

THE RELEVANCE OF BLACK THEOLOGY IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

Black theology became popular in South Africa in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a result of the contradictions of White oppression that spanned over three centuries. The height of White oppression of Blacks and other races in that country was the formal legalization of apartheid in 1948. The Black theology movement played a significant role in the collapse of apartheid and the introduction of democracy in 1994.

Following the demise of apartheid, scholars like Charles Villa-Vicencio, Valpy Fitzgerald, and Jesse Mugambi have argued that Black theology is no longer relevant in South Africa. They contend that it should be replaced with the theology of reconstruction.

The predominant question from the foregoing is whether Black theology is still relevant in the transformation of South Africa or not. This paper proposes that Black theology is still relevant in the sense that most of the problems that stimulated its emergence —racialism, poverty, and cultural imperialism still exist in the country. More importantly, Black theology evolved as a crisis theology, which went into a state of inertia after the demise of apartheid and still possesses the potentials that are yet to be fully explored in Post-apartheid South Africa. Such untapped potentials can be important instruments for the transformation of South Africa. This paper therefore argues that Black, rather than Reconstruction theology would be a better approach to resolving the aforementioned problems. This article answers the question of the relevance of Black theology in South Africa by undertaking a critical analysis of the state of Black theology today in South Africa and adducing points for the continuous relevance of Black theology in Post-apartheid South Africa.

1. Introduction

Generally, Black theology is a contextualized form of liberation theology invented by the various Black peoples of the world, especially those in North America and South Africa, directed towards their emancipation from social, political, economic, and religious injustice perpetrated by the Whites. Consequently, James Cone and Gayraud Wilmore (1979:101), early advocates of Black theology in North America, wrote:

Black theology is a theology of black liberation. It seeks to plumb the black condition in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, so that the Black community can see that the gospel is commensurate with the achievements of black humanity. Black theology is a theology of 'blackness.' It is the affirmation of black humanity that emancipates black people from white racism, thus providing authentic freedom for both whites and black people. It affirms the humanity of white people in that it says 'NO' to the encroachment of white oppression.

Mwanbazambi (2009:1) defined South African Black theology as “a conscious and theological dimension of the liberation struggle against apartheid.” For Mosala (1989:1), Black theology is “a cultural tool of struggle propounded by young South Africans who were influenced by the new black consciousness.” Basil Moore also noted that South African Black theology is “a situational theology. And the situation is that of the Black man [sic] in South Africa.” Moore (1973:5) further stated that Black theology provides a means for Black South Africans to affirm their humanity through “a theology of the oppressed by the oppressed, for the liberation of the oppressed.” At the center of the development of Black theology was the need for a brand of theology that would ensure emancipation from the clutches of oppression. Black theology was also meant to speak to the oppressor in a way that would allow him to hear the good news and be saved. In a nutshell, Black theology is a biblically inspired movement that arose in South Africa in the late 1960s and early 1970s geared toward the political, social, economic, and religious emancipation of the people of South Africa. It is a cultural tool because it draws heavily on the philosophy of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) spearheaded by Steve Biko. It is also situational because it is concerned with an interpretive model of the Christian Scripture in a way that addresses the situation of the Blacks, Coloreds, and Indians of South Africa.

Recent scholarshipⁱ in South Africa has argued that Black theology no longer has relevance in post-apartheid South Africa. Those who hold this view believe that Reconstruction theology would be more appropriate for a democratic South Africa. The protagonists of Reconstruction theology argue that since apartheid, which was the major reason for the emergence of Black theology, has ceased, there is no further need for Black theology. Yet, the problem of poverty and race still exist in South Africa, which leaves the argument without solid footing. On the other hand, scholars such as Boesak, Maluleke, Tutu, and Mosala argue that Black theology still has relevance in South Africa, since some of the concerns that engendered Black theology, such as political, economic and religious inequalities, coupled with the HIV/AIDS scourge, environmental challenges, and gender injustices, are yet to be addressed, even after democratization. Phiri and Gathogo (2010) contend that, rather than consider Black theology as obsolete, it should be made to operate under the larger paradigm of Reconstruction theology since the socioeconomic, political, and religious conditions in South Africa, is similar to that of other postcolonial African nations.ⁱⁱ In an effort to address these issues, I argue that Black theology is still relevant for the socio-political, economic and religious transformation of South Africa.

2. Theology of Reconstruction

The end of the Cold War in the late 1980s and the introduction of *perestroika* under President Mikhail Gorbachev’s Soviet Union were instrumental to the call for a theology of reconstruction in Africa and South Africa. Consequently, at the meeting of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) on March 30, 1990, there were several presentations in response to an earlier call from the president and secretary of the conference, Desmond Tutu and J. B. Chipenda, for papers to reflect on a theology of reconstruction for Africa in order to ensure the continuous relevance of Africa on the international political and economic scene (Phiri and Gathogo, 2010:1). Two scholars have been prominent in the advocacy of reconstruction theology in Africa: Jesse Mugambi and Charles Villa-Vicencio. As a way of gaining an understanding of the arguments of the leading proponents of the theology of reconstruction in Africa, it is therefore expedient to discuss their positions followed by a critique of their theological proposals.

2.1. Jesse Mugambi

Jesse Mugambi (2003:128) suggested at the Nairobi conference of the AACCC that all forms of African theology—Black or African—needed to shift emphasis from the Exodus motif of liberation to a theology of reconstruction. In his view, what Africa needed most was a theological articulation that took into consideration the need for reconstruction in line with the New World Order. For Mugambi, the Nehemiah figure showed a greater resemblance to the need of Africa than the figure of Moses. Mugambi reasoned that the problems of racism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, and ideological branding had caused so much destruction and distortion in African societies that efforts needed to concentrate on rebuilding the political, economic, and religious arenas of African society. In his articulation of the reconstructive motif, Mugambi delineated three levels of operation for reconstruction theology: (1) personal, which deals with individual efforts to reconstruct personal life, finances, intentions, and motives after the destruction caused by colonialism, exploitation, and oppression; (2) ecclesial, which has to do with the involvement of the church in its theological articulation to engage the public in such a way that would move it towards a reconsideration of church life, management, finances, and pastoral care that would propel society in the direction of rebuilding what had been destroyed through colonialism, imperialism, and apartheid; and (3) cultural, which deals with cultural reorientation and involves economic, political, social, ethical, and religious issues. The reconstructive motif in Mugambi's (1995:16-17) view is an all-encompassing notion—an action that affects all aspects of human life. In this sense, Mugambi's reconstruction theology, as J. Libanio (2000:172) observed, is a theological praxis that embraces different forms of actions in society. J. Fisher (2007: 128) posited that Mugambi's suggestion is a concept borrowed from engineering and adapted to the socio-scientific field known as social engineering. It is a concept that is used where there is dysfunctionality. Mugambi (1995:17) believed that the dysfunctionality in the African socio-political and economic life can be fixed through a religious worldview that acts as a synthesis for all things that humanity loves and embraces. Accordingly, Mugambi suggested that religion would be the best approach for the realization of the reconstruction of African society. This notion has been considered a welcome view by some in South Africa who argue that in the face of such lofty suggestion, Black theology is no longer relevant to South African society. Apartheid had ended, Blacks are now in control, and since these were major problems that engendered Black theology, those who identify with such a theological brand should jettison Black theology and embrace the theology of reconstruction.

2.2. Charles Villa-Vicencio

Villa-Vicencio (1992:2) asserts that there is need for a paradigm shift in theological contemplation in line with the major shift in the political landscape in Africa. Villa-Vicencio argued that due to the repudiation of apartheid and the unbanning of political organizations such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), it is necessary for the proponents of Black theology to shift their position from the clamor for justice and equity to reconstruction. Villa-Vicencio (1992:1) placed the concept of reconstruction within the ambit of the action upon which the church needs to embark as a result of its theological proclamation for justice and the affirmation of human dignity. He further added that in the course of reconstruction, countries that were earlier bedeviled with the problems of greed, avarice, exploitation, and domination will be transformed. He drew a parallel between post-apartheid South Africa, in which activists who had been banned and exiled had returned to fill the vacuum created by the new dispensation, and post-exilic Judah, where those who had been captives were allowed to return home to embark on the work of reconstruction in their devastated land.

Solomons (2010:29) observed that, “One may argue that reconstruction in South Africa’s context involved the difficult tasks of breaking down prejudices of race, class and sexism; and the difficult challenge of creating an all-inclusive society built on the very values denied to the majority of South Africans under apartheid.” Villa-Vicencio (1992:7-9) was optimistic that if all the conditions mentioned above were met, South Africa would be headed towards a true liberation theology and tried to justify his suggestion for a theology of reconstruction by invoking the biblical passages of Ezra and Nehemiah, dealing with the return of the exiles, arguing that efforts in South Africa should move toward a post-exilic theology of reconstruction rather than the liberation theme of the Exodus passage. Such a theology, according to Villa-Vicencio, will serve as an integrative hub for political, social, economic, and legal aspects of life. In this wise, it could be said that Villa-Vicencio articulated a view that shows the importance of religion in nation building. He argued that the church ought to play a vital role in the process of societal transformation and sustenance.

3. A Critique of the Theology of Reconstruction

Essentially, theology of reconstruction seeks a shift from the prevailing liberation paradigm of theological contemplation in South Africa as a way of moving away from a theology of resistance to a theology of engagement relevant to the New World Order. One must commend the efforts of the protagonists of theology of reconstruction for several reasons. First, they have demonstrated the dynamic nature of theology by constantly seeking ways of making theology relevant to on-going situations in society. Second, they have shown that theology is not supposed to be private and individualistic but should be public and prophetic in action. Third, they have shown that theology can be a proper avenue for nation-building, especially with the action of Nehemiah taking the forefront in the reconstruction of the fallen walls of Jerusalem.

However, the theology of reconstruction raises some problems that need attention. First, as Vellem (2007:166) pointed out, in Mugambi’s estimation, the Exodus motif needs to be set aside in favor of reconstruction because of the geographical differences between the situation with the children of Israel and South Africans. Mugambi questioned the rationale behind the continuous appropriation of the Exodus motif, since South Africans did not move from one land to another or cross any Red Sea. What Mugambi missed, however, is that the appropriation of the Exodus motif is not only about the geography and physical condition of the people of South Africa; instead, the point is that the Blacks of South Africa drew a parallel between their oppression and that of the children of Israel under Egyptian bondage. They observed that God intervened in history to deliver the oppressed children of Israel and deduced that if God performed such a miraculous act in the life of the children of Israel, and God is a God of justice, then He would fight on their behalf and set them free as well. Thus, Mugambi closed any possibility of applying Scripture to a particular situation. Second, Vellem added that Mugambi invoked the redemptive/salvific theme in the European Reformation and Renaissance to support his call for a paradigm shift from liberation to reconstruction theology. Mugambi’s redemptive/salvific theme was further corroborated by Dedji, who in fact traced the theological root of Mugambi to such theologians as Paul Tillich and Karl Jaspers. Both Dedji (2003:45) and Gathogo (2005:271) noted that certain elements, such as the reinterpretation of obsolete metaphors and idioms, indicated Mugambi’s reading of Tillich, while Gathogo observed that Mugambi’s invention of new myths was traceable to his reading of Jaspers. Dedji maintained that Mugambi’s Western

theological roots had influenced him negatively in his attempt to articulate a theological model for South Africa and indeed Africa.

Benedicts (2004:7) asserts that Mugambi's decision to invoke the Reformation theme to support his quest for a theology of reconstruction might not be unconnected to the impact of the Reformation, especially Calvinism, in the socio-political development of continental Europe, particularly when one considers the effect of Calvinism on the development of Capitalism. However, Vellem (2007:169-171) noted that even beyond the influence of Reformation on the development of continental Europe, the problem with Mugambi was his weak articulation of the tenets of liberation in his theology. Vellem reasoned that Black theology is essentially contextual; for contextualization to be effective, it is important to begin theological contemplation with the experience of the people contextualizing or being contextualized. To this extent, Vellem argued that Mugambi's error was situated in his desire to begin his theology of reconstruction on a Western theological premise rather than upon an African one. The major problem with Mugambi's suggestion, however, is exegetical weakness. There is nothing wrong in using the redemptive salvific theme borrowed from the Reformation where proper care is taken to interpret Scriptures before their applications. According to Cullman (1967:122-127) Mugambi's leap from Exodus to Nehemiah lacked proper interpretation. A careful consideration of the Exodus motif against the biblical history of salvation depicts God's continuous action in history to redeem humanity from the problem of sin. The Exodus and Old Testament narratives of God's intervention to deliver His people is an archetype of the redemptive work that Jesus was to complete in the future. However, it is often difficult to realize this continuity in biblical history if one tries to dichotomize and compartmentalize various sections of the Bible without looking at the whole picture of God's history of redemption. A hasty leap from interpretation to application is often the problem of contextual theologies—a problem identifiable in Mugambi's appropriation of the reconstruction theme.

In the same vein, both Maluleke and Pityana engaged the protagonists of the theology of reconstruction, especially the work of Villa-Vicencio, contending that it should have begun with the work of liberation. Maluleke was particularly skeptical about Villa-Vicencio's suggestion that the call for a theology of reconstruction would bring little or no change in the African situation. Maluleke (1997:23) stated,

The assumption that the end of the "cold war" has immediate significance for ordinary Africans and that the so-called "New World Order" is truly "new" and truly "orderly" for Africans *is faulty*. Yet, as Mugambi himself rightly points out, Africa's problems of poverty, war, dictatorships, and American bully-boy tactics are unlikely to decrease. In fact, the New World Order is not only likely to relegate Africa into a "fourth world" but it will also impose its own prescriptions on African countries. One such prescription is democracy or its semblance. I have also been critical of the fact that both Mugambi and Villa-Vicencio appear to minimize the value of previous African theologies of inculturation and liberation. . . . Weaknesses notwithstanding, twenty-first century African theologies cannot afford to simply abandon them. We must look for ways in which to move on without despising what has already been achieved. Otherwise we might think we have progressed forward when in reality we have moved backwards.

In essence, Maluleke believes that there should be no hasty move from liberation to reconstruction theology. In his opinion, it would be more beneficial for African theology to

consolidate the various approaches it has already charted than seek ways to be relevant to the so-called New World Order. Such a move could hurt more than help. Pityana (1995) felt that Villa-Vicencio's call for a theology of reconstruction posed no threat to Black liberation theology because it could still be situated within the ambit of liberation theology. Indeed, Pityana noted that Villa-Vicencio was highly instrumental to the evolution of Black theology in South Africa, which suggests that Villa-Vicencio's advocacy of a theology of reconstruction could not be an attempt to subvert Black theology in South Africa. While Maluleke expressed a critical objection to the notion of a theology of reconstruction as espoused by Villa-Vicencio, Pityana (1995) expressed optimism that theologies of reconstruction and liberation could be complementary.

Following the aforementioned arguments, it could be said that what South Africa needs today is not a shift from theology of liberation to theology of reconstruction, as the concerns of reconstruction theology are already inherent in liberation theology. In fact, it could be argued that liberation could be an umbrella to accommodate reconstruction. A change from liberation to reconstruction would only imply a change of nomenclature that makes little or no difference in the long term. The reason for an argument against a shift from liberation to reconstruction theology is hinged upon the fact that reconstruction is almost inconceivable without liberation. An enslaved mind, no matter its ingenuity, can hardly implement any lofty plans independent of the master. South African Blacks groaned under apartheid for about half a century with such enterprising leaders of repute as Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela, and Sabelo Ntwasa. These leaders were vibrant and full of ideas for a free South Africa where justice and equity reigned but were never able to implement such ideals of an egalitarian society as long as they remained under the tutelage of the White supremacists. The situation was the same for the children of Israel under bondage in Egypt.

It may be argued that South Africa still faces the same problems that were present during the days of apartheid—namely racism, violence, inequality, and poverty. The point is that to eliminate or mitigate these problems requires a proper appropriation of the tenets of true liberation. In this case, liberation could be seen from two perspectives—spiritual and physical, as described below:

First, spiritual liberation refers to freedom from the bondage of sin as a result of genuine repentance (metanoia) and the subsequent appropriation of the blessings of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Such freedom presumes that humanity is held under bondage as a co-inheritor of the sins of Adam and needs faith in Christ to be set free from such bondage. When a person is saved, he or she becomes a new creation in Christ Jesusⁱⁱⁱ. The changed life depicts a process of reconstruction that continues to the end of the life of the person. However, such changed life or reconstruction would be impossible without first believing in Christ and repudiating one's sins. A person who truly appropriates the blessings of the cross would be freed from greed, avarice, segregation, and corruption. A changed life is full of compassion and avoids situations of injustice. This is perhaps what has not been properly appropriated in South Africa. What is needed in South Africa is freedom indeed. A mere shift from liberation to reconstruction will not make any difference. Second, physical liberation, on the other hand, refers to freedom from natural, social, political, economic, and religious enslavement. It is freedom from all forms of physical oppression represented in the form of colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism. Enslavement of any form inhibits the ability of a person to perform at his or her best. Jesus

corroborates the significance of physical liberation when, after His rejection at the Nazareth Synagogue, He went around the area of Capernaum performing exorcisms and healing the lame and the sick (Luke 4:16-44). The foundation of effective performance is contingent upon the level of freedom a nation experiences. South Africa has flag independence, but economic power still resides outside the majority^{iv}. Lack of economic freedom is a great drawback on nation-building. It does not matter whether the approach is liberation or reconstruction—proper development and socio-political and economic transformation will take place where true freedom is embraced and appropriated.

The most important factor for South Africa, therefore, is not whether it shifts from liberation to reconstruction, as indeed liberation is the bedrock for reconstruction. Reconstruction will not be feasible where there is no freedom. In a way, reconstruction could be said to be a logical consequence of liberation and, as Pityana observed, reconstruction can operate under the ambit of liberation. In light of the above discussion, the following section will seek to address the relevance of Black theology in post-apartheid South Africa.

5. The Relevance of Black Theology in Post-Apartheid South Africa

In line with the discussion in the previous section on the problems of reconstruction theology, it will not be out of place to concur with Maluleke that the call for a paradigm shift from a theology of liberation to reconstruction is premature. While one may acknowledge the fact that Black theology of liberation has not been able to articulate a relevant model for the way forward in its theological contemplation, this does not suggest that the whole model should be jettisoned for something new. Black theology can still be relevant because the problems that occasioned its emergence are still present within the South African society, which suggests that even though South Africa has obtained flag independence, the theme of liberation should be explored as a framework for solving the myriad of problems confronting the country. What matters for post-apartheid theologians in South Africa is the proper harnessing of both the resources used in the hey-days of Black theology movement and the determination with which they confronted apartheid and the application of such to the problems of contemporary South Africa. There are several specific reasons why Black theology remains relevant, as will be discussed below.

First, Black theology remains relevant in post-apartheid South Africa because of its relationship with the BCM ideology. As a cultural movement, Black theology was a means of reminding Blacks of their self-worth and dignity. However, self-worth and self-dignity are not only meant for Blacks. The White minority, who ruled and oppressed the Blacks, as Tutu pointed out, did so out of fear of being dominated by the Blacks. There is a tendency for a reversal of situations in South Africa. It behooves Blacks, through the culture of the dignity of humanity, to seek to affirm the self-worth of their White counterparts through the BCM ideology and liberation. The affirmation of the dignity of White people would better be achieved through the spirit of liberation, which seeks to hold no person under bondage, be it cultural, social, political, or economic. The second reason why Black theology is still relevant has to do with the idea of reconciliation. Liberation seeks a true and genuine integration of humanity, and true liberation engenders forgiveness and reconciliation. Where there is true liberation, one is free from the residue of deep-seated anger and the spirit of vengeance. In this sense, both the oppressed and the oppressor can embrace one another in the spirit of forgiveness. True liberation, rather than

reconstruction, can be the appropriate tool for Blacks to reach out to their White counterparts and seek to live in peace and harmony. Admittedly, the notion of reconciliation and forgiveness may not come that easily, especially since some Black South Africans believe that there cannot be reconciliation in a situation of unequal relationships, particularly without restitution by the Whites in the form of restoration of land to Black South Africans. However, Tutu has argued unequivocally that such reconciliation is possible, as was demonstrated by Mandela after his release from prison and his setting up of the TRC. Moreover, the philosophy of *ubuntu* and the *imago Dei*, can be a model through which Black theology of liberation can seek ways of reconciling with the people on the other side of the divide.

Mwanbazambi noted that Black theology of liberation can be an effective instrument for re-evangelization and reintegration of South Africa. He added that the vibrant nature of Black theology and the source of knowledge it provides have opened the way to reach Africans with the Gospel of Christ in a manner that is intelligible to them, using African symbols and narratives. According to Mwanbazambi (2010:4), Black theology would be relevant through the re-evangelization of Africa, reconstructing, reconscientizing, Christian education, contextualizing African theologies, rethinking the Christian mission for African churches, reimagining new ways to realize community development based on biblical hermeneutics, assisting the ongoing struggle against poverty, developing new jobs, Christian leadership and searching for a new inclusive language of naming and communication.

He (2010:4) added that,

South African Black theology has added to the current body of knowledge and one aspect of its continued relevance is that it proposed a new way for the positive transformation of African societies. Today, we can draw inspiration from that new approach in our search for pastoral or missiological model of care that is contextual and liberating.

In this way, Mwanbazambi suggested, Black theology continues to be relevant both as an academic tool and a praxis tool for South African Blacks. It is an intellectual tool because it can be a means of engaging theological discourse in South Africa. Black theology, because of its cultural ideology, is an intellectual/theological think tank for the church in South Africa. It could be adapted to a pastoral use because at its root is the concern for the oppressed, the marginalized, and the lost. Black theology of liberation seeks, like Jesus, to reach out to the down-trodden and societal rejects and make them relevant by giving them hope in the world.

As a holistic Christian theology that seeks to cater to the spiritual and physical needs of South Africans in line with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Black theology can borrow a leaf from the evangelistic works of the late Nicholas Bhengu. Black theology in post-apartheid South Africa should move beyond seeking solutions to socio-political and economic issues alone; but should find ways of integrating mission and evangelism into its activities. The same vibrant organizational methods that were used for combating and bringing down apartheid could be rejuvenated and used for massive evangelistic outreaches in post-apartheid South Africa. The significance of the transformative power of the Gospel of Christ has been attested in the history of the Church and as exemplified in the prodigious evangelistic exploits of Bhengu in South Africa^v.

Furthermore, Black theology of liberation speaks against every form of oppression in the society. It affirms the rights and dignity of persons irrespective of their color, creed, or status in life. To this end, Black theology can be used as an important tool in engaging the problems confronting post-apartheid South African society, such as HIV/AIDS, corruption, colonialism and neo-colonialism, violence, patriarchy and the victim oriented psyche by cooperating with the churches and the government to organize seminars, workshops and establishing guidelines on Christian ethics, organizing mission and evangelistic programs as well as providing assistance and counseling for those who are affected in one way or the other by the problems mentioned above. Four of these issues: HIV/AIDS, corruption, violence and victim oriented psyche are hereby discussed in the following section.

5.1 HIV/AIDS

Black theology's relevance in the face of the debilitating consequences of the HIV/AIDS endemic cannot be overemphasized. Steve de Gruchy (2005:233) reported that a special United Nations (UN) report published on the HIV/AIDS crisis in South Africa in 2004 revealed that about 5.3 million South Africans—out of a population of about 42 million people— were estimated to have tested positive for the HIV virus or had full-blown AIDS. A similar report by the South African Department of Health showed that about 30 percent of pregnant women between 15 and 49 were living with the HIV virus in 2010. The overall implication of the AIDS crisis in South Africa is a drastic reduction in its population force, especially the working class group. Such depletion in the labor force will undoubtedly lead to serious economic consequences, as it will affect the level of productivity and cause an eventual shortage of food and productive services in the country. As a theology of liberation, Maluleke (2005:31) noted that there is need for a reflection on the silence of the Bible on the crisis of AIDS that has ravaged millions of souls in South Africa.

The challenge posed by the problem of AIDS is enormous. It involves the challenge of dealing with bereavement, proper sexual orientation, rejection, and stigmatization. Black theology as a prophetic and public theology can continue to provide both the impetus and the theological basis for the church in South Africa to be positively involved in dealing with the social and economic problems created by the scourge of AIDS by reaching out to the affected and also providing functional education to its members on appropriate “sexual ethics, patriarchy, stigma, suffering, exclusion, care, death and bereavement.”

5.2 Corruption

Corruption continues to be a problem in South Africa as well as other parts of Africa. Jonathan Hyslop (2005) and Tom Lodge (1998) noted that there have been widespread allegations of corruption involving high-ranking government officials in post-apartheid South Africa. A prominent case is that of the arms scandal and others investigations dealing with the tenure process. The problem was that there were irregularities in the award of defense contract for the procurement of ships and war planes for the country's military. After investigation, Zuma, then-deputy president, was found to have been involved in some corrupt practices. Although President Mbeki threatened to remove Zuma as deputy president, this did not happen, and Zuma eventually became president of South Africa. One of the major problems in Africa is underdevelopment, which is tied to the issue of corruption. It is difficult to attract a reasonable level of investment in a society ridden with corruption. It is the task of Black theology to reflect on the culture of

corruption in South Africa by fashioning a theological/ethical basis on the ills of corruption and then seeking to work with the church and legislation against corruption. For instance, Black theology can devise a theological reflection based on the cultural concept of *ubuntu* to explain that a corrupt leader negates the principle of *ubuntu*, which says that the personhood of others is affirmed in the corporate existence of the community. It is almost impossible for one to affirm the interdependent nature of the community as well as the dignity of others where he/she diverts the funds meant for the whole society into his/her private use. As a theology of praxis, Black theology can be used as a means of reorientation of society toward concern for others by eschewing corruption. For instance, Exodus 23:8 says, And you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of the just). The root word **dx;v** is the same word used in Deuteronomy 16: 18-20 and Isaiah 1: 23 to refer to a bribe. The same notion is identified in Ecclesiastes 7: 7 and Psalm 62: 10 as sinful and injurious to the peaceful existence of society. Black theology can be a means of properly harnessing these passages and other similar texts in the Old and New Testaments as a means of demonstrating God's disapproval of corrupt practices. Kunyihop (2008:170-172), corroborating the Bible's condemnation of corruption, noted that corruption impairs right and proper judgment. Black theology as a prophetic theology can be used as proclamation against the evil of corruption and its effects on South African society.

5.3 Victim Oriented Psyche

Closely related to the problem of corruption in South Africa is the concept of victim oriented psyche. Social psychologists teach that victims of any kind —racism, sexism or violence often feel insecure even after such victimization has ended. South African Blacks consider themselves as the victims of a long period of discrimination and oppression by the Whites. Consequently, even in freedom, they still feel insecure. The natural consequence that flows from the feeling of insecurity is for the victim to become defensive against further acts of oppression —real or imagined. One way Black South Africans think they can secure themselves against such further oppression is to strengthen their socio-economic and political conditions by all means in order to catch up with their White counterparts as quickly as they can.

In an attempt to catch up with their White counterparts, Black South Africans, on assuming office under a free South Africa tried to amass as much wealth as they could, even if it meant doing so illegally. Therefore, there was increase in political patronage in the new South Africa. Leaders of the ANC felt obligated to compensate those who were loyal to them in the days of struggle against apartheid; to this extent, many of such loyalists were appointed into public offices, whether they were qualified or not, as a means of surrounding themselves with trusted loyalists. Similarly, as in other African countries, such as Uganda, Kenya and Nigeria, there were large-scale frauds through award of contracts in South Africa, such as the case with the defense contracts involving kick-backs, bribery and rent payment. At the end of the day, it is the underprivileged, such as “the poor, the old, the disabled, the sick, the children and the new born,” in the society that bear the brunt of such corrupt practices (Phiri and Gathogo, 2012:15).

Black theology can be relevant in allaying the problems associated with the psychology of the victimized among Black South Africans by seeking to re-orientate the leaders by reminding them of the basic tenets of Black theology —the dignity of the Black race. It should be noted that insecurity is a product of inferiority. Black theology, having been a tool of reinforcing the

humanness of the Black race, can be used to strengthen the level of confidence in South African Black leaders. Second Black theology is about fairness, equality and social justice. Black leaders can be reminded of these key elements of Black theology and that such ideals are blatantly side-stepped when leaders are involved in corrupt practices. In the same vein, Black leaders can be reminded that they were once weak, powerless and oppressed. Black theology of liberation aimed at bringing an end to such conditions of weakness and oppression; and therefore, corruption contradicts the basic tenets of Black theology. More importantly, Black theology as, a Christian movement and a theology associated with praxis, can work with South African churches by organizing seminars, teachings, and workshops on the evil of corruption and its economic, political and social implications for the society. In like manner, as a prophetic theology, Black theology could be a means of speaking to the problems of corruption in South Africa. For example, Tutu (1994:203) observed that Black theology should continue to be a vigilant societal watchdog, seeking to be prophetic when things are wrong in the society. With such positions strengthened, Black theology can be an instrument to assuage the fears of the Black leaders in order to help the Black leaders deal with the problem of the victimized person's psyche.

5.4 Violence

One of the concerns of Black theology is its reaction to the violence done to Blacks during the apartheid regime. However, there continues to be violence in South Africa on the domestic front, specifically spousal abuse, child molestation, rape, and inter-tribal/ethnic violence. Black theology can serve as a tool to engage the crisis of violence by using its commitment to praxis to reach out to those affected. It can also assist in a theological/ethical reflection that shows that God abhors violence and those who practice such will face the judgment of God. A good example of such effort is the Tutu Peace Foundation. Black theology can cooperate with the Tutu Peace Foundation to provide functional education for youths in South Africa as a program of mass mobilization and reorientation towards the necessity of living in peace in the world. The African concept of *ubuntu*, good neighborliness, and good moral upbringing should be properly developed and inculcated in South African youths.

6. Conclusion

The argument presented above shows that, although Black theology has been faced with the challenge of inertia in the years after apartheid, it does not mean that it is no longer relevant in post-apartheid South Africa. Black theology as a dynamic tool can continue to engage society and seek ways to provide solutions to the problems of evangelization, a true biblical perspective on the problem of corruption, violence, and racism. This becomes even more possible in light of the fact that Black theology of liberation is essentially a theology of praxis and has already developed and continues to develop pragmatic tools for reflection on the situation in South Africa. What has to be done mainly is to reactivate the various machineries that were set up during the apartheid days, like the Women's Liberation project, the Wilgespruit Fellowship Center, the setting up of foundations to cater to the needs of the victims of HIV/AIDS pandemic, rape, violence, and abuse, as well as workshops and seminars on the evil of corruption. Such projects will further enhance human development as well as take care of the spiritual and material needs of the people of South Africa.

7. End Notes

ⁱ McGovern (1989) insists that South African Black theologians should shift attention from liberation to reconstruction. In his opinion, it is necessary that liberation theologians divest themselves of its social analysis and preoccupation with global dependent capitalism and move toward a more specific analysis of land reform and other pressing needs that would help popular Christian movements be more politically effective at the national level. Charles Villa-Vicencio also referred to liberation theology as not just a theology of resistance but of reconstruction, while Villa-Vicencio and Valpy Fitzgerald maintain that liberation theologians need to move beyond general indictment of globalization and neo-liberalism to the development of specific analysis and proposals for action, both in micro- and macro-economics. Indeed, the advocacy of a theology of reconstruction in South Africa dates back to 1990 when the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) called on its theologians to reflect on the end of the Cold War in 1989 and its relevance to Africa. At the 1990 Nairobi meeting, the AACC noted that it was time for African theologians to decide whether the Black theology of South Africa or African theology should shift its focus from the Exodus liberation motif to a reconstructive motif.

ⁱⁱ Record shows that several post-colonial African countries such as Uganda, Senegal, Gabon and Nigeria among others are confronted with problems of bad leadership, high level of unemployment, shortage or lack of social amenities and infrastructures such as good roads, potable water. Coupled with these problems are the issues of political instability and weak economies. However, contrary to Phiri and Gathogo, I believe that Reconstruction theology should be subsumed under Black theology. The tenets of Black theology are more relevant to the situation of all Black people especially in terms of culture than the notion of reconstruction. While it may be argued that reconstruction is more expedient and general to all post-colonial African countries, it lacks the necessary cultural flavor needed for the re-orientation and re-awakening of the African mind. One of the greatest problems confronting post-colonial African nations is the problem of identity crisis arising from the pollution of their culture through the imposition of Western culture on them. Therefore, an important element necessary for the transformation of the African society is the recovery of its true cultural values, which is a very important ingredient of Black theology and the Black Consciousness Movement.

ⁱⁱⁱ John 8: 32; 3: 16; 2 Corinthians 5: 17. See Ephesians 4: 21-24 where Paul uses the “put on/put off” metaphor to explain the changes necessary in the life of those who have accepted the blessings of the cross. Paul’s teachings can be likened to the notion of reconstruction of one’s private life, behaviors and attitudes, which ultimately possesses a macro implication as individuals proceed to practice pious and righteous living.

^{iv} It was alleged, for instance, that the poverty level among non-Whites increased from 27 percent to 43 percent between 1993 and 1998, especially in the Kwazulu-Natal province. It was further mentioned that approximately 1.8 million South Africans in 2000 were living on less than \$1.00 per day, and more than 2.3 million lived on \$2.00 per day. See Johannes G. Hoogeveen and Berk Ozler, “Not Separate, Not Equal: Poverty and Inequity in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” in *William Davidson Institute Working Papers* 739 (2005): 22. See also Haroo Bhorot and Ravi Kanbur,

^v For example it was reported that at several of Bhengu’s evangelistic meetings, a large number of people who came forward to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and personal Savior often gave up their arms such as guns, knives and cudgels with which they have committed one crime or the other. As Billy Lephoko attested; ‘It did not matter where he preached, whether in cities or rural areas crime (sic) came down; people turned stolen goods and their tools of trade in to Bhengu. Stolen goods and weapons were then taken to the police in truck loads.’ He noted further, ‘The Johannesburg Star’s staff reporter (in *Mission News*, October, 1958), reporting under the title ‘A Black Billy Graham’ wrote: The fire died out of the tall, bespectacled Zulu’s eyes and voice and he began slowly around the congregation, intoning: “*Ubugebengu abukhokheli lutho. Nikelani izikhali nani kuNkulunkulu.*” (“Crime does not pay. Surrender your arms and yourselves to God.”) There was a slight stir and then knives, pangas, hatchets, coshes, knuckledusters and other dangerous weapons were silently passed from hand to hand to the Rev. Nicholas Bhengu, South Africa’s Black Billy Graham.’ On another occasion, following his sermon, it was reported that ‘a native from

Randfontein handed over a small, razor-sharp, needle-pointed knife with the words: "I don't know how many that has stabbed. I've lost count." Such was the impact of the late Bhengu's labor among his native South Africans and he drew the admiration of the Blacks, the Whites, the Police and even the architect of the Bantu Education program, Dr. Verwoerd. A similar effort will not be out of place for Black theology in post-apartheid South Africa. See Daniel Simon Billy Lephoko, "Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu's Lasting Legacy: A Study of the Life and Work of One of Africa's Greatest Pioneers" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pretoria, April 2010), 151-52.

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