

**THEOLOGY BAKES NO BREAD! : AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF
THEOLOGY IN THE PRE AND POST INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE**

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Abstract

In a quest to find relevance in the 21st century, theology has found its expression in ways that capture the permanence and change argument of ancient Greek philosophy (Parmenides and Heraclitus respectively). The author argues that what remains permanent is the concept god and the flux is realised in the various forms of theology that characterise the Zimbabwean context both in the pre and post-Independent periods. Academics like Ndabaningi Sithole, Canaan Sodindo Banana, Abel Tendekai Muzorewa and Sebastian Bakare are some among others who have expressed a sterling religious commitment whilst at the same time coming up with practical forms of theology that qualified them as free thinkers whose ideas shaped to a greater extent the attainment of political independence in Zimbabwe. Almost in line with The Barman Declaration of 1934 in Germany and also in the spirit of the 1985 South African Kairos Document, the mentioned academics did show that the Gospel of Christ goes beyond the myopic views of religion that encourages acceptance of the status quo yet people cry for retrieval from the labyrinth of suffering created by an artificial religion of the oppressor. It is along this line that the author gauges the future of theology in Zimbabwe. Findings point to the fact that theology in the Zimbabwean context is not 'dead'. It is rather a dynamic entity that continues to influence society in big ways. This is a position that is arrived at by looking at both the past and present scenario of the ecclesiastical field which exhibits a clear theological hermeneutics that has transformed the society for the better. The contention of this paper is to show that theology in Zimbabwe has been enriched by various liberation theologies from around the globe. The methodology applied includes interviews and archival information.

Keywords: Bulwarks, Chimurenga, Church-State, Liberation Theologies

Introduction

What is the relevance of theology in a world that has advanced so much due to the 'miracles' performed by technology and also a socio-political world that appears to have successfully progressed without much appeal to religion? This is a question that was thrown

to the researcher by a student who was just beginning his first year at university. The paradox lied in the fact that the student was pursuing a degree in the Arts Faculty and odds were that theology was to be one of the modules on offer at some point of his academic journey. The question was not without merit though, for it became the launch-pad of this research. Missio-theological reflections have revealed that from the day the first missionary set foot in the country now known as Zimbabwe, the influence of theology was glaringly conspicuous. Missionaries played a behind the scenes role that catalysed the colonisation of Zimbabwe (Linden, 1980). The “discourse about God” (McGrath, 1995:117) prodded the missionary into action and the mandate was to clutch the dark soul of the African reeling under the ‘yoke of sin’ and ‘ignorance’ and lead him or her to the light offered by Christianity. However, the other ‘silently’ pronounced but important role was the facilitation of colonisation of Africa (Constantine Chiwenga Presentation to Anglican Clergy, St John’s Chikwaka, 7th January 2011). In order to elucidate this point, the research focused on enunciating the various types of theology and how these were applied to the landscape of Zimbabwe over the course of history.

A Selected Variety of the Constituents of Theology

An application of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution confirms that the term theology has also been subjected to an evolution of some sort over the passage of time. Yet amidst these cataclysms, one thing remains, namely, the term ‘god’. Simply put, theology is the science of god (Erickson, 1998:22). Be that as it may, one who studies it today appreciates that several branches of this discourse are now in existence. Examples are: systematic, biblical, historical, and philosophical theologies. The mid-20th century also witnessed the mushrooming of several contextual theologies that are sometimes regarded as Third World Theologies. Some of these include Black, Liberation, African, Feminist and Reconstruction theologies (Ferm, 1986).

Theology as the science of God also includes the ways in which God interacts with His creation, particularly with mankind. It also entertains issues of the interaction between man and man in a world where values and options of man in society exist. This brings out an ethical dimension of theology, which is an indispensable ingredient of liberation. To this end Kammer III (1988:7) asserts that “to say that we are moral beings is to say that we are human – for it is precisely the fact that we are moral that defines our ‘humanness’.” The various branches of this discipline have over the years become focussed and specific in incorporating

the moral dimension in theology. Systematic theology is the attempt to reduce the teaching of Christianity to a coherent and relevant statement using scripture, general revelation, reason, and church tradition as its sources (Demarest, 2001:1162). The most distinctive aspect of systematic theology when considered in relation to biblical, historical, and philosophical theology is that it makes a clear attempt to contextualize theology in time and space. Systematic theology applies the principle of correlation put forward by Paul Tillich and in this case, it is inseparably linked to culture in ways that other types of theology are not.

Biblical theology is “that kind of exposition of biblical books, texts or words, which is based upon the presupposition that there is a common biblical (or Hebraic) viewpoint which is shared by the authors of the scriptural writings” (Richardson, 1969:36). It seeks to identify the eternal truths that exist within the Old and New Testaments without an attempt to contextualize those truths. Systematic theology uses the material of biblical theology, but adds the step of applying that material to the contemporary context. The value of biblical theology is in its treatment of the biblical material to ascertain the fundamental truths within the text. The limitation is that it fails to consider application (Erickson, 1998:26).

Historical theology is the process of discovering the various theologies held by individuals and groups at particular points in history with a specific effort to understand their specific context. The importance of historical theology is that through it the modern systematic theologian can better understand their own presuppositions and biases when developing their own contemporary theologies (Erickson, 1998:27). Historical theology is also beneficial in that one can learn through the examples of past theologians how to better perform the work of systematic theology (Erickson, 1998:28). Today’s systematic theology is the historical theology of the future.

Philosophical theology “is that branch of theology which seeks to give rational expression in terms of the philosophical ideas of the day to belief in Jesus Christ as the supreme revelation of God” (Richardson, 1969:258). It may be defined in Anselm’s phrase as *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding) or in Aquinas’ expression as the *handmaid of theology*. Philosophical theology performs the service of assisting the theologian in the clear defining of terms and arguments. It aids in the defence of theology and lends credibility to some of theology’s truth claims. It offers a small role in the recognition of universal or natural revelation (Erickson, 1998:29). Systematic theology benefits from philosophical theology, but has suffered much from the intrusion of secular philosophical principles into the realm of theology.

Within the context of ministry systematic theology is constantly being used as ministry is the attempt to apply biblical truth to people's lives. It is important to use all of the types of theology in order to better be able to communicate the truths of scripture to those whom one is ministering. Biblical theology assists in identifying the fundamental truths of scripture. Historical theology helps in understanding why the church currently holds its various beliefs and practices. Philosophical theology helps in clarification of ideas and terms that are associated with theology. Systematic theology, however, is where the rubber meets the road with most people. It places the truths discovered in the other forms of theology into the lives of the people receiving ministry and is thusly the most significant of the four types of doctrinal studies. The systematic theology articulated by Paul Tillich became the launch-pad of various liberation theologies. Paul Tillich's emphasis on the need to 'correlate' everyday experiences in the doing of theology became a huge attraction to Third World theologians who were battling in finding the relevance of Christianity in a world of multiple frustrations such as injustice, poverty, racism and cultural alienation. The different groups of people dotted around the globe have complex and different histories and cultures that have influenced the development of their theological discourse. James Cone contends that "theology is always made when people seek to understand the ultimate meaning of their existence in relation to their neighbour and their God" (Cone, 2000:204).

In North America, racial-ethnic minorities lived in a society where religio-cultural and socio-political values were defined by an ideology of white supremacy. The whites defined the humanity of the racial-ethnic minorities. It was the fierce assertion of the minorities' right to define their humanity coupled with the plea to ascertain their term of existence that gave birth to Black Theology. The clear definition of this theology erupted from the theological articulation of James H. Cone in his 1969 publication: *Black Theology and Black Power*. Its meaning was derived from a community of African American clergy and lay persons who were struggling to understand the meaning of their identity as *black* and *Christian* in the white racist society of the United States, which also claimed to be Christian and the leader of the free world (Cone, 2000:210). As a theological discipline, it arose out of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements of the 1950s and 1960s, as defined by the life and works of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X. This form of theology later found its footing in South Africa. Basil Moore acknowledges that it has been imported from the United States into South Africa. However, the content of America has not been imported with the title. Inasmuch as there are striking similarities, the differences are almost as striking as the

parallels (Moore, 1973:1). In South, the major concern is apartheid, a doctrine coined by the white minority rule that condemned blacks to hewers of wood and drawers of water. Black Theology is therefore a situational theology that seeks liberation for the marginalised (Mpunzi, 1973:135). Steve Biko was an articulate Black Theologian from South Africa (Hallencreutz quoted in Banana, 1991: xv). Such being the case, it can be argued that a number of theologians within and out of Africa have articulated Black Theology in different forms. In Zimbabwe, the voices of Canaan Sodindo Banana and others, including Church-related institutions have produced works whose colouring is without doubt imbedded with connotations of Black Theology.

African Theology is yet another theological expression that gained currency since the late 1960s in Africa. The main thrust of this theology is culture. Hallencreutz's introduction to Banana's book *Come and Share* (1991: xv) says that "African Theology in the strict sense explored the cultural and religious heritage of pre-colonial Africa and tried to express Christian convictions in integral dialogue with this heritage". Pioneers were significant African scholars such as Idowu from Nigeria, Mbiti from Kenya, Mulago from Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo) and Setiloane from South Africa. But how effective has been the doing of theology in Zimbabwe?

Theology Bakes no Bread?! Analysing the Zimbabwean Context

To many a people, those who study theology do so for the reason to become ministers of religion. It is the general perception that those who venture into such an endeavour will focus on 'spiritual' matters and avoid at all costs to entertain 'mundane' issues. In this case, the contention put forward by the proponents of this position is that the major task of theology is to inculcate moral values to people without necessarily involving yourself in the daily affairs of those whose responsibility is to represent people in governance. It is this kind of mentality that proffers the argument that 'theology bakes no bread'. Theology consequently becomes a futile enterprise far-away detached from existential realities and lulls people into a sleep owing to its unpractical form of existence. Some argue that this is the theology that the early Christian evangelizer tried to sell to the African; a theology that also justified the evils of slavery for it did not question the bad deeds of 'Christian' men who owned ships that transported slaves from Africa to the lands they were inhumanely treated. Ian Linden (1980) asked: is Christianity essentially a counter revolutionary creed? By establishing the relationship between Christianity and imperialism, and the role of

missionaries in the process of imperial colonisation, the answer to the question is likely to be a big yes! Certainly during the armed struggle (of and for Zimbabwe), Christian churches were presented as part of the ideological apparatus of capitalism (Constantine Chiwenga Presentation to Anglican clergy, St John's Chikwaka, 7th January 2011). The theology that the missionary of the late 19th century to Africa had a recipe and ready ingredients that aimed to protect the interest of the coloniser. There are clear instances whereby the Bible was interpreted for colonialism. General Chiwenga quoted the speech of Jules Jenkins, Governor of Kinshasa to the first group of missionaries journeying to the Congo in 1883. The speech was published in a Belgian newspaper in Kinshasa in 1951.

Reverend Fathers and dear compatriots; the task I ask you to accomplish is very delicate and demands much tact and diplomacy. Fathers you are to preach the gospel, but your preaching must be inspired by first, the interest of the Belgium State. The main goal of your mission in the Congo is not to preach the Negro the knowledge of God. They know that killings, stealing, adultery and blasphemy are not good. Let's have the courage to admit this fact so you won't teach them the things they already know. Your essential role will be to easily facilitate the task of the administrative and industrial personnel. That is to say, you will interpret the gospel in a way to protect and serve the interest of Belgium, in that part of the world. To do so, you will see that our savages be not interested in the riches that their soil possesses, in order that they will not want them, thus they be not in murderous competition with us and dream to live a luxurious lifestyle. Your knowledge of the scriptures will help us to use special texts that recommend the infidels love poverty such as 'the beatitudes', 'blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom', 'it's hard for the rich to enter into the kingdom of heaven'. You will do all that you can to cause the Negro to fear being rich in order that he may go to heaven. From time to time, you can keep them from rebelling and keep them in fear that you will use violence. You will teach them to endure anything, even when they are insulted and beaten by your compatriots/administrators. You will teach them whoever uses violence is not a child of God.... Teach the gospel to the Negroes in an African style in order that they are kept submissive to the white colonist.... Institute a system of confession, which will make you good detectives in order to denounce or put every black who has a spirit of rebellion against the system.... Consider all blacks as little children and require them to refer to you as father (General Constantine Chiwenga Presentation to Anglican clergy, St John's Chikwaka, 7th January 2011).

Without doubt the words of Jules Jenkins reveal that the missionary did not mean good to the African. The same can also apply to the Zimbabwean context. An example is the decisive colonisation of Zimbabwe whereby “the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the Jesuits (SJ) joined the invading pioneer column out of the conviction that Matebele power had to be destroyed before evangelization could become effective. They thought of their work as purely religious, but in fact their mission was linked to politics” (Verstraelen, 1998:50). The same author contends that by accepting portions of land from Cecil John Rhodes the missionaries were tied to the scheme of the White settlers in occupying (that is, taking away) land from the local inhabitants. This conforms to the findings of Hastings (1989:162) who argues that the missionaries “acquiesced in being, in more or less collective manner, a colonial state-church, at once privileged and captive”.

Furthermore, towards the turn of the nineteenth century, the Anglican Bishop George Hegel Knight-Bruce clearly manifested that his business was to befriend the Matebele on behalf of the Queen and effectively to also help those who had been authorised by Her Majesty to conquer the world for the British Empire. The view of Bishop Knight-Bruce was that the Matebele King Lobengula possessed authority not only for the Southern part of Zimbabwe but also of the Northern part which the Mashonas inhabited. In a letter to Lobengula (12th March 1889), he said, “I am your friend as I was when I saw you at Umvoocha or at Emkanwini. I have written to England saying how important it is for the welfare of all nations that the English and the Matibili should be friends.... I never said that I should advise you to allow anyone to go through your country to look for gold. However, Mr Rhodes, Mr Rudd, and Mr Maguire are friends of mine, and, if you allow anyone to look for gold in Mashonaland, I think no other people would be better friends to your country than these would be” (Broderick, 1953:21). These are words of a man whose influence of the prosyletisation Zimbabwe has such a great importance. Any history of the presence of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe that precludes this name is not worthy of its salt. Inasmuch as this fact remains, however, it is noted that the motive of the man of the cloth was not only religious. Rather, it also had economic and political overtones. In him, we see the lack of the desired neutrality, but rather the co-option of the Church by the State (Lapsley, 1986).

Events mentioned in the preceding paragraphs give the imperative to look at the role of the Church in secular affairs. Verstraelen (1998: 49-55) offered an extensive presentation on Church-State relations. He alludes that there are in general four models of Church-State relations. The first one is *Theocracy* which refers to the State as being under control of

religious leaders. Iran is an example, and also today's Egypt under the leadership of a member of the Brotherhood (Morsi) seems to be opting for this model despite the concession to lead a democracy in a post-Mubarak era. The second one is *Erastianism*, which refers to the State's use of religion for its own interests. The Roman Empire is an example. Erastianism can be equated to what theologians of the *Kairos Document (1985)* called State Theology, which justifies the *status quo*. The third model is *Separation of Church and State*, that is, legally separate but without hostility. The fourth model is again *Separation of Church and State*- but one in which the State takes a *negative* and *unfriendly* stance against religion (Verstraelen, 1998:50). The Church is viewed as an opposition Party and the worst form of this model is the stance of former Communist countries that dismissed religion as an enemy of progress and a tool of the oppressor.

Zimbabwe has been subjected to all the four models and sometimes the four are applied concurrently. The other group constitutes those who hold the view that religion and politics should be separate. This is the group that interprets John 6:10-15 in a 'spiritualised' manner. It is the group that holds a 'hermeneutics of the spiritual world' for they prefer to talk about a pie in the sky rather than *sadza (pap)* on the table. They hold that Jesus withdrew from the crowds upon realising that they were about to crown him king (The Watchtower, 1 May 2012:5). Members of the Jehovah's Witness are an example. They claim to be guided by Jesus' prayer that "I request you, not to take them out of this world, but to watch over them because of the wicked one. They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world" (John 17:15-16). This is the position they interpret to mean he was not meant to entertain worldly affairs, hence, those who follow him should follow suit.

Be that as it may, several God-fearing people feel that religion should be involved in politics. They believe that religion can play a vital part in solving humankind's problems. "Christians who take their faith seriously know that it has political implications - that the gospel calls us to imagine and work for a transformed world" (Kirwan, 2008:3). This is the group that makes use of political theology as they assess the current goings on; prod the hard questions of why this is going on; offer what they deem to be the proper ethical position to take, and finally give the way people are to respond. Zimbabwe has since the second Chimurenga produced a plethora of such theologians. Those who have articulated theological ideas have been inspired by the same Jesus who announced his mandate as that of liberation *in toto* (cf. Luke 4:18-19). They are also inspired by the justice and peace motif enunciated by Micah when he says "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly

with your God” (Micah 6:8 NIV). Zimbabwe has over the years produced some theological voices that changed the social and political landscapes. One such prominent voice is that of Canaan Sodindo Banana who has been singled out by the researcher as the key theologian to be presented. However, there are others like Ndabaningi Sithole, Abel Tendekai Muzorewa, and Sebastian Bakare who also deserve a slot in this piece. Contributions of Institutions such as the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference will also get a slot.

Some Theological Megaphones of the pre and post Independent Zimbabwe:

Zimbabwean Voices as Bulwarks against Excesses of the State

Canaan Sodindo Banana can be considered as one of those rare breeds of theologians Zimbabwe has ever produced. He is (was) a Statesman, politician, political detainee, sportsman, theologian and minister of religion. He published a number of books that makes him qualify as a political theologian, black theologian, and African theologian and a national hero.

Banana’s theology had its antecedents. The world of the 1960s and 1970s witnessed a number of significant movements. The 1960s and 1970s represent the most loaded period of socio-political happenings in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia). However, this is also the period that marks a decisive phase in the history of the international ecumenical movement. On the Catholic side the mid and late 1960s was the time of the Second Vatican Council which encouraged new initiatives within the Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe. The most notable innovation was the inauguration of the Catholic Commission on Justice and Peace.

Within the World Council of Churches (WCC) there was parallel advance. In 1966 there was the epoch-making consultation in Geneva on the Church’s Mission in a Time of Social and Technological Revolutions. In 1969 there was the launch of the Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) which had immediate ramifications on the life of the Churches in Zimbabwe.

It was in a time of far-reaching ecumenical advance that Canaan Sodindo Banana completed his seminary studies at the United Theological College, Epworth. He soon emerged as an ecumenical activist in Bulawayo Council of Churches and in the Urban Industrial Mission Programme of the young and enterprising Southern Rhodesia Council of Churches. His services were also made use of by the Urban Mission desk of the WCC and its Division of Mission and Evangelism in Geneva. Together with Garfield Todd and Nathan Shamuyarira, then in exile, Canaan Banana was also invited to attend the Nottingham Consultation in 1969, which preceded the introduction of the PCR programme. Banana did not attend the

Consultative Meeting. However, he became actively involved in propagating and defending the programme.

Banana also pursued his academic career in the USA at a time when the philosophy of Martin Luther King was at its peak. The American Civil Rights Movement had an impact on his theological dosage. Black theology as enunciated by James Cone as well as Liberation Theology from Latin America by Gustavo Gutierrez all went into Banana's theological pot where they fermented culminating in the production of a cleric who radically interpreted the social ills of the then Rhodesian State of Ian Douglas Smith. He agreed with Gustavo Gutierrez's idea of propagating a "theology from the underside of history" in which he says that in recent years it has seemed more and more clear to many Christians that if the Church wishes to be more faithful to the God of Jesus Christ, it must be aware of itself from underneath, from among the injustice, struggles and hopes of the wretched of the earth- for such is the Kingdom of God" (Banana, 1991:73)

At independence, after Joshua Nkomo had declined the offer by Robert Mugabe to become State President of the newly independent Zimbabwe, the offer was extended to Canaan Sodindo Banana who became in my view a Theological State President (1980-1987). He became a useful tool in reaching out to the Protestant Christian masses that still had sympathy to Abel Tendekai Muzorewa who had become the first and last Prime Minister of the short-lived Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. Muzorewa lost the mandate to rule Zimbabwe in the first general election of a free Zimbabwe in 1980 to Robert Gabriel Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU).

In order to properly assess Canaan Banana's theological contribution as State President it is interesting to relate his concern to what is contained in the progressive South African *Kairos Document* of 1985. This document advocated Prophetic Theology in a racially ridden (apartheid) South Africa. It outlined three forms of theology, namely, State Theology, i.e., Christian Theology that supports the *status quo*; Church Theology, which basically concentrated on dogmatic issues (orthodoxy as opposed to orthopraxis); Prophetic Theology, which addressed socio-economic and political issues with a view to emancipate the generality from the yoke of oppression (Luke 4:18-19; Isaiah 61:1-2). Banana embraced Prophetic Theology and was proud to have participated in the struggle for the liberation of Zimbabwe. He argued that Exodus 3: 7-8 (The commissioning of Moses to lead the liberation of Israelites from Egyptian bondage) "does validate the use of liberating violence" (Banana, 1990:45).

From 1988-1996, Banana left the State House and was engaged by the University of Zimbabwe as an Honorary Professor. In that capacity he early shaped a new course in Political Theology which he gradually refined. He expressed his theological ideas as a free intellectual. This was realised in his involvement in serving as Eminent Person on a Mission to South Africa prior to its independence. He carried out responsibilities on behalf of Organisation of African Unity (OAU) as mediator in the Civil War in Liberia, a situation which his former students appreciate for it showed them that Theology as a discourse really does 'bake bread' (Richard S. Maposa interview, Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo, 7th February 2013). They enjoyed his classes for their practical approach in the doing of theology (Robert Matikiti interview, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, 11th Nov 2012).¹

As already alluded to in the abstract, Zimbabwe has produced a good number of theologians who have shown that indeed theology is not a 'dead' entity. Ndabaningi Sithole is one of those rare breed that the country has produced. He was born on 31st July 1920 at Nyamandhlovu, Matabeleland, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and died on 12th December 2000, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S. He was a teacher, clergyman, and an intellectual leader of the black nationalist movement in Rhodesia, later Zimbabwe. Mission-educated, Sithole was a teacher before he studied theology in the United States (1955–58). On returning to Rhodesia, then a British colony, he was a Congregationalist minister, school principal, and president of the African Teachers' Association (1959–60) (www.uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/6608/Moyo.pdf The Struggle within the struggle- UNISA Institutional Repository- accessed 12th February 2013). He argued that "no man can be brought up on the Bible and remain uninfluenced by it.... One of the unique teachings of the Bible, especially the New Testament, is the worth and dignity of the individual in the sight of God, and there is a relation between this teaching and the present African nationalism" (Sithole, 1959:52). Sithole believed that the Bible was a form of explosives that could do more than the spears of those who earlier tried to resist the rule of the colonizer (Sithole, 1959:54). His political career began in 1960, when he joined the new National Democratic Party, which was led by Joshua Nkomo, and became its treasurer. Sithole became an influential member of the party, and, after the NDP was banned in 1961, he helped form the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). After that party also was

¹Robert Matikiti and Richard S. Maposa are both former theology students of Canaan Sodindo Banana at the University of Zimbabwe. They are currently lecturing in theology at the University of Zimbabwe and Great Zimbabwe University respectively.

outlawed, he traveled widely in search of support, making broadcasts into Rhodesia from Tanzania.

In 1963 Sithole returned to Rhodesia as unrest with Nkomo's leadership was mounting. Backed by nationalist Robert Mugabe, Sithole broke away from ZAPU to form a new party, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). Considered dangerous by the white minority government, Sithole and other nationalists were arrested a few days before Rhodesia unilaterally declared itself to be a sovereign state on November 11, 1965. While in jail, Sithole was deposed as leader of ZANU and replaced by Mugabe; the party later was reformed as the ZANU–Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF). Sithole's ouster was largely a result of his public renunciation of the armed struggle during the court trial.

He was imprisoned until December 1974, when he was allowed to attend a meeting of black nationalist leaders with the Rhodesian Prime Minister, Ian Smith, in Lusaka, Zambia. Sithole returned to Rhodesia and again was arrested on March 4, 1975. He was released one month later and attended a meeting of the Organization of African Unity in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. He then went to Lusaka and continued to fight for the cause of black majority rule in Rhodesia. In 1978–79 he served on the Transitional Executive Council, preparing the transfer of power in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. He was a Member of Parliament in 1979. Though continuing as leader of a reorganized ZANU, he was defeated in the elections of 1982, and his influence dimmed thereafter. In 1984 he moved to the United States after claiming that Mugabe was plotting his assassination. During his self-imposed exile, he remained active in oppositional activities, and in 1992 he returned to Zimbabwe. In the 1995 elections Sithole won a seat in Parliament but later that year was arrested for conspiring to kill Mugabe. Sentenced in 1997 to two years in prison, Sithole did not serve any jail time, because of poor health; he died while in the United States seeking medical treatment.

Sithole published his influential *African Nationalism* in 1959 (2nd ed., 1968). In addition to numerous newspaper and journal articles, he also wrote a biography of Obed Mutezo (1970), the novel *The Polygamist* (1972), and an account of the Zimbabwe struggle, *Roots of a Revolution* (1977).

The lessons that can be learnt are that Sithole is one theologian-cum-politician who clearly points out that many African nationalists benefitted from the education brought by the missionary. In his words, "...the Church may be regarded as the guardian angel of African nationalism. Practically all important African political leaders went through the Christian Church school" (Sithole, 1959:57). A few examples are: Robert Mugabe who went to

Kutama College, a Catholic Jesuit School; Canaan Sodindo Banana, whose background and theological contributions have already been highlighted in the preceding paragraphs; Leopold Takawira who went to St Augustine Penhalonga, and was a lawyer and key figure of the liberation of Zimbabwe; and Samuel Mumbengegwi, a former student of Dadaya, former government minister and now lecturing at Great Zimbabwe University. His parting shot in the chapter on the contributions of Christianity to Africa is that “in many ways the Christian Church has provided Africa with sound political leadership” (Sithole, 1959:64). The researcher also contends that Sithole’s deep immersion in theological tenets imbedded in Christianity curved his political career. Consequently, he adopted the spirit found especially among South American liberation theologians that saw it necessary to clutch the Bible in one hand and a gun in the other all in pursuit of liberation for the oppressed. Thus, Sithole exhibited a continued commitment to fight for liberation despite the several incarcerations that marked his political career.

Another theology- inspired leader is Abel Tendekayi Muzorewa. Being a cleric and theologian, Muzorewa will forever remain in the annals of history as a man of the collar who actively participated in politics. He became a Prime Minister of the State (Zimbabwe-Rhodesia) that barely lasted a year and was a prominent contender for the highest post in the land for two elections that followed the Independence of Zimbabwe, that is, 1980 and 1985. Ariston Chambati suggests that Muzorewa was a ‘caretaker’ leader who performed rather well during the time that he himself believed he was (Sithole, 1991:147). But he began to make mistakes when he started acting politician. Apparently, he lost sight of the fact that he was merely a caretaker. However, Masipula Sithole counters this argument in asserting that by and large, Muzorewa played a positive role throughout. For example, when ZANU and ZAPU leaders could not agree on a leader of the umbrella African National Council (ANC) in December 1974, they decided on Muzorewa. And some observers have suggested that the Lancaster House settlement would not have occurred or succeeded without a ‘weak’ albeit ‘naïve’ man leading the Salisbury delegation (Sithole, 1991:147). The settlement would have been different had Ian Smith led the Salisbury delegation. It was necessary, therefore, to have a transitional man between Smith and Mugabe. Sithole says that in a way, and in that sense, the Bishop was God-sent.

Sebastian Bakare, former Senior Chaplain at the University of Zimbabwe, former bishop of Manicaland is another of those theologians whose book *My Right to Land in the Bible and in Zimbabwe- A Theology of Land for Zimbabwe* (1993) is a must read for those who are

interested in the biblical basis for the politics of land in Zimbabwe. He says that “What seems important to me is to arouse an interest among Christians to be engaged in this biblical theme of land, which up to now has met with amazing indifference from many theologians.... Indeed land as an issue is just as sensitive now as it was in the Old Testament and New Testament” (Bakare, 1993:97). The indifference that Bakare cried about is now a thing of the past. The land issue in Zimbabwe has by now received an elephant’s share in terms of discussion among theologians. Richard Maposa’s 2012 publication is one such example. He discussed land in his *Land to the Landless? A Theological Reflection on Some Christian Views to the Land Reform Program in Zimbabwe*. Maposa asserts that studying Bakare’s book “has established that some of the current voices and actions of the Christian churches constitute an emerging theological paradigm of liberation in light of the deepening woes in Zimbabwe today” (Maposa, 2012:69).

Bakare also fought for that which is morally right as exemplified by his coming out of retirement to fight the moral decadence that had crept into the Diocese of Harare through the unbecoming behaviour of Nolbert Kunonga. He came to provide spiritual leadership for the flock of God, and in so doing, was required to take a tough stance which included fighting the injustices perpetrated by Kunonga who was in most cases aided by State machinery in driving the people of God out of Church facilities (Michael Chingore, Interview, December 2012).

Another post - 2000 era phenomenon that definitely deserves a thorough presentation on its own is the reigniting of the Jeremiah-Hananiah controversy in the form of Pious Ncube (former Archbishop of Bulawayo Roman Catholic Archdiocese) and Nolbert Kunonga of the Anglican diocese of Harare. Pious Ncube has been viewed as a champion of social justice and this has earned him the accusation by ZANU (PF) as a Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) sympathiser. On the other hand Kunonga has been generally viewed as a Mugabe man and a ZANU (PF) propagandist. The researcher contends that this is one way of doing practical theology by ecclesiastics albeit the diametric antagonism of their philosophies and theological ideas.

Having made some terse presentations on some of the influential theological individuals in the Zimbabwean society, the study now looks at institutions that have been conscientious objectors in Zimbabwe.

Institutions (selected) as Bulwarks against Excesses of the State

The Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference, formerly, Rhodesia Catholic Bishops' Conference (RCBC), is one institution that has been an objective critique of the State. From the years of the Second Chimurenga, ZCBC has channelled out pastoral letters that challenged the ills and excesses of the State. Randolph (1985: 197 - 219) came up with a catalogue of such pastoral letters ranging from the 1960s up to 1985. The contributions of the Catholic Church are acknowledged by Ambrose Moyo (1988:212) who stated that "politically, churches have avoided criticising the government openly, except for the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CCJP) on the situation in Matebeleland." Moyo was referring to the era described by Mugabe as "a moment of madness" (www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/gukgenoci...), namely, the Gukurahundi atrocities of 1983. Banana (1996:237) lauded the Catholic stance in saying that "the CCJP's statement of the issue is meritorious, given the proven fact and force of public outcry, many an undesirable institution has been seen to falter and crumble, or at least seen to take corrective measures on previously unchecked excesses." For purposes of space, this research focussed more on the post 2000 era. Two such letters can be singled out, namely *God Hears the Cry of the Oppressed- Pastoral Letter on the Current Crisis in Zimbabwe* delivered on Holy Thursday, 5th April 2007; and *Let Us Work For The Common Good, Let Us Save Our Nation* 14th January 2011.

The 2007 Pastoral Letter of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference pointed out that the country was in a crisis, a crisis of governance, a crisis of moral leadership, a spiritual and moral crisis. The letter outlined that the roots of the crisis stem from the adoption of colonial legacy. Despite the knowledge that colonialism is evil, the new figures in power have adopted the colonial system and applied it on their people. Hence, it is more like new wine in old skins, an unfortunate system of the oppression of black by black, a form of neo-colonialism. The Letter cited the perpetuation of draconian security laws of the Rhodesian State that have re-emerged as the *Public Order and Security Act (POSA)* and the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. It appears as though someone sat down with the *Declaration of Human Rights* and deliberately scrubbed out each in turn (*God Hears the Cry of the Oppressed, 2007:7*).

The 2011 Letter comes at a time when there is a new dispensation in Zimbabwe, the Government of National Unity (GNU). The Bishops emphasized on the social teaching of the Church. In so doing pertinent issues raised zeroed on prioritisation for the eradication of

poverty by using the proceeds from the natural resources like diamonds, land, etc., for the development of the whole nation and all its citizens; to continually fight the problem of corruption; to prosecute wrong doers in a non-partisan manner; urging the uniformed forces to maintain peace and security especially before, during and after elections... (*Let Us Work for the Common Good; Let Us Save Our Nation* 2011:6-7). Commenting on the stance of the Catholic Church, Nyasha Madzokere said that this is what is expected of the Church, namely, taking a fundamental option for the poor and oppressed as well as supplying a voice on behalf of the majority who are often denied their inalienable right to air their grievances (Nyasha Madzokere, Interview, Masvingo, 18th Feb 2013).

Besides the Catholic Church, there are also some nuances of protest against the government of the day by New Religious Movements (NRM). One such example is protest through song exhibited by members of the Johanne Marange sect. There is no clear and distinct theological articulation recorded that offers a social teaching of this sect. Philip Mazambara (Interview, 11th Feb 2013), an expert in the NRMs in Zimbabwe, says “the 1940s are an example of unprecedented political revolt by members of the Johanne Marange. They have a song that manifests their disdain of the oppressive government of the whites in Rhodesia”. Their song ‘*Mhandu yedu ndiNebhukatineza*’: *Rumbo urwu runoti Nebhukatineza ndimambo weBiriteni. Chose chakaipa chinonzi chinobata noumambo hweBiriteni.* [(Our Enemy is Nebuchadnezzar. This hymn says Nebuchadnezzar is the King of Britain. All the evils are traceable to the kingship of Britain) Jese, 1990:11]. The leadership of the Vapostori sects felt the pain of the ill-treatment, oppression and subjugation of blacks that they went on to compose songs to express their concerns against the regime of the coloniser.

Analysis

The task at hand requires that an analysis of the application of theology in the situation of Zimbabwe be given. The key question is: Have Zimbabwean theologians been able to apply theology to everyday life? Richard Osmer (2008:4) explains that Practical Theology addresses the following key questions:

- What is going on? (Descriptive-empirical task).
- Why is this going on? (Interpretative task).
- What ought to be going on? (Normative task).
- How might we respond? (Pragmatic task).

An analysis of gathered information points out that the response is in the affirmative, though some form of ambivalence is also noted. There are visible elements that can be categorised as both negative and positive. As pointed out by General Chiwenga, some of the missionaries sided with the oppressor during the colonisation process. Some mission institutions can therefore be viewed as potters used by the coloniser to produce an African who would be subservient to the needs of the coloniser. The example of Jules Jenkins is representative of what was happening in other parts of Africa as realised in the behind the scenes role played by missionaries such as the Anglican Bishop George Hegel Knight-Bruce in persuading Lobengula to grant mineral concessions to Rhodes, Rudd and Maguire. Ndabaningi Sithole concurred while at the same time he also pointed out the positive contributions that include education, health and castigation of social ills perpetrated by the government of the day. This positive role of the Church is especially noted in the contribution of the pastoral letters churned out by the ZCBC as well as its service arm, CCJP. The sterling works of theologians such as Banana, Sithole, Muzorewa and Bakare cannot be overemphasized. By applying Practical Theology with a liberation thrust, these men of the cloth showed the much needed prophetic voice that the faint-hearted can only dream of.

Bearing this in mind, it is therefore not out of tune to contend that some Zimbabwean Theologians deserve to be designated the title of free thinkers and bulwarks against excesses of the State. The impact of Theology in the pre and post Independent Zimbabwe make it imperative to further argue that a nation without sound theologians is 'doomed'. It has been made evident that Theology of a political nature emanating from the theological crucibles of the cited theologians and institution has over the years been concerned with three main things: the maintenance of a *cordone sanitaire* (a healthy barricade) between politics and religion; reflection on unjust and alienating political structures; the production of metaphysical images around which communities are organised (*cf.* Kirwan, 2008:9). The social teaching of the Church brought to the fore the Micah motif that gaud one to 'love mercy, justice, and peace'. Issues of justice stand out at the heart of theology, thereby making it a relevant and a *sine qua non* entity of a society.

Furthermore, it has also emerged that some historical facts keep on being reignited as far as Church-State relations are concerned. What happened in Germany in 1934, that is, the publication of the Barman Declaration has its match in the Zimbabwean context. The document crafted by Karl Barth and other theologians of the German Confessing Church was a response to Hitler's National Church. Its spirit of castigating the ills of leadership is what is

seen in the words of the likes of Banana and Sithole. Just as the Kairos Document of South Africa was produced by a number of theologians in 1985, as a protest against apartheid, the same spirit is realised in the several pastoral letters issued by the ZCBC and other individuals already discussed.

Conclusion

That theology was inseparable from the pioneering efforts of colonising Zimbabwe is an undeniable fact. There was a mixed bag of the motives that the missionary who first came to this part of the world had. Some were for the good of the society to which the Word was to be preached, while some were not so noble for they entertained the interests of the coloniser. Be that as it may, the work of the missionary proved to have been the greatest moulder of some of the brightest political minds that Zimbabwe has ever had. As for instance, some people who took lead in the struggle for Zimbabwe were affiliated to the Christian religion and they found justification of their participation in the struggle from the Bible. Thus, they gave a practical application of theology to everyday life, hence, the argument that theology does indeed bake bread. It has done so in the past, it is doing it today, and signs are promising that it shall do so in the future.

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