

Book Notes

An Agenda for Black Theology

Hermeneutics for social change

by Dr Bonganjalo Goba

Publishers: Skotaville Publishers, Johannesburg, 1987, 126 pp.

Price: About R14.50

Writing as a deeply committed christian within the heat of the Black struggle for liberation in South Africa, Dr Goba explores the rich resources of the Christian tradition and their relevance for this struggle. He further explores the importance of the struggle for liberation as a means of opening the eyes of Bible readers enabling them to see the involvement of God of the oppressed in historical struggles of the downtrodden, not only in biblical times but also in our own here and now. Through this hermeneutical exercise Dr Goba wishes to stimulate Christian participation in the struggle for liberation, a more intense reading of the relevant biblical texts as well as a critical reassessment of white theology that has failed to empower black people.

Beatific Comradeship. An Exegetical-Hermeneutical Study on LK 10, 25-37

by Dr Welile Mazamisa

Publisher: J H Kok-Kampen, The Netherlands, May 1987, 212pp/W Eerdmans, Grand Rapids (± July, 1988)

This is an exegetical-hermeneutical study concentrating on the interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Countless studies on this parable have seen the light of day, but the bulk of these works has emanated from the relatively wealthy capitalistic North, where it is more convenient to identify with the notion of a "charitable" Samaritan rather than with the idea of a wounded man on the side of the road.

The first part of the study deals with methodology in which the author discusses modern theories of literary analysis. Modern literary theories are discussed to point out the correlation between biblical interpretation and literary theory, although the former is not a subcategory of the latter. Secondly they are discussed because issues concerning the temporal dimension of texts and their actions, the function of narrative, as well as the class status of the reader, are equally relevant to biblical and literary hermeneutics.

The biblical text is not only a record of theological statements; it is language and literature as well. Literature goes beyond merely projecting a self-contained or self-referring world. As recorded language it reflects the close interrelationship between language and society. In this respect, it is logical that some of the rules

and theories that apply to literature will also apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the biblical text.

The second part of this study is analytical. An examination and survey of the interpretation of the parable at hand is undertaken. What is specific about the parable is that the story is not presented in the language of myth; rather it is presented in the language of human history, of the profane, that of open drama. In the parable Luke's Jesus portrays a *skandalon*, but the scandal is not that the priest and the Levite pass by the wounded man. What is new in the parable is that the Samaritan, a member of a despised community, does something different from what Samaritans are expected by the Jews to do when they encounter a wounded Jew lying in a ditch. What is new is that he does loving kindness and thereby becomes a comrade to the wounded man.

Further, the work looks at the interpretation of the parable by various communities. The reading of Lk 10:25-37 by the under-class of Solentiname (Nicaragua) is used as an example of a materialistic reading. The parable becomes human as it is conveyed through a series of profane interpretations and politically engaged allegory. It takes flesh in the womb of the daily experiences of this community and comes to birth as a materialistic reading of Scripture. Moreover, this reading is an example of reception-oriented hermeneutics as well. In this kind of hermeneutics the class position of the receptor/hearer is carefully considered. It is, therefore, no wonder that oppressed and exploited communities would tend to identify with the wounded man of the parable (e.g. the poor peasants of Solentiname before the Nicaraguan Revolution, p. 160, and the old woman in one of South Africa's Bantustans, p. 162).

Proclaim Freedom to my People

by S.S. Maimela

Publishers: Skotaville, Johannesburg, 1987, 152pp

Price: R15,00

It is an open secret that South African society is riddled with many contradictions, and foremost among them is the fact that we pride ourselves on being a Christian country; yet our society has fashioned, nurtured, tolerated and carried to its logical consequences one of the most brutal and oppressive social systems known to humanity: *Apartheid*. This political system of racial domination, created and upheld by White Christians, is one which is committed to the denial of human rights and liberty to the majority of South African citizens, especially those of the African ancestry, regardless of what the Gospel of Jesus might proclaim and teach to the contrary. In consequence, the history of South Africa has been marred by continuous racial clashes and deadly military confrontation as Whites struggled for the subjugation and domination of Blacks.

In order to maintain its position of dominance over the Black majority, the White minority has had to resort to ruthless means of suppressing Black political and economic dissent, however peaceful that dissent might be. Put somewhat differently, fearing that they might some day be toppled and subjugated by the Black majority, Whites not only turned their backs against Christian values best sum-

marized in the “Golden rule” (Mt 7:12, 22:39), but also lost faith in democracy and its rules of fair play.

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