²⁰ Proof of this is manifested by the present emphasis on spirituality in the Independent Church movement where much of traditional thinking and expression is encouraged and characteristic of the movement. It is also because of this tendency to contextualise the Christian faith that the independent churches are regarded as a lively source for a theology which expresses a genuine African perspective. Thus in these churches one hears more about the work of the Holy Spirit than any other name. This is the spiritual abundance that Africans are looking for, and it is believed that material benefits will naturally follow. In saying this, we do not mean that poverty is next to piety. Africans do not glorify poverty, yet they do not believe that it is a curse either.

For the religious Africans, both materialism and spirituality flow from the same source, God. God may work through nature to provide us with shelter and food; and may speak to us through any means, even through the written word. Traditional religionists are aware of God's magnitude. They believe that God is wealthy because all creation belongs to God.

The point is, for theology to be completely African, its practitioners should prefer and develop "traditional" theological thought forms to Western ones because the African world view is not the same as the Western. And as we all know, theological concepts hold more naturally when they are developed within a people's thought forms. Even new ideas begin to be spiritually meaningful when they have been appropriated to the mind's natural thought pattern. So, with respect to revelation, African concepts of God in traditional religion can best express African concepts of the Divine who is the same God who revealed Godself in both the special and general revelation. Both revelations are equally salvific although the traditional is more relevant to African needs than special revelation in the form it is being expressed. It appears that the only reason most Africans prefer Christianity is that it was presented as a superior form of religion, yet in fact, the benefits are the same because the Benefactor is one. The existing definitions of African theology are superficial because they operate on "non-existent Christian experience."²¹ This is why a new definition of African Christian Theology is absolutely necessary. The adjective "Christian" is

necessary in order to distinguish it from African traditional theology.

b. The New Definition

African theology is a reflective interpretation of what the biblical God is doing to enhance African survival through the agency of people who are informed by Scripture and traditional concepts of God who is revealed to us through the faith and life of Jesus Christ. This definition refers to what God is doing to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked. African theology is then interpreted and understood as the truth of how life will triumph over death, in our present and future as lived out by Jesus Christ. It speaks the vernacular of the African masses because it is the language through which we express our faith. It is to articulate God's actions of grace, justice, and providence that enhance survival. Both biblical and traditional religious beliefs take the matter of survival very seriously for it is the reason for an affinity for religion. Survival in this corporal life and our spiritual bodies is a top priority in African life and thought.

To be more specific, African theology emanates from insights gained in every day incidents in our lives. For instance, one day my grandmother, a peasant, was starving to death and she walked in the woods to look for anything that providence might give. She came across a bush full of ripe wild fruit. Her conclusion was that God had heard her supplication. The Shona would say *matenga andiwona* meaning: providence has favoured me. Some may say *midzimu yangu ineni*, meaning: my guardian ancestral spirits are with me. In each case, there is an assurance of continuity between knowledge of God as a benevolent God before Christianity and after she had accepted Jesus Christ. As a first generation Christian herself this providential act did not perplex her. It only confirmed that God cares for all humanity "even the most insignificant people like me," she said.

Survival is understood to mean sustained existence even when all the odds are against it. Most Africans believe that it is God alone who ultimately sustains life. In pre-scriptural Africa, one knew that a deed was of the Creator if it enhanced one's survival. Only God is the source of the good but any number of agents may be used to deliver the goods. The African can interpret what is good news for him or her depending on whether it enhances survival. Consequently theology should offer an African interpretation of survival in the light of God's grace and justice as revealed in the Scripture (God's raising Jesus Christ from death) since one of the African attributes of God is that God is provider.

c. An African Hermeneutical Principle

The future of African theology is found in the application of a

peculiarly African hermeneutical principle to our reading and interpretation of the Bible. This will have to be imaginatively evolved in light of a new epistemology in order to construct an African theology which speaks in such a language that the suffering and the poor masses can identify themselves in it.²² Although Africans are not necessarily a peculiar race, only a peculiarly distinctive African theological perception can speak to their needs. This can happen only if a new hermeneutics develops as part of their theological methodology.

Such African theology will still be universal because it reflects upon the actions of a God who is everywhere. However, it must first address the African condition. This author contends that it is no use for a theology to be universally sound and acceptable, when it is completely irrelevant to Christian believers in the local region where it is created. J. Cone's very first statement on the future of African theology indicates the need for a peculiar African way to interpret the gospel.²³

The future of African theology is found in its creative interpretation of the gospel for the African situation and in relation to the theologies of the poor throughout the world.²⁴

I also agree with Cone that a creative interpretation of the gospel (the Bible) does not necessarily exclude the African theology's concern about indigenisation and selfhood.²⁵ In fact, it is a creative articulation of these two elements in the light of the Scriptures that will result in a peculiarly relevant and authentic theology. African theology should be created through the use of an indigenous theological methodology which is dealing with native materials such as proverbs and the African experience itself.

However, the challenge is: can African theologians use their culture, a rather exclusive phenomenon and a despised one (in the case of Africa) as the context in which the Scripture is interpreted? Can such theology be faithful to both Christendom and its local social context? That goal may be difficult to attain but theology cannot and should not settle for any type of prefabricated thinking in the interest of conformity. Only a genuinely liberated, creative African theology can deal with that tension between particularity and universality without sacrificing its authenticity.

This challenge applies not only to African theologians but to all Third World theologies. Also herein lies the future of African theology which seeks to be completely "African" and absolutely "Christlike" at once, without either of these losing its original savor. Jesus' complete humanity and divinity has set the example of this ideal state

where the creature and its creator can achieve a divine union. This is how African theology can lead us to be sanctified by God.

When Jesus Christ taught in parables he cited specific historical events with characters with definite cultural limitations. Yet the truth that he intended to convey can be appropriated in every culture. African theology would be an example of this diverse theological quality if it did not focus on Africanisation. True Africanisation is extremely important but its purpose is only to convey the gospel message to the African masses in a way that enables the people to internalise the Word. Africanisation is a means to an end. The end arrived at by a gospel related to a particular social context is a full humanity.

The challenge to African theologians is to be highly imaginative in their interpretation of the gospel so that it speaks to local communities as well as reveal the universal truth. A new hermeneutical principle facilitates the treatment of cultural values in light of the gospel so that what is cultural remains within its cultural context while the "kernel" i.e the truth is free to be incarnate in any culture. This universality and particularity of truth could be the contribution of African theology to other communities. When Christianity was planted in Africa, this distinction between Christ's truth and the cultural ramification and relevancy was not clear.

It seems to me that such theological versatility can only occur when the concepts of selfhood and Africanisation are interpreted in the light of the gospel, which faces us even today. Such an interpretation is only possible when it is done by African people who are liberated from a colonial mentality. African minds enslaved by Western theological systems must be liberated from cultural-theological provincialism, to THEOLOGY, i.e. truth. We remind ourselves that culture is not theology. However the latter may be conveyed via the former without itself becoming culture. The distinction between the two should not be compromised because it is the lack of such a distinction that was one of the major weaknesses of Christianity when it was introduced to the African communities. Consequently African theology needs to be liberated in order for it to be liberative and develop into a meaningful word of God.

d. Liberation Perspective of African Theology

As a Christocentric theology,²⁶ African theology's creative interpretation of the gospel necessarily deals with the concept of liberation because that is Christ's mission to the world.²⁷ It used to mean setting humanity free from politico-socio-spiritual bondage, liberation can also mean salvation. I believe that since salvation is a household word in the African church of which Christ is the head, liberation²⁸ used synonymously with salvation becomes a major

ingredient of African theology. Canon Burgess Carr's introductory statement of *The Struggle Continues*²⁹ properly expresses the importance of the concept of liberation in the African church. At the Lusaka Assembly, he said:

The churches discovered that 'living for Christ and no longer for themselves' meant identification with the complex of liberation struggles that are going on in Africa. But the most startling discovery was the awareness of their own need for liberation. Lusaka will be remembered as the moment in history when the churches in Africa recognised their need to be set free by Christ in order to share in His liberating and renewing activity in Africa.³⁰

Because it is christ-centered, African theology must let Christ serve the people. Liberation is the service Christ has to offer because the suffering, poor, ill, captive, hungry and naked are bound by the political economic and social structures. These are among the people whom the Son of Man came to save (Matthew 1:12b). It is rather unfortunate that the term 'Liberation' seems to be confined to 'political freedom' only. Maybe this is what is more obvious to most people, but liberation means far more than the predominant usage which is necessitated by pervasive political oppression. Black theology in South Africa believes that the major Christian emphasis in Africa, especially in South Africa, is liberation because Black people there are suffering from oppression.³¹ Liberation as defined by both the exponents of Black theology and African theology who use the term, relates to the political, economic, social and spiritual contexts.³²

This demonstrates that Black and African theologies are closely related although African theology has a particular focus in Africanisation as the manifestation of their liberation from foreign dominating powers, both in ecclesiastical and secular terms. Therefore Africanisation is a form of liberation from colonial mentality to a full humanity as stated earlier. It is also liberation from cultural limitations and deprivation. But Black Theology's primary focus is political until all Black people everywhere are politically free.

A theology of Africanisation and contextualisation seeks to interpret Christ in such a way that He sets the people free to be their real selves, having been transformed within their social context by the love and grace of God through Jesus Christ. However, in Christ these separated SELVES are united in their common faith as a new humanity. Furthermore the church in Africa is calling for a liberated theology and that is why Lusaka declared:

We must call upon the churches in Africa to allow Christ to set them free: from theological conservatism so that we can understand,

interpret apply and experience the message of the gospel afresh.³³ Thus African theologians need to liberate themselves in their process of interpreting and theologising so that they do not let the dominant Euro-American theologies continue to harness their souls and minds or cloud their vision. A new hermeneutic is the way towards the liberation of African theology.

CONCLUSION

To conclude I contend that the future of African theology lies in a liberated African theological activity, producing a theology which is liberated to be both authentically African and Christlike at once. This is the one sure way it can produce refreshing and life-giving theological insights suited to the African genius, thought-forms and life-style.

One of the tests for a truly liberated African theology is whether the indigenous African churches will accept and utilise it in the development and interpretation of their doctrines and liturgies. The indigenous churches were the first to sense a theological discomfort in the mission churches which practiced a prefabricated theology. This imported theology was suppressive and repellant to a true African spirit of worship. No wonder the independent churches are among our major sources for African theology. They have deliberately set out to worship God through their cultural expressions, disregarding Western values in liturgy, for example. African theology is tested, but not necessarily sanctioned by whether African nationalists in general and African heads of state in particular will feel that it is enhancing the process for de-colonisation and humanisation. There is an acute case of colonial mentality both in some secular institutions and some churches in Africa. Several nations would like to see the church develop a humanising theology that would either challenge or gird various ideologies in Africa today.

Somehow, the evil of the white colonial oppressors has been unfortunately inherited by their black successors in some cases. African theology could sink roots in the African soil if it would take the role of a prophetic voice seeking to humanise and enhance political reconciliation where it is needed. One way to do this is through emphasis on the African full humanity after the example of Jesus Christ who came so that we may have an abundant life.

African theology is most useful now because many Third World nations are struggling to survive. The church can revitalise the spirit of self-reliance and non-alignment without creating enemies or political friction at home and abroad. Burgess Carr's first documentary report to the All Africa Churches Conference's Assembly expressed this need succinctly.

“Reconciliation is the primary mission of the church in Africa today. We believe that God is calling His church in Africa to be a reconciling influence among our people.³⁴

This is an extraordinary challenge. Its success lies in a proper articulation of liberation which sets humanity free to be creative and not just free from oppressive forces. Finally it is hoped that the African theological and political temper will gradually pave a way for the church in Africa to continue to be prophetic in the continent. If the church fails to prove to be relevant to the need in Africa, it may be regarded as a mighty force that fosters colonial mentality, continue spiritual and psychological enslavement, while depriving the people of the possibility of a full humanity.

FOOTNOTES

1. Segundo J.L.: *The Liberation of Theology* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1976).
2. Nyamiti, C.: “Approaches to African Theology” in *The Emergent Gospel* . He mentions the fact that time to define African theology and to try to agree on any particular definition is now passed. This is time to work on the nature, problems and method. See pp. 33-34.
3. Only Professor J. H. Cone’s article: “A Black American Perspective on the Future of African Theology” in *African Theology en route*. pp. 176-186, addresses the same concerns and needs.
4. *Ibid*, p. 176.
5. Gabriel Setloane’s article: “Where are we in African theology” suggests the direction which African theologians should follow. For him, Christology needs to be explained by African theologians in a manner that is relevant to the needs of the African believers. See his article in *African Theology en route*. pp. 59-65.
6. Appiah -Kubi, K. and Torres, E.: *African Theology en route*. p. 178
7. See chapters seven and eight in *Origins and Development of African Theology* (1985) by G. Muzorewa.
8. However it is not the final word. In fact this definition may be regarded as merely functional and not definitive.
9. Appiah — Kubi and Torres, *African Theology en route*. New York: Maryknoll. 1979. p. 83.
10. Fashole-Luke, “The Quest for an African Christian Theology,” in *The Ecumenical Review*, 27. 1975. p. 267.
11. Kurewa, “The meaning of African theology,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*. (1975 pp. 32-42).
12. I was much surprised when many Christians in Zimbabwe reverted to traditionalism. Some members of the clergy also

- also turned to traditionalism during the seven years war in the country. They were persuaded to believe that their ancestor spirit has a major part to play in the whole experience. (1972 to 1979).
13. Psalm 136:13 and Deuteronomy 11:4. (RSV)
 14. Matthew 15:38 and Mark 8:9 (RSV)
 15. Luke 8:50-54.
 16. All the gospel narratives witness to the event.
 17. Setiloane's article, "Where are we in African theology" raises the same question. He also says "I cannot say I necessarily like where I am." See African Theology en route. p. 64.
 18. We understand the Trinity as the Christian doctrine that refers to the one being of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Claude Welch says "since the early centuries of the church it has been considered the primary and distinctive aspect of the Christian conception of God." See "Trinity" in A Handbook of Christian Theology. New York. The World Publishing Company. 1958. See also Welch's most exhaustive work on the Trinity: In this name the doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology. Welch gives a Christian perspective. Raymond S. Masha has also written a good article on the subject: "The Trinity in the African context," in African Theological Journal 9. No. 1. (April 1990).
 19. By the Incarnation, we refer to the Christian doctrine that God become a human being in Jesus Christ. Aylward Shorter's book: African Christian Theology: Adaptation or Incarnation (1977) urges African theologians to consider the nature of African Christian theology. Is it to be adaptation or incarnational?
 20. This is the sense in which the Psalmist says "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Psalm 23:1b.
 21. When tragedy hits an average African Christian family the survivors almost invariably revert to African traditional beliefs, after they have attended the funeral service in the church. The seven years of war in Zimbabwe demonstrated this.
 22. Luke 4:18, 19.
 23. Appiah-Kubi and Torres, ed. African Theology en route. New York: Maryknoll. 1979. p. 181.
 24. Ibid., p. 181
 25. Ibid., p. 181.
 26. Mbiti, J.: New Testament Eschatology in an African Background. London: Oxford University Press. 1968. p. 190.
 27. Luke 4:18-19.

28. I believe that although the word "liberation" is not in common usage, interchangeable with "salvation," both terms apply to the benefits of knowing Christ. We have already noted that for some theologians liberation is the central theme in the Gospels. Cone makes this point clear in *A Black Theology of Liberation*. On the other hand, most African theologians believe that salvation is the central theme in the Gospels. See Mbiti's article: "An African Views American Black Theology," *World View*. 1974.
29. The AACC's Third Assembly was held at Lusaka in May 1974. The theme was "Living for Christ no longer for ourselves." Carr was the General Secretary of the AACC for several years.
30. AACC, *The Struggle Continues*. Nairobi. 1975.
31. Tutu, "The theology of liberation in Africa," in *African Theology en route*. Appiah- Kubi and Torres eds. pp. 162ff.
32. Appiah-kubi, Muganbi, Carr, Mshana accept the use of the term relative to African Theology. See their individual articles in General Bibliography at the end.
33. AACC, *The Struggle Continues*. p. 14.
34. Burgess Carr, *A Report to the Executive Committee of the AACC*" Document No. 1. (March 1972).

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BOOK REVIEW

Pero, A. and Moyo, A. (eds.): Theology and Black Experience. The Lutheran Heritage Interpreted by African and African-American Theologians.

Augsburg Press, Minneapolis 1988. 248 pp (paperback) +R45.00

This book contains the papers delivered at the first conference of African and African-American Lutheran theologians held at Harare in 1986. The conference was the outcome of a dream which emerged from the reflections of Albert Pero through his involvement in the "Black Theology Project" at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago and Ambrose Moyo of the University of Zimbabwe whose chief research interest has been in relating African Theology to Black Theology.

Under the rubric of the general conference theme of the "Lutheran Heritage and the Black Experience in Africa and North America, a number of lectures were given on topics such as "Justification of Faith and Its Social Implications, "The Two Kingdoms Doctrine and Its Continuing Relevance, "The Theology of the Cross, "Liberation Theologies" and "Theological Education and Preparation for Ministry." Each of the fourteen papers were presented by pairing an African with an African-American theologian on a key issue of Lutheran Theology. The speakers included a distinguished gathering of African and African-American theologians such as Sibusiso Bengu (Lutheran World Federation), John Pobee (World Council of Churches), James Echols (Prof. of Historical Theology, Lutheran School of Theology), Rudolf Featherstone (Prof. of Theology, Trinity Lutheran Seminary), Simon Maimela (Prof. of Systematic Theology, University of South Africa), Vivian Msomi (Rector, Lutheran Theological College, Umpumulo), Richard Perry (Director of Black Ministries, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and Judah Kiwowovele (Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.)

The book opens with an interesting set of papers of which the first three could be grouped together to illustrate the flavour of the debate. Richard Perry's article is entitled, "Justification by Faith and Its Social Implications." In this article Perry notes how a deep understanding of African-American history provides a strong challenge to the traditional Lutheran emphasis of dividing justification from sanctification. He illustrates through his paper how middle-class white Lutherans have developed a narrow interpretation of justification which has enabled them to distance themselves from the context of the oppressed. Perry (and Moyo in a later article) stresses that black Lutherans take the Letter of James more seriously than do white Lutherans. He argues that James was written out

of an experience of class discrimination in the church and reflects the protests of the oppressed. Hence he concludes, "We join with James in saying, 'So faith by itself, if it has no works is dead.' (p.33).

Simon Maimela shows how justification by faith in South Africa has been distorted by the Apartheid government and society. Maimela argues convincingly that "Lutheran development of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, it seems to me, was an attempt to answer questions his generation raised as they tried to make sense of life and to discover its meaning (p.35). He asserts that a fundamental question still facing all Christians is how one can live a meaningful life. Maimela goes on to argue that Luther's teaching was revolutionary in that a meaningful life was no longer the preserve of successful people or church leaders but was open to the weak, poor and powerless. It is God alone who gives life and salvation and makes the most unworthy sinners children of God. In South Africa this understanding of a meaningful life given by God has been severely distorted. He concludes sharply and incisively that, "In South Africa, justification-a life of meaning and quality-is not seen as a gracious gift from God. Justification is determined by the state on the ground of 'natural worthiness', that is, on the basis of race, culture and economic status... In South Africa, unconditional acceptance of other human beings is not the presupposition of human existence." (p.39)

Rudolf Featherstone's article on "The Theology of the Cross" approaches the question of justification from another angle. He observes that white Lutherans in America have tended to side with the "status-quo" and "privilege" and are largely unconcerned with issues affecting the oppressed. He argues that white Lutherans have emphasised right-thinking (orthodoxy) at the expense of the cross and suffering. He concludes that Black Theology and the Theology of the Cross together provide a profound challenge to "status-quo" Lutheran thinking and behaving. Among the challenges he mentions for example are that, "Black suffering and the theology of the cross challenge orthodoxy to move beyond the posture of right doctrine and to become more concerned about orthopraxis." (p.54).

The reviewer was deeply enriched by reading this book. It provides a powerful challenge and revision of certain key ways of interpreting the Lutheran tradition. The book demonstrates a process of awakening of the Lutheran consciousness to the awareness of profound pluralism in it's midst. For too long the white middle-class interpretation has prevailed. The book is recommended for theological students, interested laity and scholars, both Lutheran and ecumenical.

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**Heine, Susanne: Matriarch, Goddesses and Images of God
A Critique of a Feminist Theology, Augsburg, 1989.
Translated from the German by John Bowden, pp. 183,
Price unknown. (Paperback)**

Susanne Heine is a professor in the Protestant Faculty of Theology at the University of Vienna. She wrote *Matriarchs, Goddesses and Images of God* as a sequel to her much acclaimed book *Women and Early Christianity* — a critical account of modern biblical scholarship (Augsburg 1985). The sequel takes up some key notions which are of particular interest to feminist theologians, for example, God as Father and as Mother; the re-emergence of the goddess cult and of nature worship; the historical reconstruction of matriarchal cultures; and the feminisation of Jesus. Looking at the table of contents, which includes the themes referred to above, one might be forgiven for presupposing that this was a book on radical feminism about replacing patriarchy by matriarchy. This is not the case, on the contrary, Heine suggests that it was high time that the war between the sexes was over. She believes that feminist theologians have achieved a good deal, “From a shift in consciousness to a change in real circumstance” (p.1). She suspects, however, that some feminist theologians will be satisfied only with “total achievement”. Utopia for women, as well as for men, will not be realised however, this side of eternity. Heine may seem to be out of sympathy with “the women’s cause” at times but this is not so. She merely reacts against the common belief that solidarity means uniformity. She believes that self-reflections and changes of course are not signs of treachery to the sisterhood. Nor must pluralism be regarded as a threat, she sees it as the only possible way of avoiding rigid dogmatism. (p.2) She questions, for example, the wisdom of feminist theologians who arrange services where all male elements in language and conceptuality are eliminated: God is replaced by the Goddess, Jesus Christ becomes Jesa Christa, the Holy Spirit is addressed as she. Does the feminist cause benefit from these moves? Heine suspects that it does not. She admits to writing at times with a degree of scorn and of anger especially when she sees the extent to which feminist theologians harm their legitimate cause by illogical theories. She opposes isolationism since she believes it leads to a dead end. She would prefer to engage in “second stage” feminist theology which transcends exclusivism and works towards a theological reintegration of the sexes. She encourages feminist theologians to think more systematically and to discover “complexities of meaning. Although Heine plays devil’s advocate throughout the book she concedes nevertheless that many feminist theologians have the same intentions as she. She is aware that the “scientific approach” which she advocates will be perceived by some feminists as a ‘male way’ of looking at reality. But she per-

sists in pleading for sharper thinking, great sophistication and more honesty. She lays herself open to further criticism by attacking some of feminism's most sacred cows. She dares to sit in judgement on feminist theologians and counters their questions with some of her own. It becomes clear from the beginning, therefore, that the debate carried on in this book is not directed against the evils of patriarchy but at the shortcomings of feminist theologies. To be more specific: Heine concedes in her chapter on God the Father God the Mother, for example, that it is quite in order to bring together some feminine features of God to counter balance the one-sided long standing tradition which stresses the masculinity of God. In the end, however, she asks whether it is either honest or meaningful to insist on that balance being maintained since clearly male designations for the divine qualities and modes of action dominate the Biblical text. God who is all in all, she says, and who is "Wholly other" will release us from questing for a male/female God. "Thank God, she says "that God is different from us human beings" (p.31) She begs the questions, however, since Christian and Jewish traditions persist in using the male images of God to the exclusion of female images. Heine is right, of course, when she says that God as Father is an analogy among other analogies but it still remains the dominant image in conversation about God and in the church's prayer life. Heine argues well but contributes little, in my opinion, to solving the dilemma of designations about God.

Certain feminist theologians show increasing interest in female deities. Heine asks whether the revival of the cult of Goddesses and the tendency to leave behind the God of the Christians and the Jews in order to return to "an old buried tradition" in which "women counted for something" is really in the best interests of feminists. Heine suggests that the myths of people of four thousand years ago are "unsuitable candidates for revival ". Heine uses several examples from Eastern mythology, from fertility and vegetation cults to make her point. She then claims that the revival of the goddesses represent the negation of the individual, of consciousness, of freedom of thought and action and of human personality. In other words the arguments derived from the goddess myths can all too easily, be turned against those who use them.

Closely connected with the cult of Goddesses is the interest shown in matriarchy. The conviction that matriarchy once existed in history has taken on "a programmatic character. Anyone who dares to think that there is no historical proof for the existence of a fully fledged matriarchal culture incurs, she says, the feminist 'anathema'. Heine proposes that the subject be approached methodologically and with a matter-of-fact objectivity; that for the duration of the examination subjective interests be put aside. She asks feminists to refrain from

canvassing support for theses which have not been proved conclusively or from manipulating peers for the sake of "the cause. Statement like: "If you, woman, want to be in solidarity with me, you must share my firm assumption" (p.82) should be avoided. The hypothesis concerning matriarchy, or indeed any other hypothesis on the feminist agenda ought not, she says, to be accepted without thorough critical examination. Having said that Heine refers, in a summary way, to studies carried out on matriarchy but comes to the conclusion, rather facilely I thought, that "on historical examination the evidence whether there ever was a matriarchy proves negative" (p.96) She does acknowledge that there were matrilinear social organisation but these are not to be confused with matriarchy. Heine's conclusions could and no doubt will be contested. She argues her case well but the amount of evidence she offers is not really enough to prove conclusively that the case for matriarchy is unfounded. In the end her being proved right or wrong is beside the point. More important is the challenge she poses and the warning she issues to feminists. There has been too much jumping on bandwagons; too much highly subjective research. Heine encourages intense self-criticism for she believes that feminism is strong enough to weather it. It is for this reason that throughout her book she consistently selects 'pet' feminist theories and attempts to debunk the 'myths' surrounding them. Yet another example should make that clear. Many feminist theologians react against the concept of a male saviour. Jesus Christ was a man, God's Son invested with divine authority. The Saviour joined a hierarchy of men, a hierarchy in which women do not appear, or, if they do, only at the bottom of the ladder. This raises the question: Can Christ the Son of God serve as an ideal or should there be a Jesa Christa daughter of God? Heine points out that physical procreation by God is a concept as alien to judaism as it is to Christianity. She makes a case for Jesus the man. He turned everything upside down by rejecting those things which men cling to such as power and kingship. He chooses servanthood, humility and powerlessness. But Jesa Christa the woman could not choose these things since she would already have been at the bottom as a 'servant' humble and powerless. The man Jesus takes the woman's place. In this way God came near to the feminine in the masculine. Heine rejects Jesa Christa, therefore, in favour of Jesus Christus.

Matriarchs, Goddesses and Images of God is a challenging and exceedingly interesting book. It is a token, if indeed one is still needed that feminist theology had come of age. Heine, in taking the discussion beyond the war between the sexes, encourages women to measure swords with women. Her way of showing that she is in solidarity with women is not by condoning their shortcomings as theologians or as thinking persons but in calling their bluff. She

goads them into rethinking some of their presuppositions. She challenges some of their "well worked through" conclusions obliging them, to go back to the drawing board to rework their theses. This, I believe, can only be to the good. She does not always practice what she preaches however. Her own capacity to pursue an argument is not always as logical as it could be. She writes as a theologian yet her eclectic approach (she uses Scripture extensively and dips regularly into philosophy, sociology and psychology) is a mixed blessing. Heine vacillates between being authoritative and dogmatic but in the end feminist theologians will, I trust thank her. Heine describes her book as 'second stage' feminism. Anyone reading it should first have a sound knowledge of the basic principles of feminist theology. In other words it is a book for the initiated. It was originally written in German under the title *Wiederbelebung Der Gottinnen?* and was ably translated into English by John Bowden.

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**Boff, Leonardo: Trinity and Society. Maryknoll,
Orbis Books, 1988. X111 + 272pp.**

Leonardo Boff, a well known Latin American theologian and very prolific writer in the different areas of Liberation Theology, has come with yet another great contribution to the thematic development of Liberation Theology.

This time, Boff selects the Trinitarian confession of the Church universal and explores its meaning for Christians who are involved in the struggle for liberation in Third World situations that negate the validity of the confession that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit by denying the humanity of the oppressed and the poor as well as refusing them free and equal entry into the human community. This confession is placed in the midst of this contradiction, i.e. between the objective situation in Latin America and other continents that devotes all resources to the denial of the truth of this confession on the one hand and the poor who subjectively commit their lives to its validation by struggling to assert their humanity and claiming their right to human community. In this struggle, the faith of the poor wishes to understand what it says to itself when it expresses this confession at moments when it praises God. It also wants and hopes to be resourced and strengthened by this confession in its ethical existence and practice during moments of despair and defeat.

Boff contends that it is not obvious what Christians understand and mean when they utter this confession because more often than not, words and expressions, including theological concepts, hide more than they reveal. Neither is it obvious that Christians understand and mean the same thing when they make this confession. What they understand and mean is bound by time and history as well as the place which the particular confessing Christians occupy in their society. This has led to a confusing state of affairs wherein the Trinitarian confession is losing its power to criticize and change society. In this regard Boff argues that, "...a. disunited society affects our understanding of faith; it cannot create favourable conditions for an integrated expression of the mystery of the Trinity." (p.13) Instead it projects an image of God that buttresses its existence and legitimizes its power relations.

It is Boff's intention with this book to find a way of restoring the critical and transforming power of confessing God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, especially for the poor, the oppressed races and sexes. In his effort he is guided by the following two questions: Can there not be a unity in diversity? Can diversity not be a revelation of the richness of unity? To Boff, these questions which are clearly

religious, encapsulate the deepest problem of human society during the end of the twentieth century.

Armed with the above questions, Boff combs and ploughs through the rich history of the formation and reformation of dogma in the ancient, medieval and modern church and shows how the church went about addressing its problems of society by means of different understandings of the reality of the Trinitarian God and articulations of the Trinitarian dogma. To those who would hasten to say that asking questions about this confession borders on blasphemy, Boff highlights a very important fact, i.e. that one has to make a distinction between the Trinitarian confession which is a product of human and the Trinitarian reality of God. His own starting point is obviously the witness of the Bible as recorded in both the Old as well as the New Testament which he summarizes with a quotation of St. Epiphanius: "Unity is taught by Moses; the prophets proclaim duality; in the gospels we meet the Trinity." (p.42) This part of the book is followed by different ways in which the church, from the late 2nd century onwards, when large numbers of educated Christians began to appear, interpreted the scriptural witness to the Trinitarian reality of God.

In the following chapter, Boff deals with the "crisis of reason" which was inaugurated by World War 1 and includes our own period in the history of humankind which is characterized by the destruction of the ecosystems as well as the production of totalitarian ideologies. As a result, Boff contends, "... we approach reality and truth not only through logos (understanding) but mainly through pathos (feeling), not just through reason but also through the heart...." (p.112) It is this dual approach which has led to the elevation of the plight and the struggles of the hitherto neglected members and sections of the human family as important hermeneutical keys in the emerging understandings and formulations of the Trinitarian doctrine. The results are, celebration of the Father as the origin and the goal of all liberation. The Father is also understood to be the basis of universal fellowship that encompasses all races, colours and genders. The Son is celebrated as the mediator of integral liberation and the Spirit, its driving force. At the end of this exercise Boff concludes that, the Trinity is a sacramental mystery that will remain the Unknown in all eternity, thus challenging Christians to reflect again and again on that Reality within their concrete existence.

This book is very good, especially for theologians who are in search of new ways of understanding the above doctrine of the Church.
by Dr. Takatso Mofokeng, University of South Africa, Pretoria.