

**AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGIES: EXPRESSIONS OF A
DECENTRED AND EMBODIED POSTCOLONIAL CHRISTIANITY**

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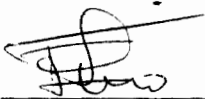
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1.0. INTRODUCTION.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19; cf. Mk 16:15). Taking on this missionary mandate, the apostles started a minority missionary movement scarcely tolerated and often persecuted. However, after the year 380 CE Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire when Emperor Constantine was converted and opened the entire Roman Empire for Christianization. This situation helped the fast spreading of the Christian faith throughout the Roman Empire around the Mediterranean sea and even beyond, as Paas (2006a: 51) says that “there are indications that, even, the apostles extended their missionary journeys beyond the boundaries of the empire”. The church in the Latin West of the Roman Empire and the church in the Greek East of the Roman Empire eventually developed respectively to the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church (Paas, 2006a: 51). These two brands of Christianity kept spreading throughout Europe even after the collapse of the Roman Empire (Paas, 2006a: 112). ˘

This spread of Christianity was not limited to Europe especially with the European exploration of foreign lands in the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. From the fifteenth century, Christianity in form of Roman Catholicism was to spread to Africa (especially sub-Saharan Africa) with the explorations and the conquest (*conquista*) of foreign lands by countries like Portugal, Spain and France. The Portuguese, Spanish and French explorations, discoveries and conquest were also combined with missionary work of priests of Roman Catholicism (Shaw, 1996: 107-119). However, from 1500 – 1650 CE was a period of reformation in the Roman Catholic Church which gave rise to the Protestant brand of Christianity in Europe (Todd, 1972).

Soon, just as Roman Catholicism earlier on began to spread outside Europe with the help of the explorations of countries like Portugal, Spain and France, Protestantism also began to spread outside Europe mainly due to the seafaring activities, discoveries, and overseas settlements by countries like Britain and the Netherlands. In the nineteenth century there were intensive European missionary activities by both Catholics and Protestants which reached a climax in Africa after 1885 and many Africans were converted to Christianity (Paas, 2006b: 134-139). During this period colonialism in Africa reached its peak, only to begin waning in the 1950s bringing national independence to most African countries and also paving the way for a renaissance of African culture (Hastings, 1979: 132). But the hopeful enthusiasm of the first years of independence in most countries; like Liberia, Zaire (DRC) under Mobutu and Malawi under Hastings Kamuzu Banda, slowly began to disappear as most ordinary people could not see any difference from colonialism (Hofmeyr, 2005: 367-372).

The position of both the Catholic and Protestant churches during these stages of political independence varied from being persecuted to being an ally of the government, sometimes even co-responsible for the violence (Shaw, 1996: 259-282). Responding to this period saw the rise in both the Catholic and Protestant churches of a number of phenomena, one of which has been the flourishing of African liberation theologies from the early 1970s. Of course, as I show later in section 2.2, outside the academia the ideological resistance that followed soon after colonial incursions and the imposition of the white man's Christianity and the liberal views of Christians like Ernst Troeltsch and Rudolf Otto in the academia influenced the development of these African liberation theologies. Again responding to this postcolonial period, saw the flourishing of what is now known as postcolonial theory. As I elaborate later in section 2.1, postcolonial theory has three key projects: deligitimisation against the idea of

domination; bringing many voices against the idea of silencing other voices; and having mutuality against the idea of subalternity (McLennan, 2003: 68-89).

This thesis aims at analysing how African liberation theologies can be seen as expressing the ideas of postcolonial theory and hence producing a decentred and embodied form of Christianity in the postcolonial context. Of course, today debate goes on as to whether or not African liberation theologies have largely died out as a theological tradition in these first years of the twenty-first century. Because of space-constraints, this is one question that I hope to pursue in another work later. However, in this thesis my only aim is to argue that African liberation theologies can be seen as expressing the ideas of postcolonial theory and hence producing a decentred and embodied form of Christianity in the postcolonial context. But before analysing, let us have a good grasp of our context of discussion.

2.0. SETTING THE CONTEXT.

Two key areas; Postcolonial theory and African liberation theologies set the context of my arguments. Hence, to understand our context of discussion, in this section I will: first, explain postcolonial theory; second, I will explain how postcolonial theory relates with religion / Christianity and; third, I will explain African liberation theologies.

2.1. UNDERSTANDING POSTCOLONIAL THEORY.

As Gandhi (1998: viii) acknowledges, “although much has been written under its rubric, ‘postcolonialism’ itself remains a defuse and nebulous term”. However, looking at the academic and cultural conditions under which it first emerged we can say postcolonial theory presupposes a colonising legacy against which postcolonial theory offers a decolonizing legacy (cf. Gandhi, 1998).

COLONIAL LEGACY BEHIND COLONIALISM: Leela Gandhi traces Europe’s colonising legacy back to the sixteenth and eighteenth century humanisms both of which “are unanimous in their anthropocentricism or categorised valorisation of the human subject” (Gandhi, 1998:29). Further, Gandhi (1998: 29) tells us that “Renaissance humanism and its inheritors insist that man is made human by the things he knows, that is, by the curricula context of his knowledge and education”. Now, a barely discernible corollary to the humanist valorisation of man is that “some human beings are more human than others either on account of their access to superior learning or on account of their cognitive faculties” (Gandhi, 1998: 29). As such the underside of this humanism produced “the dictum that since

some human beings are more human than others, they are more substantially the measure of all things” (Gandhi, 1998: 30).

This was aggravated when in 1619 Descartes attempted to “enthroned the human being at the centre of epistemology and simultaneously, to make knowledge impregnable to doubt” (Gandhi, 1998: 34). Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am), makes, as Bertrand Russell (1961: 548) puts it, “mind more certain than matter and my mind more certain than the minds of others”. As Gandhi (1998: 34) writes, this thinking was later embraced as the enlightenment which Kant in 1784 confidently defended in *Berlinische Monatschrift*. Kant argued “that Enlightenment offers mankind a way out of or exit from, immaturity into the improved condition of maturity” (Ghandi, 1998: 30).

However, as Gandhi goes on to argue, this Enlightenment restricted the ostensibly universal structures of human existence to the normative condition of adult rationality- itself a value arising from the specific historicity of European societies instead of reflecting the radical heterogeneity of human nature. This thinking then excluded dialogue with other ways of being human and brought into existence and circulation the notion of the ‘non-adult’ as ‘inhuman’ setting “into motion a characteristically pedagogic and imperialistic hierarchy between Europe adulthood and its childish, colonised other” (Gandhi, 1998: 32). This perception of the colonised as childlike or childish invited the colonial civilizing mission as a project of bringing the colonised to maturity only to end up legitimising domination, silencing voices and producing a scenario of subalternity (Gandhi, 1998: 32).

Colonialism Legitimizing Domination: Lozada (2011: 535) tells us that imperialism and colonialism carried with it ideas that European thought was the height of knowledge, the standard for knowledge and “played a major part in portraying non-western peoples as inferior, childlike, incapable of ruling themselves, and requiring patronizing rule for the interest of the west”. As such Western thought had universalizing aspirations in its search for a totality, for a rational summary of the common structures which govern all social thought and action (McLennan, 2003: 75). Thus, they relegated all non-western discourse to invisibility and backwardness (Dirlik, 2003: 276). Hence, as Prakash (1995: 3) tells us, the colonising legacy enacts a kind of violence by instituting “enduring hierarchies of subjects and knowledges - the coloniser and the colonised, the occidental and the oriental, the civilised and the primitive, the scientific and the superstitious, the developed and the developing”. This resulted in the silencing of other voices.

Colonialism Silencing Other Voices: Those, who did not qualify as the norm, did not have a space to speak with authority and agency. Those who had been marginalized or colonized over the centuries could not even define themselves but rather had the colonizers tell them, ‘who they were’ (Lozada, 2011: 536). Nandy (1983: xi) writes, “Colonialism colonises minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within colonised societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all”. As a result, important non-western traditions, ideologies and philosophies crucial to defining non-westerners and probably of vital importance to the whole world at large were assigned by western modernization discourse to the dustbin of history. A case in point here is African philosophy, at the root of which is the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, ‘I am because we are’, that calls us to always pay attention to our interrelatedness so as to have a thriving existence for all, or else, doom for all in the long term.

Colonialism Producing a Scenario of Subalternity: Through domination and silencing of other voices the coloniser attempted systematically to cancel or negate the cultural difference and value of the colonised resulting in a scenario of subalternity where the dominant were producers and the dominated were receivers, the subaltern. This was as the dominant westerners equated modernity with Western ways of knowing, “regarding ‘true’ (knowledge) as emanating only from ‘the European West’ and all other knowledge, particularly from the ‘third-world’ as having nothing to teach the world” (Lozada, 2011: 540). They (westerners) gave no chance to the idea of having a fragmentation of a single modernity into multiple and alternative modernities. For them modernity and later on globalisation meant the universalizing of Euro/American ideas (Dirlik, 2003: 276).

Against this colonial legacy which only advances domination, silencing of other voices and producing a scenario of subalternity, postcolonial theory offers a decolonising legacy which advances delegitimizing domination against the idea of domination, bringing out the silenced voices against the idea of silencing other voices and mutuality against the idea of subalternity. To this decolonising legacy I now turn.

DECOLONISING LEGACY BEHIND POSTCOLONIAL THEORY: Gandhi traces this decolonizing legacy to “a long line of thinkers stretching from Max Weber to Martin Heidegger, through to Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer” (Gandhi, 1998: 37). All of these thinkers were concerned with the destructive power of western rationality released into the world by Descartes’ “self-defining, all knowing and formally empowered subject of consciences” (Gandhi, 1998: 37). From the legacy of these thinkers the anti-Cartesianism turn of poststructuralist and postmodernists like Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard developed (cf.

Gandhi, 1998: 38). “While the subject who ‘thinks’”, Derrida and Foucault would argue, “may not ‘know’ his own limitations, the uneven history of rationality testifies to the civilisation failure of the Cartesian project- which begins as it ends in violence” (Foucault 1984: 78).

Further, Foucault (1984: 85) argues, “Humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination”. Hence, “Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard maintain that the Cartesian philosophy of identity is premised upon an ethically unsustainable omission of the other” (Gandhi, 1998: 39). As Gandhi goes on to say, apart from simply omitting the other, Descartes’ Philosophy of identity is also sustained through a violent and coercive relationship with its omitted other as modern rationality has endeavoured violently to repress all symptoms of cultural alterity (Gandhi, 1998: 40). We can arguably say that “the procedures of the colonial civilising mission were motivated by similar anxieties” (Gandhi, 1998: 40). It is out of this postmodernism and poststructuralism that postcolonial theory emerged in the academy (Gandhi, 1998:41).

Through poststructuralism, in 1977, postcolonial scholars in the subaltern study group learnt to be suspicious of the problem of universalism / Eurocentrism just as Carl Marx did. Further, postcolonial studies have learnt from poststructuralism, to dialogue the material effects and implications of colonialism as an epistemological malaise at the heart of western rationality (Chakrabarty, 1993: 422). Nandy (1983: xiii) tells us that it is crucial for postcolonial theory to take seriously the idea of psychological resistance to colonialism’s civilising mission. Further, Gandhi (1998: 17) tells us that “colonialism does not end with the end of colonial

occupation. However, the psychological resistance to colonialism begins with the onset of colonialism”.

Thus, as Sugirtharajah (2002: 16) writes, we can see the first elaborations of a postcolonial theory in anti-colonial liberationist writings which emerged outside the academy long before they were accorded academic appreciation. These were the writings of people like Amilcar Cabral, Franz Fanon, C.L.R. James, Aime Cesaire, Albert Memmi and Ananda Coomaraswamy who were openly anti-colonial in their writings and praxis as they articulated the psychological, cultural, and political damage that European colonialism had inflicted on people. These revolutionary figures are united in their proposal of a radical style of total resistance to the totalising psychological, cultural and political offensive of the colonial civilising mission. All this culminates in postcolonial theory which advances delegitimisation of domination against the idea of domination, bringing out the silenced voices against the idea of silencing other voices and advancing mutuality against the idea of subalternity.

Postcolonial Theory Delegitimizing Domination: Kayatekin (2009: 1114) notes that colonial and imperialist hegemonies have relied crucially on the constructions of the ‘conquered’ cultures and of the subject populations as different from and in opposition to an assumed norm of modernity, which may or may not be achieved, but nonetheless represents a more advanced stage of development. Hence, a central unifying theme in postcolonial theory is the analysis of these constructions and representations of culture and subjectivity in and through colonial discourse(s) with the aim of radically challenging these cultural representations of the other. By this, postcolonial intellectuals aim at the reassertion of native

cultures and knowledge systems so as to combat the colonization of the mind that survives past formal political decolonization (Dirlik, 2003: 283).

Further, with regard to new forms of domination Gandhi rightly proposes the elevation of anti-colonial resistance to the status of anti-colonial critique. This will help anti-colonial nationalisms not to deflect attention away from internal orthodoxies and injustices. Attention can be paid to economic disparities, social injustices and the capture of the newly independent state by a nationalist elite (Gandhi, 1998: 82). In this regard postcolonial theory merges with feminist theory inverting prevailing hierarchies of gender/culture/race and they refuse the binary oppositions upon which patriarchal/colonial authority constructs itself (Gandhi, 1998: 83). Here western liberal feminism is seen as another form of colonialism as it tries to show the average third-world woman as “ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domesticated, family-oriented” (Mohanty, 1994: 200) who needs to be represented. In this regard postcolonial theory is of the view that third-world women must progress in their own way not as carbon copies of their western counterparts (Gandhi, 1998: 95). All this ends up helping to bring out silenced voices.

Postcolonial Theory Bringing Out Silenced Voices: Postcolonial theory challenges the rules of hermeneutics emanating from the West as it involves a reorientation toward knowledge and an openness to questions developed outside the west. Thus, it is committed to transforming the conditions of oppression and giving a voice to the subordinated classes and peoples. As Lozada (2011: 536) defines it, postcolonial theory,

Is a mental perspective that allows those who previously did not qualify as the norm a space to speak with authority and agency. It forces those who have been marginalized or colonized over the

centuries to continue to ask and answer the question 'who am I?' rather than having the colonizers tell them who they are.

As a result those traditions, ideologies, and philosophies "that were assigned by modernization discourse to the dustbin of history have made a comeback with vengeance." (Dirlik, 2003: 277).

In contemporary China, for example, there has been the Confucian revival while in Africa there has been the famous 'African Renaissance' that is geared at going back to African philosophy at the root of which is the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, 'I am because we are', which is even getting recognition on the world stage. Thus, as Gikandi (2006: 69) argues, postcolonial theory "values the narratives of those who have been disadvantaged in relation to the institutions of the modern west and those who are marginalized, or self-marginalized, from the nations that succeeded the colonial empires". Thus, in postcolonial terms, newness is a form of 'cultural translation' in which what we thought to be familiar languages are made alien to themselves, argues Bhabha (1994: 227).

However, Foucault (1980: 86) is quick to point out the difficulties of dissociating the recovery of subjugated knowledges from the will to power. In this regard, Deleuze and Guattari (1986: 27) suggest – somewhat elusively- that subjugated knowledges and literatures must resolutely replace the desire to become 'major' or canonical, with an opposite dream: 'a becoming minor'. Further, anti-postcolonial criticism repeatedly foregrounds the irresolvable dichotomy between the deconstructive predicament of postcolonial intellectuals and the social and the economic predicament of those whose lives are literally or physically on the

margins of the metropolis. Critics like Arif Dirlik and Aijaz Ahmad, in particular are unrelenting in their exclusion of all theoretical/intellectual activity which lacks adequate reference to everyday sociality (Ahmad, 1995: 1). Dirlik (1994: 331) argues that the predominantly “epistemological and psychic orientations of postcolonial intellectuals are ethically incompatible with and irrelevant to the problems of social, political and cultural domination.”

In this regard, it becomes of paramount importance to refer to Chabran’s (1990: 242) call for the need of intellectuals’ experience in the everyday sociality in the formulation of postcolonial ideas. This is in tandem with Marxism’s long-standing insistence on the necessary coalition between thought and everyday life (Gandhi, 1998: 62). In connection to this, postcolonial theory looks at good and bad nationalisms. Given its poststructuralist inheritance, recent postcolonial critique tends to favour those varieties of counter-hegemonic anti-colonialism which subvert rather than reverse the chronic oppositions of colonial discourse (Gandhi, 1998: 112). Such nationalisms are those that Nairn (1977: 348) said encouraged societies to “propel themselves forward to a certain sort of goal (industrialisation, prosperity, equality with other peoples, full and participatory citizenship) by looking inwards, drawing more deeply upon their indigenous resources”. Hence mutuality is paramount.

Postcolonial Theory Advancing Mutuality: Postcolonial theory “challenges the binary opposition that ‘true’ (knowledge) emanates only from ‘the European West’ and all other knowledges, particularly from the ‘third-world’ have nothing to teach the world” (Lozada, 2011: 540). Homi Bhabha (1994: 171) has argued that in postcolonial criticism colonial testimony and migrant experiences are conjoined to produce alternative public discourses,

different social players, and new critical agents. By doing this, postcolonial theory aims at giving non-western people a voice, a language, and a politics so that they can claim a place at the front of the line along with others. Now, as Dirlik (2003: 279) tells us, “even US foundations have joined the chorus of criticism against the equation of modernity with Western ways of knowing”.

Thus, there is a move towards a scenario where there is an absence of a single centre, of a single controlling desk, of a single board of directors, and a single managerial office. Conceding the possibility of having culturally different ways of being modern, the result is that now there is the fragmentation of a single modernity into multiple and alternative modernities. The revivals of native traditions serve as alternative modernities leading to the proliferation of modernities. Ultimately, the proliferation of modernities coming to the forefront of consciousness makes Euro-American modernity to lose its claims to universality. This is evident in our day most conspicuously in the realms of culture and knowledge as we have seen with the Confucian revival and the African renaissance. However, in the economic sphere claims to universality of Euro-American modernity may still be sustained (Dirlik, 2003: 276 - 283). However, this does not mean that nativism is the only alternative.

As Said (1993: 277) writes, “there is the possibility of a more generous and pluralistic vision of the world”. Gandhi (1998: 124) says that “rarely did the onslaught of colonialism entirely obliterate colonised societies. So, also, far from being exclusively oppositional, the encounter with colonial power occurred along a variety of ambivalent registers”. Thus there was mutual transformation of coloniser and colonised during the colonial encounter. In this regard, as Pratt (1992: 4-6) writes, there was an interaction within radically asymmetrical conditions of

power invariably producing an estrangement of familiar meanings and a mutual 'creolisation of identities and the term hybridity comes to the fore. Hence, postcolonial theory points in the direction of inter-civilisational alliance as one that seriously humanises the world we have inherited. This is as Ashcroft (1989:196) writes that "it is not possible to return to, or rediscover an absolute pre-colonial cultural purity".

This is how we can understand postcolonial theory in summary. According to the aim of this thesis I will be trying to argue that African liberation theologies express the ideas of this postcolonial theory so as to give a decentred and embodied form of Christianity in the postcolonial context. But before these arguments how is postcolonial theory related to Religion / Christian theology?

2.2. POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND RELIGION / CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

We have seen postcolonial theory presupposing a colonising legacy with such key features as domination, silencing other voices and ending up in the scenario of subalternity. Against this colonising legacy we have seen postcolonial theory offering a decolonising legacy producing such key features as delegitimizing domination, bringing out silenced voices and advancing mutuality. We can also see both the colonizing legacy and decolonizing legacy with regard to the history of religion / Christian theology.

COLONIZING LEGACY BEHIND RELIGION / CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY: Tomoko Masuzawa (2005) traces the colonizing legacy in religion back to the Enlightenment's notion of history as a singular civilizing process, of which modern Europe was the triumphant vanguard and all the other civilizations and non-European societies merely markers of various interim phases already surpassed by the people of European descent. In this line of thinking, Christianity, the religion of Europe the triumphant vanguard in the singular civilising process, was seen as superior. This, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, resulted in the obsession with speculative theories about the origin of religion in which religions of the non-European societies were assigned to mere stages already surpassed by Christianity. Hence upon the advent of the 'superior' Christianity, indigenous tribal religions, variously termed as paganism, heathenism, idolatry or occasionally polytheism were expected to give way (cf. Masuzawa, 2005: 37-70).

Further, the nineteenth century developed the legacy of comparative theology which advocated examining indigenous religious systems only to prove "that Christianity is the only true religion among the multitude of what turn out to be, in the last analysis, pseudo religions", Satan's empire (Masuzawa, 2005: 77). This is best expressed in what Robert Moffat (quoted in Parrat, 1997: 39) said with regard to the indigenous people of southern Africa:

Satan has employed his agency with fatal success, in erasing every vestige of religious impression from the minds of the Bechuana, Hottentots and Bushmen; leaving them without a single ray to guide them from the dark and drab futurity, or a single link to unite them to the skies.

Any sympathy toward these religions, as Archdeacon Charles Hardwick preached in the nineteenth century, was seen as absolutely retrogressive and carrying men/women afresh to paganism (cf. Masuzawa 2005: 93).

Hence, early Christian evangelizers were convinced that “Christianity could not be based on traditional culture and that there was no real continuity between African traditional religions and the Christian message” (Kalilombe, 1999: 149). With this mentality Tutu observed that the whites pursued “a policy of the root-and-branch condemnation of things African, which had to be supplanted by their obviously ‘superior’ western counterpart” (cf. Parrat, 1997: 40). Corresponding to this type of colonial thinking, in different Christian churches developed a colonial Christian theology with such key features of domination, silencing other voices and ending up in a scenario of subalternity.

Colonial Christian Theology Advancing Domination: In South Africa the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) theology hearkened back to its Calvinist roots. DRC theology sailed from the Netherlands replete with stern Calvinist injunctions about sober living and rigid components, as well as racially tinged ideas about the curse of Ham (cf. Magaziner, 2010: 60). Faced with the plurality of South Africa’s peoples, the ‘neo-Calvinist’ DRC theologians led by the Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper proclaimed that God’s will manifested itself in the maintenance of ‘diversity of nations, tongues, etc.’ and hearkened to the idea of separate development. They drew attention to the lessons of Genesis 11 in the Christian Bible and wrote about the necessity of preserving the distinctions God had sanctioned by destroying the Tower of Babel. The neo-Calvinists also drew attention to Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, in which he wrote that ‘in the single human body there are many limbs and organs, all with different

functions'. Kuyper applied different organs to nations and the body to the body of humanity (Magaziner, 2010: 61).

This is why soon after 1948 election, the DRC declared its virtually unequivocal support for the government's doctrine of separate development (Magaziner, 2010: 66). The DRC also subscribed to the Calvinist doctrine of election and predestination (cf. Magaziner, 2010: 60-61). On this basis the Whites believed that God chose the white people as his own possession and ordained them to subject the heathens (in this case the blacks, the *kaffirs* – unbelievers). As van Jaarsveld (1964: 3-4) tells us, this mentality is best expressed in Cecil Rhodes' declaration that only one race, 'his own' was destined to further God's work and fulfil God's purpose in the world and thus developed the idea of the Christian trusteeship of the European race. Hence, in 1948 Dr Verwoerd, quoting from the National Party manifesto, said; "The party accepts the Christian trusteeship of the European race as the basic principle of its policy in regard to the non-European races" (cited in Frostin, 1988: 95).

They embellished these ideas of separate development and Christian trusteeship although this only helped the minority whites to capture for themselves positions of material and cultural superiority over the original black population, and later, other communities of non European origin. Throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth century neo-Calvinism became DRC orthodoxy and its shortcomings in the social, political and economic fields were hidden by drawing attention to celestial issues of the hereafter. Magaziner (2010: 62) cites Boesak's observation that at the DRC Mission church's seminary for coloureds at the University of the Western Cape during the 1960s, were white professors who taught only pietistic version of

Reformed theology without raising the question of how this faith could be applicable to social, political and economic issues.

Thus, seminarians were equipped in all sorts of ways to talk to people about heaven and about sin and damnation, but not about the real issues arising from the social, political and economic fields. The DRC was not alone in this dichotomy between the spiritual and the material. Buthelezi writes about the colonial Lutheran Church in South Africa which acted as if God was in control of only the spiritual, the heavenly. The material part of man was left in the hands of man. In most cases, whenever the colonial Lutheran Church talked about the concrete situation, it was to legitimise it (cf. Moore, 1974: 100). Hence, as Maimela saw, the colonial Lutheran Church appeared to be giving a “theological justification of the glaring unequal distribution of socio-economic and political rights and privileges between classes” (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 190).

From this Maimela (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 190) saw the colonial Lutheran Church as expressing Napoleon’s very critique about nineteenth century Christianity in his remark about the ideological function of religion as cited in Carter (1981: 37).

Society cannot exist without inequality of fortunes and the inequality of fortunes could not subsist without religion. Whenever a half starved person is near another who is gluttoned, it is impossible to reconcile the difference if there is not an authority (religion) to say to him: ‘God wills it so, it is necessary that there be rich and poor in the world but afterwards in eternity there will be a different distribution’.

On the part of the colonial Presbyterian Church, Anderson (1977: 104) gives an anecdote which is immensely popular in East Africa:

The missionary gathered a group of people around him and opened his Bible. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven,' he pleaded with his African listeners. He then asked them to pray, telling them to bow their heads and shut their eyes. The Africans dutifully followed instructions, and the missionary earnestly prayed that the things of this earth would not prevent anyone from reaching the joys of heaven. When the prayer was over, and the Africans opened their eyes, they were alarmed to see that their land had been stolen. 'Never mind,' said the missionary, 'these earthly things are not really important,' and he led them in singing, 'this world is not my home.'

As regards the colonial Roman Catholic Church, hymns also expressed other-worldly religiosity as can be seen from the following chorus in the Chichewa hymnal: *Bukhu la Nyimbo ndi Mapemphero* (Hymn no. 193) of the Roman Catholic Church in Malawi;

Dziko lathu labwino	[Good life
Lili kwa Mulungu	Lies in Heaven with God
Ndife alendo pano	Here on earth we are just visitors
Kumwamba ndi kwathu	Our home is in Heaven]

However, we must note that the colonial Roman Catholic Church at times dealt with earthly matters. For example in 1964 the South African Catholic bishop Denis Hurley charged that apartheid was 'immoral' and Christians had to reject it. This was echoed by the Anglican bishop Alpheus Zulu who insisted that 'members of different branches of Christ's church in this country must gather to listen to the word of God together without consideration of race or colour' (cf. Magaziner, 2010: 64). Further, the Catholic Church refused to cede control over

its six hundred schools to the ministry of Bantu Education, and Bishop Hurley himself served for a time as the president of the quintessentially liberal South African Institute of Race Relations (Magaziner, 2010: 64). Despite these, the church's devotion did not readily translate to a consistent and overt political stance.

Despite charging that apartheid was immoral, Bishop Hurley in his letter dated 14th May 1969 supported officials at the Church's St Francis School when they refused to host a multiracial University Christian Movement (UCM) meeting (cf. Magaziner, 2010: 64). Furthermore, many of the church's teachers and mission priests were foreign and persistent fears of deportation often led the National Bishop's conference to comply with the government, even to the point of refusing to publicly condemn Archbishop Whelan, who on 15th February 1964 expressed satisfaction with apartheid (cf. Magaziner, 2010: 64). The Catholic Church was not alone in this, Bonganjalo Goba experienced the same at a Congregationalist school and Simon Maimela also observed the same among the Lutherans (cf. Magaziner, 2010: 65). Hence the end result was partaking in silencing oppressed voices.

African feminist theologians on their part saw legitimisation of patriarchy (domination of men over women) in the interpretation of the Bible and teaching authority in the colonial Christian churches as Phiri observed (cf. Parrat, 1997: 54). Phiri observed that, "through-out the years the Bible [had] been interpreted by male theologians who tended to make women invisible and present them negatively" (cf. Parrat, 1997: 54). Phiri goes on to say that women theologians also note the argument by some Christians that the term 'man' is used generically in the Bible and in theology to include both men and women (cf. Parrat, 1997: 47). However, Young (1990: 65) tells us that even if 'man' were meant to be a generic term, the 'men' who

were meant, were in fact males. Even if 'man' were used supposedly generically in theology, women were not its intended audience and were its subjects only as deviant or as caricature. Young (1990: 67) says that "in traditional theology women often appear only as temptress or virgin, as types, not as real women". Thus the end result was the silencing of women.

Colonial Christian Theology Silencing Other Voices: Just like colonialists, most early Anglican missionaries thought along the lines of homogeneity. Christian Europe (dominant culture, race and nation) was viewed theologically as the standard model and with a God-given mission in the world which was to bring the "lower" cultures to this superior culture. With this type of mentality it was thought that genuine Christian theology could only be done along a single way, the 'standard' European way. The understanding was that there should be a universal theology which colonial westerners identified with their brand of theologizing. It was no wonder then that the colonial western missionaries were concerned so much with guardianship / paternalism so that what they considered as 'authentic' theology could be imparted to Africans and be emulated by them. To most early western missionaries, western theology was 'the theology', true and relevant at all times and in all places as Tutu observed (cf. Parrat, 1997:41).

Thus, as Tutu (cf. Parrat, 1997: 37) also argues, while we admit that the European has done many a worthwhile and praiseworthy thing, for which Africans ought to be always thankful, but surpassing all the European's crimes in the economic, social and political exploitations of Africans was his worst crime and most violent project of spiritual and mental enslavement of African people. This was the filling of most Africans with a self-disgust and self-hatred, and thereby successfully silencing them. Seeing nothing worthy theological reflection among

Africans, the implanting of the church in Africa advocated the imparting of a foreign, prefabricated theology which had not been produced out of the living conditions of the African converts to Christianity.

To silence the Africans thoroughly, Sawyer informs us that colonial Christian “churches in Africa trained teachers without giving them a sufficient intellectual and spiritual training so that they could question their faith for themselves” (cf. Parrat, 1997: 14). It is against this background that Jean-Marc Ela, writing about the Catholic Church, wrote; “Up until now, we have been inclined to examine the problem of the birth and implanting of the church in terms of Rome as the centre of the universe” (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 142). Nyerere saw the colonial Roman Catholic Church to be generally silent on quite crucial issues that matter in earthly life (cf. Parrat, 1997: 116). Jean-Marc Ela saw Roman Catholic clergy in Cameroon as indifferent when; “access to drinking water, balanced diet, health and hygiene, education, or self-determination were more often than not, luxuries for a self-serving small club” (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 137).

Of course some clergy spoke out on such crucial matters. For example in South Africa in the early 1970s John Sebidi a Catholic priest described the founding of the exclusively black South African Student Organisation (SASO) as ‘a hefty attempt at severing ...the psychological umbilical cord’ that held the black [person] to the slow-moving band wagon’ where there was infantilization of blacks at the hands of the whites (cf. Magaziner, 2010: 26). We have also seen Catholic bishop Hurley’s condemnation of apartheid in South Africa. But despite this we have seen that colonial Christian churches’ (Roman Catholic, Congregationalists and Lutherans) devotion did not readily translate to a consistent and overt

political stance. In some cases as Nyerere writes about the colonial Roman Catholic Church, “the clergy who worked for the people and spoke for them, unfortunately, were dismissed or re-located by the Church hierarchy” (cf. Parrat, 1997: 116-117). This resulted in subalternity of the oppressed.

With regard to patriarchy, too preoccupied with the spiritual realm, the colonial Christian churches could not even bother considering bodily differences of male and female. They assumed that men’s perception of reality was the same as women’s perception of reality and so men’s theologizing would be the same as women’s theologizing. Hence they could not ask the question that Young (1990: 57) asks; “how would theology be different if women were its subject and its audience?” This impacted on the colonial churches’ handling of issues in the daily life of its members as one interviewee in Kanyoro (1996: 5) says;

My husband started coming home late and finding fault with me for everything. He would call me lazy and punch me. His whole family insulted me in many ways. I talked to my pastor, but he simply told me to persevere and not to do anything to annoy my husband. He also asked me to repent of my past sins and remember the man is the head of the home.

This ended in relegating women to subalternity.

Colonial Christian Theology Promoting Subalternity: At the dawn of the 1970s, the South African Anglican minister Rubin Phillip expressed the subalternity that existed in the Anglican Church as he suggested that its services ‘could have been in England apart from singing a few vernacular songs’. There was nothing particularly African about the practice of the faith. This view was echoed by former SASO activist and Ethiopian Episcopalian bishop

Malusi Mpumlwana tracing it back “to the late nineteenth century when his own church broke from the Anglicans, partly in response to white missionary control and especially in reaction to the worship’s stubborn Europeanness” (Magaziner, 2010: 82-83).

Further, the Kenyan Mbiti also lamented the existence of subalternity that existed between Europe/America and the third-world in the Anglican Church. Mbiti (1976: 16-17) wrote;

We have drunk theology with you; we have dreamed theology with you. But it has all been one sided; it has all been, in a sense, your theology. We know you theologically . . . Do you know us theologically? Would you like to know us theologically? Can you know us theologically? And how can there be true theological reciprocity and mutuality, if only one side knows the other fairly well, while the other side either does not know or does not want to know the first side?

On the part of the Catholic Church, the Malawian Roman Catholic bishop Kalilombe (1999: 167) lamented the subalternity of ordinary people in the Catholic Church. In one paper read at an EATWOT Conference, Kalilombe (1999: 167) lamented that ordinary people were not involved in the formulation of policies and projects of public importance even when such policies were to determine the every-day lives of the public. Only the people higher up in the hierarchy; the pope, bishops, and priests were involved in the formulation of policies and projects of public importance. With regard to the social, economic and framework of the present-day world colonial Roman Catholic theology remained a ‘theology of tranquillity’, “preaching resignation and appearing to accept as immutable the social, economic and framework of the present-day world” as Nyerere observed (cf. Parrat, 1997: 111).

This theology of promoting resignation was also expressed in hymns as can be seen from the following chorus in the Chichewa hymnal: *Bukhu la Nyimbo ndi Mapemphero* (Hymn no. 78) of the Roman Catholic Church in Malawi;

Maso anu ayang'ane kumwamba	[Your eyes should be fixed on the things of Heaven
Musatanganidwe ndi zapansi pano	Do not commit yourselves to the things of the earth
Zapansi pano ndi zakutha	Earthly things are ephemeral
Zokoma zili kumwamba	Good things are in Heaven]

Boesak also sees this ‘theology of tranquillity’ and preaching of resignation in the colonial Dutch Reformed Church and says that this ended up producing in the oppressed Africans, a “waiting-patiently-upon-the-Lord kind of attitude which leads to a disease Martin Luther King called ‘giveupitis’” (cf. Parrat, 1997: 122).

With regard to patriarchy, Phiri observes that the majority of the colonial Christian denominations in Africa resisted including women in leadership positions (cf. Parrat, 1997: 52). Thus why, as Pemberton (2003: 94 -95) says, Nasimiyu-Wasike, lamented that although women are meant to be co-workers in the church, they were subjugated; they were servants; they were maids. It is no wonder then that studies in religion in Africa have for a long time been silent on the role of women but have predominantly centred on the role of men both expatriate and local as Phiri observed (cf. Parrat, 1997: 45). Too preoccupied with the spiritual realm, in the Catholic Church for example, no synod until very recently even bothered to explain why the church excluded women from the Eucharistic ministry though the church preached equality of all humanity in Jesus Christ.

Thus, corresponding to the colonising legacy in religion/Christianity developed a colonial Christian theology that portrayed a centred and too spiritual Christianity. Now just like in postcolonial theory against this colonizing legacy in religion/Christianity which developed a colonial Christian theology, was a decolonising legacy in religion/Christianity out of which postcolonial African liberation theologies arose.

DECOLONISING LEGACY BEHIND AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGIES: A

decolonising legacy in religion / Christianity can be traced to English Deists, many of whom opined that 'religion' as a genus is one, whereas its 'sects' and 'denominations' as species are many (cf. Lash, 1996:). Further, although "in the nineteenth century discourse, the fossilization of 'old religions' was pervasive that to presume any sign of life in them seemed an unnatural act", Jason Fradenburg developed a sympathetic view (Masuzawa, 2005: 84). As Fradenburg (1888: 2) wrote, to appreciate indigenous religions, we must place ourselves in sympathy with the people, listen to their hymns and prayers and witness their rites and ceremonies. We must know their religious ideals, as well as their corruptions in practice.

Further, Fradenburg (1888: 2-3) wrote, "The truth discovered in heaven faiths is the hope of the missionary. He finds the common ground upon which he may stand with those whom he would save and the sure foundation upon which he may build". In addition to this, just a decade before Fradenburg's work, in October 1877, the Dutch government created faculties of religious sciences when it "separated the theological faculties at the four state universities (Amsterdam, Groningen, Leiden and Utrecht) from the Dutch Reformed Church" (cf. Sharpe, 1986: 121). The first Dutch scholars on religion-like Cornelis Petrus Tiele and Abraham Kuenen got involved in a controversy on "the distinction between ethnically or

geographically specific ‘national religions’ and religions that transcend such ethnic and national boundaries” (Masuzawa, 2005: 108-109).

In their arguments Tiele came to admit cases where a particularistic or national religion could spread beyond its national boundary owing to historical accident and not on account of its own intrinsic universalistic character (cf. Masuzawa, 2005: 112). Such type of reasoning culminated in Morris Jastrow, concurring with Tiele, suggesting that the universality of any given religion should be considered a matter of confessional claim rather than a quality in the objective order (Jastrow, 1901: 122-123). The German theologian Ernst Troeltsch (1865 – 1923) further advanced the decolonizing legacy when he pointed to the discovery of historicity itself – “the realization that no body of knowledge, no vantage point, no matter how powerfully compelling, could escape the pall of historicity, that is, escape the particular and contingent determinations of its moment” (cf. Masuzawa, 2005: 311-312).

Therefore, Troeltsch argued that “the mutability of Christianity... destroyed the Catholic fiction that the church simply represented the continuation of original Christianity as well as the Protestant fiction that the Reformation represented its restoration” (Troeltsch, 1897: 77). Further, like Troeltsch, comparative historians of religions from Rudolf Otto and Gerardus Van der Leeuw to Mircea Eliade had advanced the idea that all human beings without exception were endowed with some distinct and irreducible sensibility specific to the Infinite, the Holy, the Absolute. Hence, “by the early 20th century liberal Christians like Troelstch and Otto were generally prepared to accept the fact of religious diversity and to respect the viability, in principle, of other religions” (Masuzawa, 2005: 313-314). This decolonizing

legacy, though not singularly, gave impetus to African liberation theologies among African Christian theologians. Now what are these African Liberation theologies?

2.3. UNDERSTANDING AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGIES.

African liberation theologies can be understood under five headings: definition, origin, methodology, those involved, and lastly, the goal of African liberation theologies.

DEFINITION OF AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGIES: African liberation theologies can be understood along Gutierrez's (1974) definition of liberation theology. As such we can say that African liberation theologies are critical reflections, under the word of God, on the African experiences of poverty, weakness and oppression. Thus, as Per Frostin (1988: 16) says, "If liberation theology in Africa and elsewhere is seen as a process of doing theology 'from the underside of history', all varieties of African theology belong to this process, as far as they take the African context seriously". In this thesis I will focus on four traditions: First, African cultural theology (also known as enculturation theology); Second, black theology (South African black theology); Third, liberation theology done in independent African countries which Parrat (1997: 5) calls political theology and; Fourth, African feminist theology.

In these theologies, like in all liberation theologies, social relations are seen as the main crossroad and the focus is on who are asking the questions that theologians try to answer (the chief interlocutors of theology). These theologies have the poor, the exploited classes, the marginalised races, all the oppressed as the chief interlocutors whose problem is a simple

question, 'what is God saying about my situation of being dominated, oppressed and exploited?' (Frostin, 1988: 6-9).

Hence, African [cultural] theology primarily answers the African's question, 'What is God saying about my situation of having my culture and identity dominated, oppressed and exploited by other cultures? Black theology primarily answers the non-white person's question, 'What is God saying about my situation of being dominated, oppressed and exploited by whites on account of my colour?' Liberation theology done in independent African countries primarily answers the poor African's question, 'What is God saying about my situation of being dominated, oppressed and exploited by Europe/America on the geographical level, by the rich on the economic level and by the capitalists on the classist level? African feminist theology will be primarily answering the woman's question, 'What is God saying about my situation of being dominated, oppressed and exploited by men on account of my gender?' (cf. Frostin, 1988: 8).

ORIGINS OF AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGIES: A complex history characterised the emergence of our four currents of African liberation theology. Therefore, here, I will just give a very short summary as regards the origins of these currents. First, with regard to **African cultural theology** we must say that this tradition had roots outside the academy in the ideological resistance that followed soon after colonial incursions and the imposition of the white man's Christianity which led to the early rise of African initiated churches in South Africa and elsewhere (cf. Sundkler, 1961). However, in the academy, African cultural theology's ideological resistance to both the colonial incursions and the

imposition of the white man's Christianity followed in the line of liberal Christians like Troeltsch and Otto we have seen before.

Along this line, in the 1930s, Aime Cesaire (Martinique) and Leopold Senghor (Senegal) led a group of Caribbean and African students in Paris in launching "the famous Negritude movement with its review *Presence Africaine*, an affirmation and rehabilitation of the black cultural identity in history, literature and art" (Kalilombe, 1999: 149). This was followed by Fr. Temples' work *La Philosophie Bantoue* in 1949 in which he affirmed that the African way of life had a valid philosophy. Then in 1956 was the publication of a collection of essays under the title: *Les pretres noirs s'intrrogent*. In this collection a team of black ecclesiastics studying in European universities argued for "the need to Africanize Christian doctrine, cult, pastoral practice and art, basing them on African culture and religious traditions" (Kalilombe, 1999: 151).

On the Catholic side, these ideas were to find support during the second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965). On the Protestant side, the All African Council of Churches (AACC) founded in 1963 helped the growth of African cultural theology by offering scholarships for research on African theologising. Since the founding of the Ecumenical Association of African Theologians (EAAT) in 1977, the association has been the main forum for the development of African cultural theology (Kalilombe, 1999: 151). At the heart of African [cultural] theology is liberation from "cultural mutilation of the African people's self-consciousness and self-respect" and was mainly done in the independent countries north of the Limpopo (Kalilombe, 1999: 156). In this current of liberation thinking, though not confined to African

[cultural] theologising, are notable figures like; Bishop Patrick Kalilombe, John Mbiti, Charles Nyamiti, Bereket Yebio, Harry Sawyer, Bishop Tshibangu, and John Pobee.

Second, with regard to **South African black theology**, its roots lie in a long tradition of protest against racial discrimination, appropriation of land and exploitation of the non-white groups by the whites since European settlement in South Africa. However a consistent black theology can be traced to the 1960s. In 1963 inter-racial Christian Institute was founded to promote theological reflection on the social and political situation (Walshe, 1983). In 1967 the multiracial University Christian Movement (UCM) was established to be a forum for social and political reflection. In 1969 Steve Biko started the exclusively black South African Student Organisation (SASO) breaking away from UCM and initiating the Black Consciousness Movement. Magaziner tries to recast Black consciousness, “to show that before there was a movement, there were thinkers, activists, students at home with books and ideas who made the latter work in their particular historical context” (Magaziner, 2010: 6)

“Black consciousness was a philosophy of liberation for people who were discriminated against by law, for those without franchise” (Magaziner, 2010: 53). Black consciousness’ engagement with the Christian faith and Christian theology during the late “1960s and the early 1970s led clergy and lay Christians – and even unbelievers – to look without flinching at the faiths history and failings in South Africa (and Africa in general) and to discard and reassess according to their movements demands” (cf. Magaziner, 2010: 55-124). In this work, these scholars read widely and vigorously translated ideas from the United States, Europe, Latin America and elsewhere in Africa (cf. Magaziner, 2010: 40-53).

From all these, then, “a consistent project for a black theology began to take shape in South Africa during the 1970s” (Kalilombe, 1999: 159). Black Consciousness ideas were carried into black theology. Even after Biko died in police custody in 1977 black theology continued using Black Consciousness ideas especially through such prominent church leaders as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, bishop Manas Buthelezi and Reverend Allan Boesak. Among academicians, were such early thinkers like Gabriel Setiloane and Mokgethi Motlhabi. Later, were scholars like Takatso Mofokeng, Bonganjalo Goba, Simon Maimela and Buti Tlhagale (cf. Kalilombe, 1999: 159-160). At the heart of black theology were questions of political freedom and justice amid the prevailing situations of oppression and discrimination in apartheid South Africa.

With regard to **liberation theology done in independent African countries**, there have been varieties and called by different names like; *Ujamaa* theology in Tanzania, theology of humanism in Zambia and simply liberation theology in other independent countries and by the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences for Africa and Madagascar (SECAM). Some of these theologies had roots in the independence movements and continued after independence. These theologies are; *Ujamaa* theology advocated by Tanzania’s first president Julius Nyerere and other scholars like Patrick Soka and Christopher Mwoleka and theology of Zambian Humanism advocated by Kenneth Kaunda Zambia’s first president. However, in other independent countries we can say liberation theology flourished after the antagonism between black theology and African cultural theology.

On the one hand, as Tutu tells us, some African (cultural) theologians like Mbiti argued that African [cultural] theology and black theology could not be one because African [cultural]

theology grows out of joy and experience of the Christian faith whereas black theology grows from the pains of oppression with an overriding emphasis on blackness and liberation (cf. Parrat, 1997: 38-39). On the other hand, as Frostin (1988: 145) tells us, black theologians like Buthelezi saw African [cultural] theology, with its emphasis on reaffirmation of African culture, as distracting attention from the real issues of modern life.

Despite these distinctions, Tutu argues that the two currents need not exclude each other as both are ultimately concerned with liberation from an unacceptable state of affairs and the two are mutually enriching (cf. Parrat, 1997: 37). This is why Tutu, quoting Ndwiga Mugambi, had this to say concerning liberation and theology: "Liberation is the objective task of a contemporary African Christian theology. It is not just one of the issues, but rather, all issues are aimed at liberating Africans from all forces that hinder him [sic] from living fully as a human being" (cf. Parrat, 1997: 39). As a result, later on, proponents of black theology, on their part, realized that blacks could not be able to liberate themselves unless they could first regain their cultural and human identity. On their part also, theologians of enculturation in the independent countries began to see the need for liberation from the present-day problems of post-colonial Africa (Kalilombe, 1999: 163).

Hence, while theological reflection along enculturation continued in these independent countries, more attention tilted towards questions of development and liberation. Thus, themes of justice, human rights, social and community restructuring begun to dominate theological reflection and praxis among African theologians (Kalilombe, 1999: 163). Theological reflections began to deal with a situation where the fundamental expression of oppression were/are the exploitative tendencies of capitalism used by a few to dominate,

oppress and exploit the masses. Here are such prominent figures as Engelbert Mveng and Jean-Marc Ela in Cameroon and all the Catholic bishops of Africa through the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences for Africa and Madagascar [SECAM] (cf. Parrat, 1997: 148-149 and Gibellini, 1994).

With regard to **African feminist theology** we can say that though its roots lay way back but a consistent African feminist theology arose with the formation of what is called 'The Circle'; a network of concerned African women theologians from across Africa and in Diaspora. The formation of 'The Circle' has roots in the formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 in Amsterdam. A decision was reached in the Amsterdam conference to give prominence to the role of women in the life of the churches by the creation of the Commission on the Life and Work of Women (CLWM). When Mercy Amba Oduyoye went to Geneva to work at the WCC women's desk she met the South African Brigalia Bam and together they wondered why always, exactly, everything written, research, the analysis was done for them (cf. Pemberton, 2003: 30-35).

So they resolved to get African women to do serious intellectual work. These sentiments found support from the Catholic side with the creation of Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) in 1976 which, through the work of Rose Zoe-Obianga, called on church leaders to receive the gift of educated women within ecclesiastical structures and urged women to new feats of self help. Finally, in 1986 at EATWOT General Assembly at Oaxtapec, Mexico, the African women delegates saw a fresh combination of Protestant and Catholic women determined to change the situation of women on their continent (cf. Pemberton, 2003: 35-53).

It was here at Oaxtapec that the springboard for the Circle was constructed, and its goals for African women established. It was formally launched in Legon, Accra, Ghana in 1989 with the goal of fulfilling the right and duty of women to have a contribution to theological development in Africa. The early members were; Sr. Teresa Okure [SHCJ, Nigeria], Sr. Rosemary Edet [SHCJ, Nigeria], Sr. Bernadette Mbuy-beya [Ursuline sister, Zaire], Dr. Rose Zoe-Obianga [Presbyterian, Cameroon], Brigalia Bam [Anglican, South Africa], Mercy Amba Oduyoye [Methodist, Ghana], Professor Elizabeth Amoah [Methodist, Ghana], Musimbi Kanyoro [Lutheran, Kenya] (cf. Pemberton, 2003: 53). Later people like Annie Nasimiyu-Wasike and Isabel Apawo Phiri [Presbyterian, Malawi] and many others have joined 'The Circle'.

METHODOLOGY OF AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGIES: African liberation theologies are generally done along three steps: Experience, social analysis, and lastly theological reflection. However, as Frostin (1988: 85) says, a "clear-cut division between experience, analysis and theological reflection is hardly possible but this organisation of the material clarifies the process of African liberation theologies".

Experience: Production of African liberation theologies begins by looking at the people's experiences where one will find that some people are being dominated, oppressed and exploited in various ways. For example, one concentrating on African [cultural] theology would find Africans suffering from what EATWOT and Kalilombe (1999: 156) have called 'anthropological poverty' where the African's identity and creativity has been denied. There is a spiritual and mental enslavement of Africans, filling them with self-disgust and self-hatred so much so that Tutu observed that Africans suffered from a religious or spiritual

schizophrenia paying lip service to Christianity as preached by the white missionary while being ashamed to express their African-ness openly and struggling to repress it (cf. Parrat, 1997: 37-38).

One, concentrating on black theology in pre-1994 South Africa, would find the black majority facing all sorts of hardships while the white minority were privileged. In 1979 one would find that black people forming 80% of the population only owned 13% of the land while the white minority forming 20% had 87% of the land. A black person had no franchise while a white child of eighteen years could vote (Tutu, 1982: 50). One concentrating on liberation theology done in independent African countries would find that in the independent countries like Cameroon, Ghana, and Malawi the euphoria of independence is replaced with harsh realities. For example Jean-Marc Ela observed the following situation in independent Cameroon. Only the elite few were/are in control of the whole nation with a lot of privileges and riches while the vast majority were/are in poverty. There were/are nutritional problems, abominable hygienic conditions, injustices and repressions, marginalization and unemployment that hurl the young into the streets, into drugs and prostitution, crime, despair and suicide (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 142 and 147).

One concentrating on African feminist theology would find that in most societies, if not all, there is the objectification and marginalization of women. Oduyoye observed this situation with regard to females. As daughters they are required to serve their brothers' interests. In some societies, wives are regarded as the husband's property and must serve their husbands' interests. Women sweat under primitive technology to grow and process food for the

families. Women lose possession of family property when their husbands die (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 166-180).

Social Analysis: Having seen these experiences of domination, oppression and exploitation in the society, as one doing theology the ultimate question is: what does oppression mean in God's eyes? But Leonardo and Clodovis Boff (1986: 24) quoting Thomas Aquinas point out that, "An error about the world redounds in error about God". Thus, theologians before asking what oppression means in God's eyes, first have to ask more basic questions about the nature of actual oppression and its causes. One concentrating on African [cultural] theology would ask why Africans suffer from alienation where the African's identity and creativity is denied.

One concentrating on black theology in pre-1994 South Africa would primarily ask why non-whites [blacks in particular] faced all sorts of hardships and the whites enjoyed a sizable amount of comfort. One concentrating on liberation theology done in independent African countries would ask why in the independent countries the euphoria of independence is replaced with harsh realities. Why the elite few are in control of the whole nation with a lot of privileges and riches while the vast majority are in poverty. One concentrating on African feminist theology would question why women undergo all sorts of harsh realities and men not really? What are the causes of all this?

Looking for these causes, Mveng tells us that one would find; empirical, functional and dialectical explanations (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 154). The empirical explanation will tend to attribute the causes to laziness, ignorance, natural inferiority or simply human wickedness.

Here, the oppressed are seen as individuals that are to be treated as objects of pity. The functional explanation will tend to attribute the causes to backwardness on the part of the oppressed. This sees harsh realities as a collective phenomenon but fails to see that the problems are not a passing phase but are entrenched in the society and even growing worse with time. The dialectical explanation sees the problems as the product of the organisation of the society. They are the product of economic, social, and political situations and structures. This is what African liberation theologies accept and deal with as is also the case with all other liberation theologies (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 154 -165).

Thus, African liberation theologians begin to analyse the organisation of the society to see how it serves to advantage some and disadvantage others. In African [cultural] theology the problem of cultural alienation could be seen as stemming from how the early missionaries evangelized the Africans. Parrat (1997: 4) quoting the West African theologian E. Fashole – Luke analysed the problem as follows:

Western missionaries stressed aspects of discontinuity between Christianity and African cultures and traditional religion to such an extent that they excluded aspects of continuity between Christianity and African cultures and religion. They condemned without proper evaluation African religious beliefs and practices and substituted Western cultural practices.

In this line, Kalilombe (1999: 149) notes that early Christian evangelization operated on the same “assumption as colonialism: a rejection of the African personality and the need to impose Western civilization on Africans”.

As regards black theology in pre-1994 South Africa, apartheid was the first thing that could be seen as the cause for the problems of the non-whites [blacks in particular]. Apartheid itself was a product of racism which was not simply at the level of prejudice and deliberate discriminatory behaviour but structural or institutional racism. It was a system of domination based on 'racial' criteria by which social attitudes and institutions were affected and which was embedded in the very structure of the society. Racism itself grew in an atmosphere of power and economic struggle of the capitalistic exploitative tendencies. So at the root of apartheid was the social-economic structure of capitalism (Frostin, 1988: 104 - 120).

In liberation theology done in independent African countries the harsh realities in post-independent nations are attributed to social economic structure of Capitalism with its exploitative tendencies. As Nyerere says, this is the root of divisions of mankind into rich and poor both on the national level (few privileged individuals and the dire poverty of the masses) and on the international level (a few wealthy nations which dominate a mass of smaller and poor nations). This is what is called Neo-colonialism (cf. Parrat, 1997: 109).

In African feminist theology, scholars like Oduyoye find the concept of gender, with its specific roles, to be the root of the oppression women face, whether it be in society, politics or religion. Their being-ness as women causes them to suffer simply because society has divided humanity into two genders; the female and the male with pre-defined roles for each gender. This has been used to advantage men and disadvantage women with the result that men dominate women (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 166-180).

Theological Reflection: Having looked at the nature of actual oppression and its causes the African liberation theologian is now ready to ask what oppression means in God's eyes. On whose side is God? To answer this Question, in African [cultural] theology, theologians first find support in what Robertson Smith had to write in his *Religion of the Semites* as Tutu cites (cf. Parrat, 1997: 40):

No positive religion that has moved man has been able to start with a *tabula rasa*, to express itself as if religion was beginning for the first time; in form if not in substance, the new system must be in contact along the line with the old ideas and practices which it finds in possession. A new scheme of faith can find a hearing only by appealing to a religious instinct and susceptibility that already exists in its audience and it cannot reach these without taking account of the traditional forms in which religious feeling is embodied, and without speaking a language which men accustomed to these forms can understand.

With this in mind, Tutu argues that the cultural alienation that Africans suffer is nothing less of blasphemy against God, who created Africans as they are "in His own image, not to be carbon copies of others of his creatures, no matter how advanced or prosperous [those others] might perceive themselves to be" (cf. Parrat, 1997: 40). Thus, it is only when Christianity incarnates in Africa that it can be said to be truly African.

In black theology, Buthelezi and Boesak first deal with western theology's dichotomizing of human life into two poles. On the one pole is the talk about the soul, the supernatural, the divine, the heavenly, the redeemed, the religious and the sacred. On the other pole is the talk about the body, the material, the human, the earthly, the created, the secular, and the profane (Frostin, 1988: 50). In this view, as Buthelezi shows, religion is confined to the first pole and

religion is shown as not really related to the second pole of our earthly life in all its dimensions, social, political and economic where people often experience domination, oppression and exploitation (cf. Moore, 1974: 100). Hence, analysing and denouncing injustices in our earthly life is not seen as the duty of the Christian Church. This is why Buthelezi and Boesak first establish, in different ways, that this earthly life (situation) has some relation to God.

To do this Buthelezi introduces the concept of a theology of the 'Wholeness of Life' which is a concept firmly rooted in the traditional African society, which never separated the sacred from the secular, and also a concept that is at the heart of Christianity. Buthelezi also sees the wholeness of life from the angle of 'creation' in the Christian Bible. Buthelezi writes that "God as the creator implies that human life in all its dimensions; social, political and economic is based on a relation to God" (cf. Moore, 1974: 99). He does this so as to establish a firm foundation that all spheres of life are related to God / Christian Church, and hence he as a bishop, can, with a vision of liberation, begin denouncing injustices in our earthly life.

In this line, Boesak (1977: 25) says that "the prophets of old never hesitated to speak God's word for the whole life. They were unflinching and uncompromising in their confrontation with kings and rulers with regard to social justice issues." While Buthelezi emphasizes Creation as the fundamental criterion for the holistic concept, Boesak cites God's revelation in Jesus Christ whose ministry was precisely for the liberation of the poor and oppressed (Luke 4:16-21). Christians believe that in Jesus, God is not neutral as regards human affairs. He takes the part of the poor and denounces injustices of every shape and kind. However, Boesak (1977: 25), in conjunction with Buthelezi, says that "liberation theology contends that

the Creator's acts in history are repeatedly described as acts of re-creation, a re-creation which finds its consummation in the ministry of Jesus the Messiah".

In the liberation theology done in independent African countries, just like in black theology, theologians first establish, in different ways, that this earthly life (situation) has some relation to God. For example, as Frostin (1988: 49 - 55) tells us, scholars like; Mbiti, Nyamiti, Mwoleka and Nyerere do it by introducing the concept of God as community from the African worldview (known as *Ubuntu* in South Africa). This concept is characterised as predominantly religious, holistic, anthropocentric, community-oriented, and this worldly. In this worldview creatures are united in a life of sharing and not selfishness, and work together because they have God as their goal. Of course, it should be noted that this paradigm of the 'African community' was not perfectly egalitarian in practice especially with regard to the treatment of women and the young (Frostin, 1988: 49 - 55).

However, this African worldview which has creatures united in a life of sharing and not selfishness is seen to be modelled in the life of the Christian Holy Trinity, where "the three divine persons share everything in such a way that they are not three gods but one," (Mwoleka, 1976: 15). By doing all this African liberation theologians in the first place try to establish a firm foundation that all spheres of life are related to God / Christian Church and then in the second place establish that a life of working together, life of sharing and not selfishness is what the Christian God wants. From these foundations then liberation theologians can call on the church to participate in denouncing the divisions of mankind where few privileged and rich individuals dominate, oppress and exploit the poor masses nationally and internationally as Nyerere writes (cf. Parrat, 1997: 109-119).

In African feminist theology, Oduyoye (2001: 52) sees Jesus' question, "And you who do you say that I am?" as edging women to define themselves and not be defined by men. Okure (1992: 179) releases liberating elements in the Bible by focussing on the power that Mary the mother of Jesus had as mother. Again, Okure releases liberating elements from the fact that a woman, Mary Magdalene, becomes the 'first fruit' of Jesus' mission and the first apostle of the resurrection. Nasimiyu-Wasike (1997: 176) sees the woman's active co-operation and initiative, alongside her reproductive ability as means of God's liberating interventions. In the 1996 Conference of Concerned Women Theologians, 'The Circle', members discussed ecclesiology along with missiology around the concept of *Koinonia* to release liberating elements for women (Oduyoye 2001: 85-87). Apart from Christian wisdom, Circle members also refer to the repository of African knowledge in order to release liberating elements (Oduyoye, 2001: 40 -42).

THOSE INVOLVED IN PRODUCTION OF AFRICAN LIBERATION

THEOLOGIES: In the early years of African liberation theologies much intellectual work was done by the elite African scholars; students, professors and clerics without any involvement of the very grass roots much in need of liberation. For example, as Magaziner (2010: 6) tells us, in South Africa "the students, clerics and artists who composed the Black consciousness movement came from South Africa's small, black middle class, those privileged enough to spend time at universities and to read and reflect on their situation". Realising this Goba (cf. Gibellini, 1974: 73) warned as he wrote:

Too many of us are remote from the everyday experiences of our black people. There is a gap between the black elite and the ordinary black man. We have allowed our acquired intellectualism to separate us from the ordinary people. Today when we speak of the black consciousness

movement, we immediately think of students in S.A.S.O. and a few clerics. The rest of the people are not involved.

Thus, the real oppressed, the poor, the weak did not take part in the production of this type of theology. It was later realised that for these African liberation theologies to be truly liberating, they must arise from the very grass roots, the real oppressed, with a liberated consciousness. The real life experience on which reflection and praxis are to be based must involve not only a few that are equipped with scientific tools for handling God's word but the whole community including men and women who have had no formal training in the scientific handling of God's word (Kalilombe, 1999: 169). Along this line, in *Ujamaa* theology Nyerere (1973: 25), at least in theory, explains:

There should be an egalitarian relationship between intellectuals and the rest of the community. Intellectuals should not descend like ancient Gods, do something for the community and disappear again. The educated people of Africa have to identify themselves with the uneducated, and do so without reservations.

This is why, Soka (1977: 31), at least in theory, says that "the cradle of the *Ujamaa* theology [was] not going to be the academic armchair of the theologian, but the small Christian communities in the *Ujamaa* village". Kalilombe, in his ever emphasis that African liberation theologies must be done at the grassroots, gives an example of how it was done in Nicaragua. Kalilombe, (1999: 194) writes; "A group of simple people, some educated individuals, and one or two professional theologians used to meet for prayer and reflection on the scriptures. It was a dialogue in which each member was able to contribute according to each one's capacities and experiences".

GOAL OF AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGIES: First, African liberation theologies target the representatives of the church so that moved by the marginalization and impoverishment of the great majority of their members, as Jean-Marc Ela writes, they should be seized with a humanistic sense of compassion and as a church make a preferential option for the poor, the oppressed in their struggle for liberation (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 136-152).

Second, African liberation theologies target the destruction of what Boesak (1977: 5-6) calls the 'pseudo-innocence' of the oppressed themselves, which is the temptation to accept the slave mentality, as Biko (1996: 68) said that the greatest ally of the oppressor is the submissive mind of the oppressed. The aim here is not that the oppressed should move to the extreme of self-love which also ends in selfishness and pride. However, African liberation theologies aim at restoring that self-love that is intrinsic to authentic human life as is reflected in the words of Jesus: 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself'. Thus, African liberation theologies aim at making the oppressed subjects of their own liberation. This is why, as Kalilombe (1999: 169) tells us, the statement of the Sixth Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) held in Geneva in 1983 clearly declared that theology must be done at the grassroots. "The real life experience on which reflection and praxis are to be based must involve the whole community, and not only a few people" (Kalilombe, 1999: 169).

Third, as Boesak (1977: 4) says, "in order to maintain the status quo, it is necessary for the oppressors to believe, and keep believing that they are innocent". Jean-Marc Ela and Engelbert Mveng give us the different ways oppressors use to justify their activities and so the works of Ela and Mveng are aimed at destroying such justifications (cf. Gibellini, 1994:

137-165). African liberation theologies therefore, aim at destroying this 'pseudo-innocence' of the oppressors which keeps them in bondage and prevents them from becoming partners with the poor (Boesak, 1977: 4). Probably, in black theology, the most definitive way of destroying the pseudo-innocence of the apartheid perpetrators was the analysing and labelling of apartheid as heresy and idolatry (cf. Kairos Document, 1986).

Finally, when both the oppressor and the oppressed are liberated, then, the goal of African liberation theologies becomes family-hood, where all citizens work together in freedom, dignity and equality. As the Roman Catholic social teachings put it, a society based on the common-good so that freedom, justice and human rights might become the common property of the human family. Simply put, the goal of African liberation theologies is social justice (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 1992). In summary, this is how we can understand African liberation theologies.

We have seen in section 2. 2, that corresponding to the western colonial thinking, Christian churches developed a colonial theology with such key features of domination, silencing other voices and ending up in a scenario of subalternity making Christianity centred. We have also seen in the second part of section 2.2 that just like in postcolonial theory against this colonizing legacy in religion/Christianity which developed a colonial Christian theology, was a decolonising legacy in religion/Christianity. Out of this decolonising legacy in religion/Christianity, arose African liberation theologies which in this thesis I argue that they express ideas of postcolonial theory so as to give a decentred and embodied postcolonial Christianity. I will bring forward my arguments along these lines in the next two sections. It is to the decentred postcolonial Christianity that I now turn.

3.0. AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGIES: EXPRESSING A DECENTERED POSTCOLONIAL CHRISTIANITY.

These African liberation theologies, in keeping with the decolonizing legacy of postcolonial theory, attempted three key projects: first, making Christianity a force that delegitimizes any form of domination; second, making Christianity a force that is directed towards bringing out the silenced voices in Christianity and in social, political and economic affairs; third, ultimately making Christianity an advocate of mutuality. It is in the pursuit of these three key projects, as I show below, that we can see African liberation theologies to be working for a decentred form of Christianity in a postcolonial context.

3.1. AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGIES: DE-LEGITIMISING DOMINANCE.

We have seen in section 2.3 that African liberation theologies are, by definition, 'critical reflections, under the word of God, on the African experiences of being dominated, oppressed and exploited'. We have also seen in the same section 2.3 that the whole methodology of African liberation theologies, in tandem with the above definition, comprises three steps. It starts with observing the experiences of the people, then analysis of the experiences of the people and finally theological reflection which grows out of the experience of the people. It is from the above definition and its methodology that I argue, as I show below, that African liberation theologies are geared at delegitimizing any form of domination.

From the first step of observing the experiences of the people in the methodology of African liberation theologies, Frostin (1988: 8) says African liberation theologians are able to

distinguish between at least six different levels of domination and oppression. First, on the ethnic level, we have the domination by whites over blacks. Second, on the cultural level, we have a situation where some cultures try to dominate other cultures. Third, on the geographical level, we have the domination by Europe and North America over the third-world. Fourth, on the economic level, we have the domination by the rich over the poor. Fifth, on the class level, we have the domination by the capitalists over the proletariat. Sixth, on the sexual level, we have the domination of males over females.

From the second step of social analysis in the methodology of African liberation theologies, African liberation theologians have always refused to accept any type of domination and any legitimizations of dominations at face value. Instead of just accepting such situations as merely metaphysical, African liberation theologians have always tried to analyse every situation of domination, oppression and exploitation. First, with regard to ethnic (white-black) domination, Maimela tries to analyse and get to the root of the conscious or unconscious belief in the superiority of all white people, and Christianity's support of this perceived superiority, "a superiority which entitles them to a position of political and economic power, dominance, and privilege in relation to black people, who were regarded as inherently inferior and doomed to servitude" (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 182).

Maimela rightly notes that in the early church "there was an ethnic and social admixture of different races that reflected the pluralism of the Hellenistic world" (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 83). However this healthy coexistence of different races in Christianity for some reasons gradually faded out. In the first place, Maimela points to Constantine's opening of the entire Roman Empire for Christianization and making the formerly persecuted minority missionary

movement into an established, official institution. "In gratitude to Constantine", Maimela argues, "the church and its religious authorities were taken over and co-opted by the ruling class, [who] expected them to construct a theology whose purpose was to advance and legitimate the cause and interests of the Roman empire" (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 183).

In the second place, Maimela points to Europe's success in conquering other races and spreading Christianity during the age of great discoveries. This empowered Europeans "to perceive themselves as God's chosen race or anointed, called upon to govern and spread western civilization and Christianity even at the cost of fanatical persecutions of those regarded as unworthy human beings, the so-called heathens who happened to be the people of colour" (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 184-185). From this merely historical accident, and not necessarily metaphysical point, came the idea of the white person's perceived sense of superiority and election resulting in this ethnic (white-black) domination.

This ethnic (white-black) domination, based on the white man's perceived sense of superiority, was related to the other types of domination in the social, cultural, political and economic affairs. This is why Allan Boesak (1984: 110-111) sees "racism not merely as a vague feeling of racial superiority, but a system of domination, furnished with social, political and economic structures of domination". In this way, Maimela delegitimizes the various types of domination as he reveals that they are not metaphysical but are social constructions by human beings, and, therefore, they can be changed and ought to be changed. It was in the pursuit of changing this domination especially on African identity and culture that one current of liberation thinking in Africa, African (cultural) theology, was born as we have seen in section 2.3.

African cultural theologians do not find much sanity in Robert Moffat's words, as seen in section 2.2, portraying Africa as having nothing worthy theological reflection. Instead African cultural theologians, as Tutu writes, point to what Robertson Smith (cf. Parrat, 1997: 40) said that a new scheme of faith only finds a hearing when it appeals to a religious instinct and susceptibility that already exists in its audience. To reach these, the new faith must take account of the traditional forms in which religious feeling is embodied. This is why Tutu, together with other African cultural theologians, see "the belief that worthwhile religion in Africa had to await the advent of the white man" as a colossal lie (cf. Parrat, 1997: 42). Thus, they clearly repudiate the tacit claim that white is right and white is best and rightly claim that there must have been some valuable religious ideas and practices among Africans that enabled Christianity to find a hearing among African people.

However, Buthelezi (cf. Torres and Fabella, 1978: 70) reveals that this much loved ethnographic approach of doing African (cultural) theology was unconsciously or perhaps consciously used by white missionaries who just emphasized on enculturation to divert attention from the social, political and economic structures of domination in modern Africa. This was by emphasising on the reconstruction of the traditional African world-view into which the gospel would be translated while neglecting the social, political and economic experiences of domination of modern Africans. In this way, these missionaries made African (cultural) theology another way of perpetuating social, political and economic structures of domination in Africa. As such Buthelezi asks: "Who can blame those who have the feeling that the missionaries, with their right hands, are diverting our attention to our glorious past so that we may not see what their left hands, as well as those of their fellow whites, are doing in dehumanisation of our lives in the present?" (cf. Torres and Fabella, 1978: 62).

Further, black students, who formed the exclusively black South African Students Organisation (SASO), reveal another type of white domination even in the very black man's fight against social, political and economic structures of domination. In this fight, through the multi-racial University Christian Movement (UCM), white liberals, not believing that blacks could formulate their thoughts without white guidance and trusteeship, often displayed a paternalistic mentality. White liberals, few though in number, not only tried to determine the *modus operandi* of those blacks who opposed the system, but also tried to lead that opposition. Black Christian students saw this as a deliberate move by the white liberals to champion the black man's struggle, and with a 'wrong analysis' dominate relations between whites and blacks so that the whites could control the political work of the blacks and lead the political struggle guided by a wrong analysis, and derail the fight (cf. Magaziner, 2010: 26-39).

Motlhabi further unmasks these related forms of domination, focusing on the relation between racism and capitalism. He sees racism as a manifestation of a far deeper malady growing in an atmosphere of a power and economic struggle so that it would justify a system where a few had a monopoly on power and wealth (cf. Moore, 1974: 119-120). The apartheid in South Africa exemplified this. This is why when Louis Le Grange, the then South African Minister of Police, euphemistically supported the apartheid as a just system and Christian, and attacked the South African Council of Churches (SACC); Bishop Desmond Tutu laid bare this euphemism.

In a press statement released on 11th October 1979 Tutu (1982: 50) said:

If Mr le Grange thinks that blacks are not exploited, oppressed and denied their human rights and dignity, then I invite him to be black for just one day. He would then hear Mr Arrie Paulus saying he is like a baboon, and a senior police officer saying he is violent by nature. He would be aware that in the land of their birth, black people, who form 80% of the population, have 13% of the land, and the white minority of about 20% has 87% of the land. In this country a white child of eighteen years can vote, but a black person, be he a university professor or a bishop or whatever has no franchise. A black doctor with the same qualifications as his white counterpart is paid less for the same job. Have any whites had their homes demolished, and then been told to move to an inhospitable area, where they must live in tents until they have built themselves new houses? This happened last week to the Batlokwa people.

Thus, the man-made system of capitalism is unearthed as the root of these other related dominations as it not only fragments society into competing individuals but also stratifies society into different classes. As Mpunzi argues, the above related dominations are a “structural manifestation of human sickness” (cf. Moore, 1974: 132). Further, Mveng and Nyerere, for example, unmask the perpetuation of the north-south, rich-poor, and capitalist-proletariat dominations.

Mveng tells us that those who want to dominate others put in place colonial and neo-colonial policies which impoverish those to be dominated so that, being poor, they can be dominated easily. In this way, those who want to dominate others, use poverty as a weapon of maintaining their power. As such the world’s economic order is based on the endless enrichment of some and endless impoverishment of others (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 159). Mveng

goes on to argue that for colonialists or neo-colonialists, "Poverty is not something to be done away with," (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 160). On the contrary, "Poverty is something to be developed. To eliminate poverty would be to exhaust one of the sources of the oppressor's power". For the sole maintenance of their power, the oppressors systematically maintain "misery factories whose mission is to produce and perpetuate poverty – that is misery and wretchedness" (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 161).

One way of perpetuating poverty, according to Mveng, is first to plunge poor states into a labyrinth of secret bilateral conventions / pacts, some of which, in the long run, poor states in the south have no means to execute, which in turn leads them being flung, bound hand and foot, into the iron cage of debt. Another way is by imposing economic systems like capitalism, at the root of which is the free market economy, and then imposing political regimes willing to execute these programmes in poor countries (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 62). In agreement with Mveng, Nyerere points to this system of capitalism as dividing humankind into rich and poor both on the international level and the national level. With the system of the free market, where it is practically a pygmy competing with a giant, the rich individuals within nations, and the rich nations within the world win and go on getting richer very much faster than the poor are able to overcome their poverty (cf. Parrat, 1997: 110).

Thus, in different ways, from the second step of social analysis in the methodology of African liberation theologies, African liberation theologians try to delegitimize different situations of domination, by showing that they are in no way metaphysical. Situations of domination need not be as they are. This unmasking of various situations of domination, leads to the third step of theological reflection. Here, the fundamental question comes to be,

‘what does God say and what is God willing to do about this situation of being dominated, oppressed and exploited?’ Wrestling with this question, Maimela, for example, finds that the God of the Bible is not manipulated for the maintenance of domination, oppression and exploitation. Instead, Maimela says that “the God of the Bible is one that wages a battle against injustice and human misery in order to establish justice and freedom for the oppressed” (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 192).

Mveng further tells us that Christians believe that in the Bible Jesus comes only to deliver human beings from their physical, moral and spiritual miseries and not to institutionalise and beatify them. This is what Christians believe to be proclaimed in the *magnificat* [Luke 1:47-55], sang by Zechariah at the beginning of the Gospel of Luke [Luke 1:68-79] and ultimately revealed by Jesus himself in the synagogue at Nazareth, as he inaugurates his public ministry [Luke 4:18-20] (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 163). Hence, African liberation theologians do not mince words to call any type of domination unchristian.

This is why Tutu argues that the cultural alienation that Africans suffer is nothing less of blasphemy against God, who created Africans as they are “in His own image, not to be carbon copies of others of his creatures, no matter how advanced or prosperous [those others] might perceive themselves to be” (cf. Parrat, 1997: 40). This is why the theological justification of the system of apartheid, which was aimed at domination, oppression and exploitation of blacks through an ideology of white superiority, was described by South African black theologians as a heresy and even idolatry. The logic here is simple, “if God is the source of justice, it follows that political injustice and oppression must be defined as a denial of God” (Frostin, 1988: 107).

Thus, by the first step of observing experience, African liberation theologians work to point out the different types of domination. Then, by the second step of social analysis, African liberation theologians point out that the different situations of domination are illegitimate, they need not persist as they are in no way metaphysical. By the third step of theological reflection, African liberation theologians point out that the different situations of domination, apart from not being metaphysical, are also illegitimate in the eyes of God. The Christian-Bible does not tolerate them, and as Maimela tells us, Christianity was in fact born to fight against any form of domination (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 187). Thus, the whole methodology of African liberation theologies, in keeping with postcolonial theory, is geared at de-legitimising any form of domination. But of what effect does this de-legitimising of domination have on the dominated?-

3.2. AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGIES: BRINGING OUT THE SILENCED VOICES.

We have seen in section 2.3 that all the various African liberation theologies were born as a reaction to the various ways of dominating and thereby silencing the African people. As such, when African liberation theologies delegitimize domination they also delegitimize the silencing of other voices. Thus, bringing out the silenced voices in the African context becomes the logical consequence when African cultural theologians give the black person a proper pride in things black and African by rejecting the tacit claim that white is best, white is right. As Tutu says, Africans must not hush up their voices and be carbon copies of others, no matter how advanced or prosperous those others might conceive themselves to be (cf. Parrat, 1997: 42).

This is why, Sawyer (cf. Parrat, 1997: 10) says that Vincent Lucas lamented that the whole world was bound to suffer loss if African people, through striving to confine themselves in moulds that are not theirs, were to forsake the contribution that only African people can make. Vincent Lucas deplored the disintegration of the traditional life in some parts of Africa in favour of European ways of life. In this endeavour, Sawyer (cf. Parrat, 1997: 16) tells us that in 1969;

Professor John Mbiti at the Annual meeting of the Christian Churches Educational Association, on Christian Education in the background of African Tribal Religions, urged that far more attention be given to the traditional culture and religiosity within which Christ comes as Lord who makes all things new.

Consequently African liberation theologians bring out the silenced voices and use them in their theologies. Sawyer advocated Africanising the Christian churches by bringing in the rites and customs of Africans who were being converted into Christianity (cf. Parrat, 1997: 11). Just like Sawyer, Boesak also says that “black theology must mean a search for a totally new social order, and in this search it will have to drink deeply from the well of African tradition, to use what is good and wholesome for contemporary society” (cf. Parrat, 1997: 27). In this line, Tutu calls for the use of a number of silenced but valuable insights from African traditions (cf. Parrat, 1997: 44) as I show below.

First, Tutu calls for the use of the valuable African insight of the corporateness of human existence that gets silenced in the face of excessive western individualism. Second, Tutu calls for the use of the valuable African insight of the wholeness of the person that gets silenced by the western emphasis on Hellenistic dichotomies of soul and body. Third, Tutu calls for the

use of the valuable African insight of the reality of the spiritual that gets silenced by the western emphasis on the material. Fourth, Tutu calls for the use of the valuable African insight of the awesomeness of the transcendent that gets silenced when westerners propagate the belief that it is an embarrassment “to speak about the king, high and lifted up, whose train fills the temple” (cf. Parrat, 1997: 44). However, as we have seen in section 3.1, Buthelezi warns of too much concentration on traditional African rites and customs at the neglect of voices from the flux and turmoil of the present times (cf. Moore, 1974: 100)

In view of this, Tutu, quoting Ndwiga Mugambi, calls for the consideration of all African voices when he says that African liberation theologies should aim at liberating Africans from all forces that hinder them from living fully as human beings (cf. Parrat, 1997: 39). This is why among the five sources of African liberation theologies that Frostin (1988: 17 - 18) identifies, three were long silenced voices. First, there is the long silenced African anthropology, a community-oriented anthropology, whereby to be human is to be part of a community; ‘I am, because we are’. Second, there is African Traditional Religion(s) silenced with their rejection of a dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. Third, there are the other silenced African realities in the arts and the struggle against economic, political, social and cultural oppressions. As a result, African liberation theologians relate Christian values to the central values of African religions and African anthropology without neglecting voices from the political and social problems of contemporary life.

With regard to the long silenced voice of African anthropology, a community-oriented anthropology, we see Nyerere, for example, bringing it out as he calls for it in the Christian struggle against economic, political, social and cultural oppressions in his *Ujamaa* theology.

Nyerere (1966: 166) says; “Our first step must be to re-educate ourselves; to regain our former attitude of mind. In our traditional African society we were individuals within a community”. Referring to the pre-colonial family with its communal pattern of life, Nyerere (1968: 137) writes;

Wealth belonged to the family as a whole; and every member of a family had the right to the use of family property. No one used wealth for the purpose of dominating others. This is how we want to live as a nation. We want the whole nation to live as one family.

Like Nyerere, Desmond Tutu in his black theology, also refers to African anthropology when he searches for a solution to socio-economic problems of South Africans. Tutu (1982: 100) writes; “In our African understanding, part of *Ubuntu* – being human – is the rare gift of sharing . . . So I would look for a socio-economic system that placed the emphasis on sharing and giving, rather than on self-aggrandisement and getting”. This African anthropology is likened to life in the Holy Trinity in Christianity. In African liberation theologies, the Trinity is seen as a model for human life in community and the Church as community. The sharing of everything in the Trinity, in such a way that the persons of the Trinity are not three gods but one, is seen as the model for human life in community (Mwoleka, 1976: 15).

With regard to the long silenced voice of African traditional religions, its emphasis on the unity of human existence with its implied rejection of a dichotomy between the sacred and the secular has had an impact on African liberation theologies. For example, Buthelezi brings it out and uses it in his theology of the ‘wholeness of life’. Based on African Traditional Religions’ rejection of the sacred/secular dichotomy, Buthelezi grounds his theology of the ‘wholeness of life’ drawing on the creation story of the Bible as well. As we have seen in

section 2.3 Buthelezi sees God, the creator, as implying that human life in all its dimensions, social, political, and economic, is based on a relation to God (cf. Moore, 1974: 99). Buthelezi does this so as to establish a firm foundation that all spheres of life are related to God/Christian Church, and hence he as a bishop, can, with a vision of liberation, begin denouncing injustices in our earthly life.

Like Buthelezi, Boesak also brings out this African concept of the wholeness of life in his black theology as we have seen in section 2.3. While Buthelezi links the African concept of the wholeness of life with the creation story of the Bible, Boesak (1977: 25) links the African concept of the wholeness of life with the stories of the prophets in the Old Testament and Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Boesak sees that Old Testament prophets as well as Jesus in the New Testament never hesitated to speak God's word for the whole life and denounced injustices. As such, Boesak argues that the Christian, just as the traditionalist in African traditional religions, ought not to separate the sacred from the secular and hence be able to speak God's word for the whole life. Matthew 25: 31-46 also expresses the seriousness of the wholeness of life by saying that when our eternal salvation or damnation will be decided, what will count will be our attitude towards those who suffer.

With regard to the silenced voices from the other African realities, such as the economic, political, and social problems of contemporary life, they also, have had an impact on African liberation theologies. We see these voices coming out, since, as we have seen in section 2.3, the chief interlocutors of African liberation theologies are the poor, the exploited classes, the marginalized races, all the despised. In this line, Goba for example, tries to make sure that the silenced African voices at the grass roots are indeed brought out in black theology. This is

why Goba warns against the danger of having black intellectuals that are remote from the ordinary black person's experiences of economic, political, social and cultural oppressions, and yet doing black theology for the masses (cf. Moore, 1974: 73). If so, then, doing black theology would be an exclusive domain of intellectuals and hence be another way of dominating and silencing the less scientifically sophisticated minds at the grassroots.

Against this type of silencing the grassroots, as I have elaborated in section 2.3 above, it was later realised that for African liberation theologies to be truly liberating, they must arise from the very grass roots, the really oppressed, with a liberated consciousness. Doing African liberation theologies means working with the grassroots, persons and groups that are really confronted with factors of domination, oppression and exploitation. This is why Kalilombe (1999: 169) says that African liberation theologies must involve not only professional theologians but the whole community. Kalilombe (1999: 194), copying from what was done in Nicaragua, says that doing theology at the grass roots must involve small groups of simple people, some educated individuals, and one or two professional theologians who meet for prayer and reflection on the scriptures. It must be a dialogue in which each member is able to contribute according to each one's capacities and experiences towards the development of theology.

All the impact of, African anthropology, African traditional religion(s) and voices from the political and social problems of contemporary life on African liberation theologies written above show that African liberation theologies, in keeping with the postcolonial project, are bringing out the long silenced voices in Christianity. However, we have earlier on seen that in the colonial churches, theology was to be done in one way which was the European way and

only theologians (pastors and priests) trained in this way, were to do the theologizing that the rest of the Christian community had to consume, with considerable gratitude. Now having restored the voices of the dominated, how do African liberation theologians view the picture of Christianity that has many voices? Are African liberation theologians then advancing chaos, isolation and false particularism by bringing the idea of many voices in Christianity? To this question I now turn.

3.3. AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGIES: ADVANCING MUTUALITY.

By bringing out the idea of many voices in Christianity, African liberation theologians are not advancing chaos, isolation and false particularism. However, they are advancing the idea that unity does not necessarily mean uniformity and solidarity does not mean the passivity of other groups like the non-Europeans and those not scientifically trained in handling God's words. Hence, they are proposing a unity and solidarity where all Christians are active members in a spirit of equality and mutuality.

This is also in keeping with what Tutu, quoting Maurice Wiles, writes about the inductive and empirical general nature of theology today (cf. Parrat, 1997: 42).

It is the ever-changing struggle to give expression to man's response to God. It is always inadequate and provisional. Variety is to be welcomed, because no one approach can ever do justice to the transcendent reality of God; our partial expressions need to be complemented by the different apprehensions of those whose traditions are other than our own. There are no fixed criteria for the determination of theological truth and error. We ought therefore to be ready to tolerate a considerable measure even of what seems to us to be error, for we cannot be certain

that it is we who are right. On this view a wide range of theological difference even including what we regard as error is not in itself a barrier to unity.

This is why Tutu considers the idea of a universal theology as thoroughly erroneous as he writes that “western theology is no more universal than other brands of theology can ever hope to be” (cf. Parrat, 1997: 41). Only the eternal gospel of Jesus Christ can properly and rightly claim universality. But this human activity, that we call theology, done by limited and particular humans, should obviously “possess the limitations and the particularities of those who are theologising” as Tutu says (cf. Parrat, 1997: 41). For this reason, Boesak warns that although the relevance of theology comes when it is “done from within the particular situation and circumstances of the theologian himself/herself, he/she should be careful to avoid claiming that the interpretation of the gospel which suits his/her circumstances is the only one” (cf. Parrat, 1997: 120-121). There is need for variety.

However, this variety cannot be leading to chaos, isolation and false particularism since all are “ultimately reflecting on the one divine activity to set [humans] free from all that enslaves [them]” as Tutu says (cf. Parrat, 1997: 41). This is why, as Frostin (1988: 8) writes, in the Geneva conference of “EATWOT, theologians unanimously rejected a reductionist approach where one level of oppression is absolutised”. Although a particular theology cannot claim to provide all answers to all situations, but true insights from particular theologies must have universal relevance. This then brings in the idea of complementing / mutuality between particular theologies. This is why African liberation theologies, though they have roots on the African soil, do not, in any way, close eyes to outside influence.

Hence, African liberation theologies call for an intercultural approach. In this line, the Swedish-Eritrean pedagogue Yebio (1982: 7-8), for example, explains:

The prefix 'inter' indicates for me a mutual relationship in which those interacting are subjects in a process of mutual learning. It indicates a process – of learning about the other and about oneself in the light of the presence of the other. Intercultural education is not limited to acquiring 'knowledge' about the other. It also involves a process of critical self-awareness a critical re-reading of one's own history and culture and one's own cultural values. Both actors are subjects and both cultures are the subject of critical study.

This is why Nyamiti does not regret being influenced by western theology in his work on African (cultural) theology.

Nyamiti says that foreign influence is not necessarily bad since “in our times, dialogue among theologians of different cultures is imperative”, and exclusion of foreign influence can only lead to “cultural isolation and false particularism” (Nyamiti, 1975: 141-142). Thus dialogue is the key concept in Nyamiti's discussion of the relationship between African and Western theologies. For this reason, Pobee warns that while African liberation theologies emphasise Africanness, it is necessary to avoid treating the African person as a museum piece or an anthropological curio (cf. Parrat, 1997: 25). Pobee goes on to say that it is necessary to take into account the fact that “the African [person] has not been static; he/she has grown in stature, mentality, culture and in other ways” (cf. Parrat, 1997: 25). But above all, he/she shares and borrows from places and cultures outside Africa in a spirit of mutuality.

With this vision of 'reciprocal influence', African liberation theologies say that the concern for cultural identity, in the quest for 'the future of Africa', does not exclude openness to other cultures. Thus, while denying an overemphasis of liberation theology as a Latin American project, exported to other regions like Africa; African liberation theologies have undeniably been influenced by Latin American liberation theology. Rather than being a one-way traffic, there has been a mutual exchange of ideas in the communication within EATWOT and third-world theologies in general (Frostin, 1988: 18-19). In this spirit, Nyerere (1966: 116) writes: "We and our [grandparents], great [grandparents], have learned and adapted from nature, from ourselves and from the peoples of Europe, America and Asia. This we shall continue to do, just as men [and women] and civilizations throughout the world have always done".

Due to this spirit of mutualism, the stand of African liberation theologies with regard to Christian denominations also advances mutuality. This is why Pobee decries the fact that doing theology has been denominational following the reformation which plunged the Christian church into separate church organizations, with each one claiming to be the only true church (cf. Parrat, 1997: 26). For this reason, Pobee says that "African liberation theologies must guard against white [person's] factionalism and be ecumenical" (cf. Parrat, 1997: 26). Arguing on the basis of ecumenism, Sawyer says that "in an age of Christian ecumenical thinking, a *Theologia Africana* might very well be the means of making Christians of various groups think together and so worship together" (cf. Parrat, 1997: 22). Hence, guiding African liberation theologians is African philosophy summarised in 'I am because we are' where neither individuals nor groups can find their identity outside the communion with others as I show in the following four examples below.

First, African liberation theologies advance mutuality by using the African philosophy of 'I am because we are' in their treatment of 'participation'. For example, in his African (cultural) theology, Nyamiti's treatment of participation expresses a holistic view of reality. He says that at the heart of this idea is a sort of organic symbiosis which is both theocentric (because it points to the creator of all reality) and anthropocentric. Thus, Nyamiti presents God as the ultimate link of human and cosmic solidarity. Apart from the fact that creatures are united with each other, on account of being created by the same creator, creatures are also united because they have God as their goal. On this account "all creatures must work and cooperate together to reach this final goal" (Nyamiti, 1977: 64- 65). This idea of having all creatures working and cooperating in mutuality on account of having God as the ultimate link of human and cosmic solidarity also permeates Buthelezi's black theology as I show below.

Buthelezi criticised the pious declarations of the white minority about love and service to God, on the one hand, and its unwillingness to share power and wealth with the black majority on the other. Buthelezi (1968: 43) argues that "faith in the creator means that the rest of creation must be recognised as God's creation. It is a relation of solidarity in creation under God". Creatures must mutually accept each other. Thus why, Buthelezi is weary of a religious paternalism, full of 'love' but uninterested in mutuality and equality. Buthelezi writes (cf. Moore, 1974: 156);

Our ultimate ethical responsibility is not only to serve man by removing the symptoms of alienation from the wholeness of life, but to equip him with the tools whereby he will be able to stand on his own feet. He will begin to have faith in himself as a man after we have had faith in him as a fellow-participant in the wholeness of life.

Second, African liberation theologies advance mutuality by using the African philosophy of 'I am because we are' in their treatment of the Holy Trinity. They take the Trinity "as the source and exemplar of all solidarity, totality, and participation in creation" (Frostin, 1988: 55). Thus, as proponents of *Ujamaa* theology advocate, the Holy Trinity is the model for human life in community. The life of the Trinity is a life of sharing as "the three divine persons share everything in such a way that they are not three gods but only one" (Mwoleka, 1976: 15). Hence, Mwoleka (1976: 15) writes that the mystery of the trinity has eluded comprehension because western theology has approached the mystery of the Trinity from the wrong side of speculation [i.e. without reference to it being a model for human existence]. As I show below, Mwoleka argues that God's revelation as Trinity is not precisely meant for speculation.

Mwoleka (1976: 15-16) says that God's revelation as Trinity is primarily offering us a model of existence, life, not necessarily a riddle to solve. When God reveals himself as Trinity, He is telling us human beings that this is 'what it means to live, now begin to live as I do'. All this then points to one fact, that Christian life in all its aspects; social, political and economic, ought to be an imitation of the life of the Trinity which is a life of sharing, mutuality par excellence. Nyamiti (1977: 25) goes further and sees the Triune God as a model of African socialism, since in God there is "perfect harmony, equality of persons, solidarity through unlimited sharing of life, and participation". Hence, as Frostin (1988: 56) notes, as early as the 1970s Nyamiti was among the few theologians who advocated for a society based on dialogue and mutuality without economic, sexist, or racial oppression.

Third, African liberation theologies advance mutuality by using the African philosophy of 'I am because we are' in their treatment of other religions. Nyerere, for example, though a committed Christian himself, always avoided speaking about the Christian faith in ways that were discriminatory towards adherents of other religions. His *Ujamaa* theology, though religiously inspired, has no single religion as its source in an exclusive sense (Frostin, 1988: 60). In *Ujamaa* theology, "Muslim fraternities have contributed in the formation of the concept of *ndugu* (sibling) which, in the political language of Tanzania, has a meaning similar to that of 'comrade' in European socialism and is used to emphasize human equality" (Frostin, 1988: 59). Apart from the Islamic influence on *Ujamaa* theology, Frostin (1988: 60) also sees a clear influence of the Roman Catholic brand of Christianity, especially from the papal encyclical *Populorum progressio* (1967) in which Pope Paul VI pleaded for justice and for "human and spiritual progress of all people and therefore the common good of humanity".

Further still, this mutuality goes beyond religion. As Per Frostin (1988: 133) tells us, although *Ujamaa* theology was not dictated by foreign insights of Marxism, a paper analysis of *Ujamaa* theology shows that it was still informed by Marxism. It is not only *Ujamaa* theology that extends mutuality beyond religion, as references to Marxist concepts and theories, and also occasional quotations from Marx are readily available in black theology (Frostin, 1988:181). Emphasising mutuality beyond religion, Nyerere (1973: 225) asks,

What right, then, have we to reject those who serve mankind, simply because they refuse to accept the leadership of the church, or refuse to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus, or, the existence of God? What right have we to presume that God Almighty takes [no] notice of those who give dedicated service to those millions of His children who hunger and thirst after justice, just because they do not do it in his name?

Fourth, African liberation theologies advance mutuality as they use the African philosophy of 'I am because we are' in their treatment of acquisition of knowledge. To advance mutuality, *Ujamaa* theology for example, advocates a holistic view of knowledge and says that "no aspect of knowledge is unrelated to the others; past and present are fused, and the different academic disciplines are but segments of one whole" (Nyerere, 1968: 81). Apart from this interrelationship between academic disciplines, Nyerere calls for mutuality between the educated and the uneducated when he says that "the intellectual needs society". Hence, as we have seen in section 2.3, Nyerere condemns intellectual arrogance. In the participatory ethos of *Ujamaa*, Nyerere (1966: 199) repeatedly stresses that intellectuals must be willing to learn from people who do not have theoretical education.

Further, in line with this participatory ethos, Nyerere (1968: 186) says academic education must aim at a situation where "the whole atmosphere of the university is one of giving service and expecting service from all its members and students." In development, Nyerere (1973: 25) advocates that educated people of Africa, must, without reservations, identify themselves with the uneducated. The educated must, in a spirit of mutuality, work with the uneducated and not just descend like ancient gods, do something, and disappear again. Hence, Nyerere condemns the arrogance of giving aid to the poor. Instead, he encourages the idea of working together, "in whatever work there is to do, alongside and within the rest of the community" (Nyerere, 1968: 186).

Thus far, in this section, I have tried to analyse African liberation theologies along the five lines of; definition, origin, methodology, those involved, and finally the goal of African liberation theology, so as to show that African liberation theologies express a decentred form

of Christianity in the postcolonial context. I have argued that African liberation theologies, in keeping with postcolonial theory, are against the three characteristics of colonial Christianity respectively. First, I have shown that African liberation theologies have tried to make Christianity a force that delegitimizes any form of domination. Second, I have shown that African liberation theologies have tried to make Christianity a force that is aimed at bringing out silenced voices. Third, I have shown that African liberation theologies have tried to make Christianity an advocate of variety, united in a spirit of mutuality. Therefore, African liberation theologies can be said to express a decentred form of Christianity in the postcolonial context. However, from another angle, African liberation theologies can be seen to express an embodied postcolonial Christianity.* It is to this angle that I now turn in the fourth section.

4.0. AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGIES: EXPRESSING AN EMBODIED POSTCOLONIAL CHRISTIANITY.

In section 2.2 we have seen that while portraying Christianity as a largely centralised institution and a supporter of centralisation in the social, political and economic field through domination, silencing and subalternity, colonial theology also portrayed other-worldly Christianity. This is so, as we have seen in the first part of section 2.2 that colonial churches did not adequately deal with the historical dimension of God's liberation as they were too preoccupied with purely spiritual matters, particularly the here-after, and neglected earthly matters. However, African liberation theologians, while accepting the eschatological dimension of God's liberation, concentrate on the historical dimension of God's liberation as we have seen in section 2.3. In this section, I will show how African liberation theologies concentrate on the historical dimension of God's liberation along the line of liberation from oppression based on bodily differences of male and female (gender) and along the line of liberation from social conditions that produce material poverty and hence express an embodied postcolonial Christianity.

4.1. AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGIES AND THE BODILY DIFFERENCES OF MALE AND FEMALE.

We have seen in section 2.2 that colonial Christian churches being too concerned with spiritual matters, bodily differences of male and female were not adequately dealt with. Phiri (1997: 47) tells us that it was assumed that men's perception of reality was the same as women's perception of reality and so men's theologizing would be the same as women's theologizing. However, African women liberation theologians refuse to believe such assumptions. For example, Oduyoye (1983: 251) says, "We cannot assume that African men

and African women will say the same things about African reality.” All liberation theologians advocate that experience is crucial in doing theology. Now, are male experiences not different from female experiences? Young (1990: 52-53) tells us that “we do, after all, experience our world as gendered beings, so we cannot easily pass over how experience might differ when we talk of women’s experience and men’s experience”. If so, would it not be wrong to say that males, with experiences different from those of females, can perfectly do theology for both males and females?

With regard to the above question, African women liberation theologians first ask: what differences does it make to live ‘in’ a woman’s body? Young (1990: 53-54) tells us that living in a woman’s body means having biological experiences of such things as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and finally menopause with their own socialized reactions. As young girls, there is the fear of pregnancy, of its biological and social consequences. During middle age, there is the fear of infertility and not becoming pregnant. In most societies there is fear of being raped or assaulted and when rape or assault has occurred the woman experiences a sense of betrayal and violation. Lastly the woman fears that her most important asset, her body will never measure up to the ideal society has imposed.

All the above experiences are in the main exclusive to women, clearly showing that men and women have different experiences and as Young (1990: 52) says, even “when they are party to the same event, they might well experience and interpret it differently”. Thus, if experience is crucial in doing theology and considering the Akan proverb, *Nea oda gya na onim senea ehyehye fa* (it is the person sleeping by the fire who knows the intensity of the heat) that

Oduyoye (1989: 442) cites, then, as Young (1990: 53) says, “Women might draw on their experiences to do theology differently”. However, women theologians tell us that “the all-male hierarchies of post-Vatican II Catholicism and early EATWOT had failed to take account of the presence of gender in the cultural transformations envisaged” (Pemberton, 2003: 95).

Hence, African women make it clear that although we live on the same continent, the experiences of women in religion and culture in Africa are different from those of men and from place to place. As Phiri writes, “It is no longer acceptable, to claim that when African men are writing African theology, they are speaking on behalf of all Africans” (cf. Parrat, 1997: 47). This fact then calls women, with their particular experiences, to pay attention to Jesus’ question; “And you, who do you, say that I am?” (Oduyoye, 2001: 52). Thus, Oduyoye points to women’s experiences as a crucial source and norm of theology in the churches. This mentality, as Pemberton (2003: 5) acknowledges, made women, both Protestant and Catholic to consider constructing what they called ‘The Circle’; a network of concerned African women theologians from across Africa and in Diaspora. It was formally launched in Legon, Accra, Ghana in 1989 with the goal of fulfilling the right and duty of women to have a contribution to theological development in Africa.

As a result various African women theologians have tried to make their theological contributions which are in the main aimed at empowering women. For example, Okure (1995) tries to reinterpret the Christian scriptures to release liberating . . . elements in the Bible. In the first place, referring to Mary the mother of Jesus, Okure tries to empower African women by focussing on the power that Mary had as mother of Jesus Christ. Okure

(1995: 202) interprets Mary as 'mother of mission' for Mary not only birthed the saviour, but continued to influence him as a mother until he had been initiated into the public form of his ministry at Cana. Seeing that there was need for wine at the wedding party at Cana, Mary told Jesus to do something. This resulted in Jesus performing his first miracle, the turning of water into wine. It is this event that marks the beginning of his public ministry in the Gospel of John.

Here, Okure argues in her 1997 unpublished paper that "Jesus does recognise that his mother does have something to do with his mission. Left to himself he would not begin at that point" (cf. Pemberton, 2003: 111). In this way, Okure (1995: 205) says that Mary acted as midwife in assisting Jesus to bring to birth the mission that lay hidden in his heart. From this, women theologians argue that even God saw the need for incorporating the 'female other' in the salvation of humankind. This is because from the Cana story we can see that Jesus along with God the Father are not omnipotent, independent actors, manipulating, the world of first-century Israel. Rather, in this instance in Cana Jesus responds as one involved in inter-subjective dialogue with his mother, "genuinely open to the possibilities presented by the female other; and even more significantly for Okure, an 'other' who is mother" (cf. Pemberton, 2003: 111-112).

In the second place, referring to Mary Magdalene, Okure (1992: 179) sees that Mary becomes the 'first fruit' of Jesus' mission and the first apostle of the resurrection. For Okure this is as a result of Mary Magdalene's "womanly love that drove her to visit the tomb in the dark hours of the morning at great risk to her own life" whilst the male followers of Jesus stayed away from the challenge out of 'fear'" (Okure, 1992: 179). In agreement with Okure, Nasimiyu-

Wasike (1997: 176) also exploits the imagery of annunciation, where a woman's active co-operation and initiative, alongside her reproductive ability, are means of God's liberating interventions.

Apart from Christian wisdom, circle members also refer to the repository of African knowledge. Oduyoye (2001: 40 - 41) tells us that in African myths of creation, we find concepts such as wholeness, unity, relatedness and inter-relatedness of all that exists. While the Supreme Being is sometimes seen as male as in the Yoruba *Obatala*, at other times the Supreme Being is seen as female as in the Chewa *Namalenga*. Further, Oduyoye (2001: 42) tells us that there are alternative theological myths from Africa where the Supreme Being, defies the gender category. With the above facts, Oduyoye (2001: 42) tells us that African women liberation theologians begin to see the injustice of telling creation stories that make the divine source of life into a male who is good, and femaleness as an opposing principle that destroys God's goodness. Hence, African women liberation theologians call for gender differences to be reconfigured in the churches so as to promote women's dignity. In this endeavour, African women liberation theologians in the Roman Catholic Church find support from two main sources in the Roman Catholic Church.

In the first place they find support from the pronouncements of Rome. African women liberation theologians in the Roman Catholic Church see their project as part of the *aggiornamento* (renewal) of Roman Catholicism begun by Pope John XXIII in 1959. Then there are the documents of the second Vatican council (1962-1965) with concentration on human promotion and the recovery of dignity expressed especially in the document entitled *Gaudium et Spes*. These documents are further supported by various popes' encyclicals like

Pope Paul VI's *Africae terrarum* (1969), and Pope John Paul II's encyclical letters *Redemptor hominis* (1979), *Mulieris dignitatem* (1988a), *Christifideles laici* (1988b) which all emphasize on the dignity of women in the modern world (cf. Pemberton, 2003: 110-122). In the second place, African women liberation theologians in the Roman Catholic Church saw the 1994 African Synod in Rome, which insisted on the transformation of Catholicism into a radical vehicle of 'human promotion', as providing support for their cause, though they were critical of the location (Pemberton, 2003: 92-93).

Apart from women doing theology using their particular experiences, women have also argued to be accorded decision-making positions (though this is not the only thing women must strive for) in which they can put into effect their particular intellectual work for the well-being of the church. This is why, when the World Council of Churches (WCC) was created in Amsterdam in 1948, the Commission on the Life and Work of Women (CLWW) was also established (Pemberton, 2003: 30) so as to promote the representation of women in decision-making positions in the churches and the World Council of Churches.

However, women continued to be poorly represented in decision-making positions both in the churches that formed the WCC and the WCC itself. "By 1983 women's representation was just thirty percent at the sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver" (Pemberton, 2003: 37). This idea of promoting the representation of women in decision-making positions in the churches was continued by the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) formally established at Dar-es-Salaam in August 1976 (Pemberton, 2003: 41). Prior to the establishment of EATWOT, "Rose Zoe-Obianga, who was to become the first co-ordinator of EATWOT's women's programme in Africa in the

mid-1980s, had called on church leaders to receive the gift of educated women within ecclesiastical structures and urged women to new feats of self-help” (Pemberton, 2003: 48).

In this line Sr. Edet (1990: 119, 116) argued for the inclusion of women into the ordained ministry so as to enhance the representational power of priestly service in the Catholic Church. Further, arguing for the inclusion of women in the ordained ministry, in the 1996 conference of the circle, members discussed ecclesiology around the concept of *koinonia*. Circle members saw mutuality as a cardinal mark of *koinonia*. Hence, as Oduyoye (2001: 85 - 87) writes, circle members were of the mind that for the churches to be a true *koinonia*, “this attitude towards ordination has got to change and the model of priesthood of all believers honoured in actuality”. The argument is that “in a true communion no voices are left unheard and no God-given charismas are trivialized or glossed over”. Thus, if *koinonia* is a community of sharing and participation, then women must be allowed to exercise their charismas at all levels in the operations of the churches. In the women’s theology, ecclesiology goes together with missiology and as such women also argue for inclusiveness on the basis of our common baptism.

From the understanding that liberation theology in general feeds on experiences, then Africans reject the Eurocentric theology and insist that other voices must be heard because African experience often differs significantly from European experience. Similarly, African women theologians are saying to African male theologians that though they live on the same continent and belong to the same churches, their experiences differ significantly from male experiences. Hence women voices must be heard also. This is why Oduyoye and Kanyoro (1990:41) say “that a new factor has arrived on the theological scene in Africa – women who

write theology and who have covenanted to articulate the concerns of women. All who call themselves prophetic theologians in Africa will have to reckon with this.”

Thus, the body, with its differences of male and female, becomes one of the criteria in doing African liberation theologies in the postcolonial context. Hence, by paying attention to bodily differences of male and female, African liberation theologies, especially in the form of African feminist theology, can be seen to portray an embodied postcolonial Christianity against the otherworldly Christianity of colonial times. However, apart from portraying an embodied postcolonial Christianity by paying attention to bodily differences of male and female, African liberation theologies can also be seen to portray an embodied postcolonial Christianity by paying attention to social conditions that produce material poverty. To this, I finally turn.

4.2. AFRICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGIES AND THE CONCRETE MATERIAL POVERTY.

We have seen in the first part of section 2.2 that colonial Christian churches, being too concerned with spiritual matters, neglected earthly matters and hence failed to pay attention to social conditions that produce material poverty. Of course, as we have noted already, some individual church-men and women admittedly worked for social-economic justice and at times the churches could condemn unjust systems. However, we have seen that the churches' devotion did not readily translate to a consistent and overt political stance. The most usual practice of the colonial churches was the upholding of the established order-regardless of its implications. Hence, the colonial churches appeared to side with those few whose exclusive

concern was their own power and the accumulation of riches at the expense of the poor masses.

African liberation theologians saw the colonial churches' sole concentration on eschatological dimension as leading the colonial churches to a theological paralysis and a theological escapism that avoided the concrete experiences of material poverty of the African converts. Hence, as Mveng says, the phenomenon of poverty was poorly studied by the colonial churches, if it was studied at all (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 154). African liberation theologians saw that this situation had to be changed in the postcolonial context. They recognised that in the postcolonial context, at the moment when people are seeking to re-read the bible in terms of actual experience, the challenges of poverty and oppression suddenly provide a *locus* where the churches can work to understand themselves and their mission. As Jean-Marc Ela says, "A church is not yet authentically rooted in a people unless it seeks to establish justice amidst that people and perform the works of that justice" (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 142).

Thus, if Christian churches in Africa are to be organised in terms of the society in which they live, then, African liberation theologians advance these views. First, churches cannot ignore the situations of dependency and economic practices imposed on African people by Western Europe and America. Second, churches have the duty of evaluating the role of economic systems in the formation of society and the perpetuation of poverty. Third, churches have to take account of the exploitation of the peasantry and popular masses as cheap labour that helps only the elite to prosper. Hence, African liberation theologians call the churches not to stand aside but to encourage and help the poor when they begin to demand a just society.

Thus Nyerere, writing about the Catholic Church, maintains that the “Church, through its members, should be leading the attack on any organisation, or any economic, social, or political structure that oppresses men and women and which denies them the right and power to live as sons of a loving God” (cf. Parrat, 1997: 118).

Further, Nyerere argues that the relevance of the Christian churches in the postcolonial context goes along with the expression of God’s love for man by involvement and leadership in the rebellion against those social structures and economic organisations which condemn men and women to poverty, humiliation and degradation. Failure to do this, then, the churches will become identified with injustice and persecution (cf. Parrat, 1997: 11). When this happens, Nyerere says that one of two scenarios is inevitable. At best, “the [churches] will become irrelevant to man [and woman] and the Christian religion will degenerate into a set of superstitions accepted by the fearful”. At worst, the Christian churches “will die- and humanly speaking, [deserve] to die: because [they] will then serve no purpose comprehensible to modern man [and woman]” in his/her pursuit of social justice (cf. Parrat, 1997: 111). However, Nyerere quoting Teilhard de Chardin says (cf. Parrat, 1997: 119), “[Churches] can joyfully suffer persecution in order that the world may grow greater. [They] can no longer accept death on the charge that [they] are blocking humankind’s road”.

This is why Jean-Marc Ela says, “We in the African churches need to pause for a moment. Let us cease, if need be, activities which pose the danger of being too comfortable and permanent, and rethink evangelization in depth in terms of the great challenges of Africa today” (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 137). Boesak is even more direct in his understanding of New Testament eschatology. He summons the postcolonial churches not to be content with the

existing situation of oppression, but to take sides with the oppressed and the poor (cf. Parrat, 1997: 122-123). In this line Jean-Marc Ela asks: “If we shut Christianity up in the universe of sin, grace and the sacraments, don’t we risk voiding the historical, concrete dimensions of salvation in Jesus Christ?” (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 141).

Thus, these African liberation theologians advocate that ministering to the poor should not merely be done with a sense of compassion but with a sense of justice, declaring the state and conditions of poverty and under-development as ugly and completely unacceptable, because they are not metaphysical conditions but are structurally and historically explicable. The poor, the weak, the oppressed in Africa should become a great concern to theologians. Hence, as Jean-Marc Ela tells us, in the opening address at the first Congress of African and European Theologians held at Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, Mveng began with these words; “Welcome to Africa, the native land of the poor, the weak, [and] the oppressed” (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 139). Jean-Marc Ela further tells us that the 1977 Pan-African Conference of Third World theologians in Accra, Ghana, openly admitted that oppression was at work in the political and economic structure (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 140). For this reason African liberation theologians made these problems of contemporary Africa the obligatory *locus* of theological research.

They tried to take account of “the situation that is the result of the joint enterprise of the multi-nationals, the cosy smugness of the ruling classes, and an all-pervasive corruption” as Jean-Marc Ela writes (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 146). African liberation theologians began to see Jesus from the view point of mechanisms and structures of oppression at work in Africa. Thus, Jean-Marc Ela writes (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 144):

Welcome to Africa, Christ's native land! The eyes of faith reveal to us the Son of Man in the life of black peasants whose production is bought for next to nothing or whose land is seized for the profit of big capital. It is Jesus' labour that is used by the local and multinational companies, for wages not even adequate to feed the uprooted families of the urban centres or factory farms. Jesus is present in the sick, who, are exploited in a corrupt society where disease itself is a source of profit.

Jean-Marc Ela goes on to say that the Eucharist itself in Christianity poses a serious challenge to Christianity as it “renders unacceptable a world where one is hungry and another is gluttoned (cf. Cor. 11:21)” and shows that Christianity is built around shared bread (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 147).

This is why, the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences for Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), recognised that the gospel of Jesus Christ demands the church's participation in the struggle to free people from all kinds of dehumanization. As Jean-Marc Ela tells us, in 1977 SECAM declared at Accra, Ghana, that all across the continent, a process of re-colonisation is underway. Hence, the African bishops meeting in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in 1981, sounded a warning (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 138-139).

Be aware of the prevailing international domination, domination at once political, economic, social, and cultural . . . Think of the enterprises of the multinational companies. . . . All of those factors weigh upon the African continent. They perpetuate situations of injustice, and create frequently insurmountable obstacles along the path to development, and economic and social progress.

The African bishops also received encouragement from the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II who declared, “There are situations and systems within countries and in relations among states that are marked by injustice, condemning many persons to hunger, disease,

unemployment, ignorance and the stagnation of their development” (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 139). While accepting the hand of the western superpowers in these situations and systems, Pope John Paul II said there was also need to look for internal factors in the dispossession of the African masses. He observed that “for many leaders, politics has become the way of dictatorship, totalitarianism, and the oppression of the weakest” resulting in the deterioration of the living conditions of the rural and working classes and the middle-class. Their “purchasing power crumbles away daily, in the face of the arrogant, abusive security and prosperity of a small minority” (Pope John Paul II quoted in Gibellini, 1994: 139)

Hence, various Roman Catholic Episcopal conferences in Africa turned their eyes to the earthly situation of material poverty. For example, the 1981 Zaire bishops’ conference asked (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 138);

How long shall we have to wait for a small portion of happiness? Failure upon failure! In the meantime, shameless exploitation, organized pillage for the profit of foreign countries and their intermediaries – while the mass of the people wallow in misery, at times in artificially created situations.

For this reason, the Catholic bishops of Cameroon were not quiet but tried to unmask the mechanisms of impoverishment in their 1990 Pentecost pastoral letter on Cameroon’s economic crisis. From the teachings of Pope John Paul II the bishops of Cameroon adopted the categories of ‘structural sin’ and sought to identify the internal and external causes of the economic oppression experienced by the poor (cf. Gibellini, 1997: 158-159).

As Mveng says, the bishops were quite aware that material poverty can, in the first place, come from eventualities such as accidents, natural disasters, disease, and so on, in which case “poverty is not bound up with the ethical behaviour either of the victim or of agents” (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 158). In the second place, material “poverty may be a direct consequence of the moral, social, economic, or other behaviour of the one who becomes poor” (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 158). But in these two cases the poor can clearly be seen as individuals. However, As Mveng goes on to say, the bishops discovered that the material poverty they were confronting involved not individuals but a social class. The bishops recognised that this type of poverty was external to the poor because it resulted from “the structures of sin and the ravages those structures inflict” (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 159). For this reason the bishops openly declared that structurally induced poverty had neither moral value, nor spiritual value, nor any other kind of value. Instead it represented “an evil that must be torn out by the roots” (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 159).

This fight against material poverty has not been a monopoly of Catholics. Protestants also have had a fair share in the Christian fight against material poverty especially in South Africa. In South Africa, theologians struggled with the structural analysis of apartheid where practically blacks had all sorts of sufferings while whites enjoyed a sizable amount of comfort. Just the white minority were privileged while the black majority were wallowing in poverty. Black theology found a dialectical explanation to this situation. It was the product of the organisation of the society, namely, apartheid with its economic, social, and political structures guided by capitalism. Having looked at the nature of actual oppression and its causes black theology intellectuals then asked what apartheid meant in God’s eyes.

Buthelezi introduced the concept of a theology of the wholeness of life which, while rooted in traditional African society, also reflected the creation story in the Christian Bible: “God as the creator implies that human life in all its spheres, social, political and economic is based on a relation to God” (cf. Moore, 1974: 99). Hence, Boesak (1977: 25) says, “The prophets of old never hesitated to speak God’s word for the whole life. They were unflinching and uncompromising in their confrontation with kings and rulers with regard to social justice issues.” While Buthelezi emphasizes creation as the fundamental criterion for the holistic concept, Boesak cites God’s revelation in Jesus Christ whose ministry was directed to the liberation of the poor and oppressed (Luke 4:16 – 21). In Jesus, Boesak sees God taking the part of the poor and denouncing injustices of every shape and kind.

Buthelezi analyses the given structures of human existence in relation to receiving God’s gifts and he maintains, “Man receives God’s grace within the structures of this world” (cf. Parrat, 1997: 85). It is with, and under the given structures of human existence that humans receive God’s gifts. Buthelezi argues, “We cannot by-pass what is around us, what is already given in life in order to be at a point where God can bestow his gifts to us, e.g., food, children, health [and] protection” (cf. Parrat, 1997: 86). As a result South African black theologians could not but declare the apartheid system idolatrous with all its practices that condemned the black majority of South Africa to material poverty. Together with Buthelezi, they saw apartheid as the reason why black people found themselves surrounded by conditions of powerlessness displacing them from the place “wherein God’s gifts are received, so that the gifts consigned for [black people] do not find [them] there, but instead find and benefit the white exploiter” (cf. Parrat, 1997: 89).

All these show that African liberation theologians advance a postcolonial Christianity that takes account of the social conditions that produce material poverty. This, together with the churches' concentration on bodily differences of male and female, shows us that the liberation at issue "is not only of spiritual, interior order. It has a direct impact on the individual and collective concrete life of humanity . . . The human being's liberation means decolonization, development, social justice and respect for imprescriptible rights and basic freedoms" as Jean-Marc Ela writes (cf. Gibellini, 1994: 141). Thus, while colonial Christianity dwelt much on spiritual matters, not saying much on earthly matters, African liberation theologians work towards a Christianity in the postcolonial context that is concerned with problems men and women face on earth.

Thus, while colonial churches would say *Maso amu ayang'ane kumwamba* [Your eyes should be fixed on the things of Heaven], as the Catholic Church in Malawi did, these African liberation theologians (Buthelezi, Ela, Boesak, Mveng and bishops in SECAM) are portraying Christian churches in the postcolonial context that say *Maso amu ayang'anenso za pansi* [Your eyes should also turn to earthly matters). Thus, the whole methodology of doing African liberation theologies: starting with experience, then social analysis and lastly theological reformulation was all a way of bringing theology down to earth and hence making postcolonial Christianity an embodied Christianity. Moreover, the very goal of African liberation theologies as elaborated in section 2.3 falls here. The three targets of African liberation theologies (getting the Church to make a preferential option for the poor, removing the pseudo-innocence of both the oppressed and the oppressor, and finally having *Ujamaa* (family-hood), or a society based on the Common Good or Social Justice, all find meaning in the idea of having an embodied Christianity against the other-worldly type of Christianity typical of colonialism.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we have seen that colonialism began to wane in Africa in the 1950s bringing national independence to most African countries and also paving the way for a renaissance of African culture. Responding to this period saw the flourishing of a number of different trajectories in the Christian churches, among which was the trajectory of African liberation theologies. Again responding to this period saw the flourishing of postcolonial theory. In this thesis, I have tried to argue that the trajectory of African liberation theologies that flourished from the early 1970s can be seen to express the ideas of postcolonial theory so as to give a decentred and embodied form of Christianity in the postcolonial context.

Thus, in the third section of this thesis I have tried to show how African liberation theologies, in keeping with postcolonial theory, can be seen to give a decentred form of Christianity in the postcolonial context. I have done this by showing that, just like postcolonial theory, African liberation theologies set out on three key projects: 1) making Christianity a force that delegitimizes any form of domination; 2) making Christianity a force that is aimed at bringing out the silenced voices within Christianity itself and the silenced voices of the social, political and economic areas of life; and 3) ultimately making Christianity an advocate of mutuality.

Apart from showing African liberation theologies as working for a decentred form of Christianity in a postcolonial context, I have shown in the fourth section how African liberation theologies can be seen to give an embodied form of Christianity in the postcolonial context. I have shown this by arguing that African liberation theologies, in keeping with postcolonial theory, looked for a Christianity that could not be identified with domination.

African liberation theologians assume that the colonial churches' neglect of earthly matters allowed colonialists to dominate and so while accepting the eschatological dimension of God's liberation, African liberation theologians concentrate on the historical dimension of God's liberation. This has been shown mainly along two lines: 1) liberation from oppression based on bodily differences of male and female (gender); and 2) liberation from social conditions that produce material poverty.

Of course, as stated earlier on in the introduction, today debate goes on as to whether or not African liberation theologies have largely died out as a theological tradition in these first years of the twenty-first century. This is a topic that this thesis has not been able to pursue because of space-constraints. However, in this thesis my only aim has been to argue that African liberation theologies can be seen as expressing the ideas of postcolonial theory and hence producing a decentred and embodied form of Christianity in the postcolonial context. By so doing African liberation theologies are able to build a postcolonial Christianity that is relevant to Africa. By so doing, apart from talking about spiritual salvation, postcolonial Christianity is also able to deal with the real issues that face today's disciples or would-be disciples of Jesus.

By this I do not mean to suggest that African liberation theologies are perfect. Like any other human product, they have their shortcomings probably too obvious for those who hated or hate them. But this is also a topic that this thesis has not been able to explore because of space-constraints. This thesis has only tried to argue that what African liberation theologies say, how they say it and its relevant praxis change the shape of Christianity in the postcolonial context. Against the centred and too spiritual colonial Christianity, African

liberation theologies, seek a decentred and embodied Christianity in a postcolonial context in the pursuit of the missionary mandate: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. . . .” (Mt 28:19f; cf. Mk 16:15).

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