BOOK REVIEW

CONE, James, H.: Martin & Malcolm & America: A DREAM OR A NIGHTMARE.
Maryknoll: Orbis 1991. xii + 317pp. $22-95 (Cloth).

In this groundbreaking book James Cone has excelled himself as a writer and a giant among black theologians. The book is lucidly written, balanced and well researched and documented.

The book consists of twelve chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 provide background information about the social environment that shaped Martin's dream and Malcolm's nightmare about America. Chapters 3 and 4 give a very perceptive analysis of their early ministries during which their sharply opposed viewpoints about the American reality began to surface. Chapters 5 and 6 are devoted to the analysis of the differing religious views which greatly influenced Martin's and Malcolm's perceptions of white America. Chapter 7 discusses Malcolm's heart rending break with Elijah Muhammed whom Malcolm served with unwavering devotion. Chapter 8 discusses Martin's disillusionment with the American Establishment during black riots in America's ghettos and the barbarous war in Vietnam. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 provide useful insights about the alternative options to the Black struggle for freedom proposed by Martin and Malcolm, an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of each of those leaders and finally how their insights complement each other. Chapter 12 rounds up the discussion by focussing on what could be learned from Martin's and Malcolm's insights in order to prosecute the Black struggle for freedom, thus taking the struggle where they left it and bring it to its successful completion.

The theological perspective that Cone has brought to the discussion and comparison between two influential African-American figures of the twentieth century, Martin Luther King, Jr and Malcolm X, has brought new insights about the social and religious environment that gave shape and influenced their perspectives on American life. Cone's non-partisan approach to his analysis of facts relating to these great thinkers has enabled him to evaluate and provide a realistic portrait of Martin and Malcolm as human beings who had their strengths and weaknesses, whose insights and perspectives on the American life should better be understood as complementary and mutually enriching. Taken together, their insights have a lot to offer to the contemporary African-Americans in their struggle for freedom and human rights in the "socio-economic conditions" in which poor blacks are "worse today than during Martins's and
Malcolm's time” (p.315). However, I have the feeling that Cone’s criticism of Martin and Malcolm for their insensitivity to sexism, especially to black women, and their failure to incorporate economic and class analysis in their struggle against the social evils of America is a bit harsh and unfair. These are not sins of omission that can be charged only to Martin and Malcolm because they represent the shortcomings of most social thinkers and theologians of the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, Martin and Malcolm have to be applauded that towards the end of their lives they had begun to talk about the important role that women could play in the Black struggle for freedom. Besides, Malcolm’s strength lay in his perceptive understanding of the evils of capitalism in relation to the enslavement of black people. Martin too began to be critical about the socio-political and economic conditions of the black poor. Therefore, the reader is left wondering whether Cone was not merely using Martin and Malcolm as a launch pad for his own self-catharsis from his insensitivity towards sexism and lack of economic and class analysis in his theological reflection in the 1960s and early 1970s. Indeed, as Robert Brown correctly points out, it was not until 1977 that Cone began to incorporate economic and class analysis in his theology (vide A BLACK THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION: Twentieth Anniversary Edition, pp. 166-167). Cone himself confesses these omissions in his FOR MY PEOPLE (1984), and his Preface to A BLACK THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION (1986 edition). His criticism of Martin and Malcolm seems to be a part of that self-catharsis.

The above observations are not intended to detract the readers' attention from this very important book which seems destined to become another classic from Cone’s pen. I recommend it highly to all women and men who want to be better informed about that mysterious undercurrent that has and continues to inform the religious and socio-political beliefs of African-Americans and make them tick.

Prof S.S. Maimela, Dept. of Systematic Theology, Unisa

Words fail me to express my deepest appreciation to Orbis for making available to the public the Twentieth Anniversary Edition of this important publication, which placed James Cone’s name on the theological map. This is because this book was significantly better in content and depth of perception to Cone’s first book entitled A BLACK THEOLOGY AND BLACK POWER — both of which made it impossible for the admirers and detractor of Black Theology to ignore the challenge that he put to traditional theology as a whole.

The passion with which he put his case soon won him staunch disciples both in the United States and South Africa. I am one of his early disciples and one of the black seminarians who, as Delores S Williams (1990: 189) perceptively points out, treated A black Theology of Liberation as ‘‘scripture. Therefore, it was not altogether unjustified that, after picking up certain affinities between my theology (expressed in a chapter entitled “Die Relevanz Schwarzener Theologie” in Christus der Schwarzer Befreier, Theo Sundermeier, ed., Erlangen, 1973) and that of Cone, Allan Boesak in his doctoral thesis entitled Farewell to Innocence and subsequently published by Orbis (1976) singled Cone, Albert Cleage and myself as the most radical ideologues of the Black Theology movement (see pp. 75-77, 97). Boesak was correct because my theological views were heavily influence by what Cone had said in his in A Black Theology of Liberation which has since become a classic in Black Theology.

Of course much has changed in the intervening period between the 1970 and 1990 editions. As Cone himself candidly admits in the Preface to A Black Theology of Liberation (1986 Edition), if he were now writing that book for the first time, he would have written a different book which would be free from certain verbal excesses in his criticism of white theology and would have tempered his response to his white sympathizers. Furthermore, he would have been more sensitive to the sexist oppression, especially of black women who are doubly oppressed, and would also have incorporated economic and the class analysis in his black theological reflection. Indeed, Cone became sensitive to those named problems over the years and, already in his book entitled For my People (1984), he pointed out the weakness of his earlier theological position as a result of which he failed to make sexism and class analysis part of his theological data. As his respondents have rightly pointed out in A Black Theology of Liberation (1986), Cone’s admission of these
errors and willingness to learn from other theological perspectives within EATWOT theological forum are signs of his greatness and not weakness. All of us have a lot to learn from him, because theologians tend to take what they write or say too serious, as if the salvation of the world depends on their theological positions. Yet such a lack of theological humility and humour betrays an unwillingness to accept that even for theologians justification is by grace alone and not through infallible written or uttered words, however true their words might have been for particular situations at a given time.

The critical responses the Twentieth Anniversary Edition make for an interesting reading and have certainly enriched the text. Cone’s concluding response, especially to Robert McAfee Brown, is highly perceptive. But I must also be frank and say that I have found the Cone of the 1990s, perhaps due to mellowing process or ageing, which has a notorious tendency of turning young revolutionaries into conservative states men and women, rather unacceptably inconsistent. For, while he correctly affirms Malcolm X’s basic contention to the effect that a black theologian cannot “communicate with the ghetto-dweller and at the same time not frighten many whites to death” (1986:199), I am persuaded that Cone, in his haste to control what he refers to as “my intemperate behaviour” which “prevented some whites, whose intentions were more honorable than my responses suggested” (1986:xiv-xv), has done his erstwhile disciples like myself grave injustice by omitting entire paragraphs in the Twentieth Anniversary Edition (1986) he believed were offensive to his white dialogue partners. Yet it were precisely through those allegedly offensive paragraphs in which he told the truth as he saw it that his theology struck a chord among his black audience, and which enabled the black community to take Cone serious when he contended that black Theology was not “in any way accountable to white theologians or their cultural etiquette” (1986:XV). Therefore, it comes as a shock that, in his desire to “control” his pen or tongue, Cone appears to have given too much concessions to the white audience and came pretty much close to repudiating a very important norm of Black theology which he affirmed in his first edition, namely, that “black theology will not spend much time trying to answer critics because it is accountable to the black community .. There is only one principle which guides the thinking and action of black theology: an unqualified commitment to the black community as it seeks to define its existence in the light of God’s liberating work in the world” (1970:33). And if Cone wants his black readers to take his contention serious (in Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare, 1991: 315) that “the socioeconomic conditions of poor African-Americans is worse today than during Martin’s and Malcolm’s time ...” then he has a lot
of explaining to do why he is now hesitating to affirm the norm of black theology which he himself formulated in 1970. Otherwise an impression shall be created that Cone's locus in society in the 1980s and 1990s is such that he is no longer the same young, angry and hungry Cone of the late 1960s, and therefore his antennae is no longer properly tuned on the wavelength through which the cry and the groanings of the poor African Americans are transmitted.

Finally, I find it regrettable that this edition has not included a single input of critical reflection from Africa which could have offered friendly amendments to Cone's theological insights. I view this omission in a serious light because Cone's first edition has had the greatest impact in South Africa, and his works are read by the largest number of student there, perhaps second only to the United States. I therefore find Cone's special pleading: "I regret that the African theologian invited to participate in this dialogue found it impossible to respond" (1990: 200) completely unpersuasive, to say the least. Unless Cone had asked a special person who for some unknown reasons was the only one he considered the qualified respondent, his comments sounds rather hollow. This is because we have many people in South Africa who could have gladly participated in the dialogue. Indeed, Cone himself has met some of those people when he visited South Africa (1985). Besides he is well familiar with the Black Theology Project of which I am the Chairperson, and which brought, at its own expense, ten black South African theologians to Union Theological Seminary for a theological consultation and exchange of ideas with their American counterparts in December 1986. The results of that dialogue were published in We are One Voice: Black Theology in USA and South Africa (Johannesburg: Skowlaville Publishers, 1989). It is against the background of this amicable working relationships between the African siblings in South Africa and diaspora that I find his comments unintelligible. In fact, they lead one to conclude that perhaps some black sisters and brothers in United States are hesitant in treating their South African counterparts as their serious theological conversation partners on black theology. Therefore, it was not totally surprising that during a theological conference in honour of James Cone as the founding "father" of black theology, Howard University, 1989, organizers did not bother to invite or inform South African black theologians on this historic conference. Even I, as Chairperson of Black Theology Project, learned about this historic conference from a newspaper report in Amsterdam while I was attending the Executive Committee of the Ecumenical Association of Third Theologians. If I had not gone to Europe neither I nor my fellow South African black theologians would have known about this conference. I believe
something will have to be done if black theologians on both sides of the Atlantic ocean are going to take one another as serious conversation partners.

These critical remarks notwithstanding, I believe that Cone's book is worth reading because the issues raised in it are still as challenging and relevant as when when it was first written. I only pray that white theologians would not be tempted to read only this Twentieth Anniversary Edition because they would miss some of the pain that Cone expressed in his earlier book.

Prof S.S. Maimela, University of South Africa.
This is a significant publication to come from the so-called independent Africa in that it marks a major departure from the sterile framework of a monotonous discourse on the "indigenization" or "Africanization" of theology which has characterized most of African theological production for the past twenty years and more (p. 172). The author dismisses the common practice of trying to recapture the past African culture and religion so that the Christian faith could speak in the African idiom as nothing but "a dangerous alibi" for theological silence in the face of African oppression by their human fellows (p. 170). Instead, Ela challenges African theologians to begin addressing some of the vexing questions that confront contemporary Africans such as urbanization, unemployment, inadequate health care, drought, famine, economic dependence and underdevelopment which are being promoted by neocolonialism, the exploitation of the rural masses by the elites in power and the urban middle class, and the chronic repressive military regimes that are often cut off from their people. As they begin to address these problems, African theologians would be engaged in prophetic ministry and doing relevant theology — both of which will at last "announce the gospel with boldness, and courageously denounce torture, exploitation, and the oppression of the majority by a minority who often serve only foreign interests" (p. 177).

The book comprises of eleven chapters. Chapter 1 takes the readers through the transforming experience that Ela underwent when he served the rural parish among the mountain poor, illiterate peasants who were defenceless, exploited and oppressed for generations. This forced Ela to reread the gospel through the eyes of the poor and oppressed, discovering the power of the gospel to liberate people from oppression. In Chapter 2, Ela calls for a meaningful relationship between the Christian faith and African belief in the ancestors, as opposed to embracing a form of Christianity that transfers dogmas, rites, and customs formed overseas to the African world. Challenging the view that confuses the African veneration of ancestors with the so-called "ancestors worship, Ela argues that offering beer and food to the dead is nothing but the "reliving a kinship relationship with them, actualizing such a relationship once again in the living present"(p. 19). That is, this is not a religious act but a symbol of fellowship, "a recognition that the departed are still members of their human families" (ibid.). In chapter 3, Ela, with deep insights, discusses African religious symbolism and shows how these could be integrated into African Christianity. Chapter 4 is devoted to the defense of the formation of local Christian com-
Communities, as opposed to the oppressive and imported "clerical imperialism" that characterizes much of the African church. In his view, the "tyranny of the clergy" which does not recognize the "different kinds of ministries" in the church but treats lay ministry as "extensions of the hierarchical ministry", has done nothing good for the African Christianity but inhibit the lay people's ability to innovate and try out new forms of ministry, thus stifling their growth (pp.56-57, 60-61).

Chapters 5 and 6 are devoted to a social analysis and unmasking the social mechanism that oppress the poor and powerless. Here Ela delivers a devastating critique of the so-called independent African countries whose leadership is corrupt and misuses national economic resources to benefit the ruling elite and their cronies particularly government workers. To illustrate his point, he cites the inadequate medical services in the rural areas and exploitation of the working rural communities by the urban dwellers.

In Chapters 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11, Ela develops a theology of liberation that challenges both the theologians and church leadership to take preferential option for the poor and oppressed. In so doing, the African church would be helping men and women to get food, stay in good health, and find their own voice and initiative to resist the forces that are exploiting and oppressing them. Arguing that the resurrection "cannot remain merely an event of the past, but must become contemporary, Ela contends that "the only form of Christianity that can be relevant to generations humiliated by poverty and oppression is one which "strives to redefine itself in its totality according to the struggles of the people in their resistance against the structures of domination" (p. 134).

Ela's book is a powerful call to action by both theologians, church leadership and lay Christians in order to transform unjust social structures into humane ones. However, there is a disappointing element that calls for a comment, namely, the temptation by Ela of wanting to make his own experience and ministry among the rural poor and basic communities the norm of "authentic" Christian ministry. This temptation has led him to dream of what he refers to as "a theology under the tree" which would be done as "brothers and sisters sit side by side wherever Christians share the lot of the peasant people" who seek to be the architects of their own history, thereby transforming their living conditions (p. 180). Such a theology can be done if people "leave the libraries and give up the comfort of air-conditioned offices" and "accept the condition of life in the insecurity of study in poor areas where the people have their feet in water or in mud and can neither read nor write" (p. 180). Ela tries to underpin his "dream" by arguing that God in Christ did not use
the vocabulary of scholars and philosophers” but spoke the "language of peasants and shepherds in order to be revealed to humanity" (p. 180.). While Ela’s challenge to theologians to take preferential option for the poor is one which all those who are genuinely concerned with the oppression of the poor should embrace, I believe the above quoted sentiments are misleading if they are taken at their face value. First, the attempt to “canonize” the so-called “people” who have their feet in water or in mud and can neither read nor write, thereby try to make ministry among them the only authentic ministry is both idealistic and an impractical illusion. Such a canonization would lead to replacement of the “tyranny of the clergy”, which Ela correctly condemns, by the “tyranny of the people.” Also, such an outcome would flatly contradict and call into question Ela’s own powerful call for the church to recognize “different kinds of ministries” as well as the “charisms and the Spirit who is the source” of all ministries in the church (pp. 56-58). Ela would therefore be well advised to realize that the variegated nature of human problems require that socially concerned Christians adopt multiple strategies and different types of ministries as they struggle to transform oppressive human conditions. Therefore, Ela’s recommendation of one type of ministry or one way of doing theology would not wash.

Secondly, Ela seems to confuse Christian solidarity with the poor and oppressed with a sort of identification that would reduce everyone involved in the struggle of the poor into a sort of sameness. This again is an illusion because no matter how much Ela would wish to identify with the “people” who “can neither read nor write”, in the final analysis he would not be the same with them because he would still retain his reading and writing capabilities. In other words, by virtue of his high academic training, Ela has an option which those poor people who cannot read or write do not have, namely, to stick his feet with theirs “in water or in mud” as long as it is convenient to do so with an option of leaving them there if he so chooses. In fact, our contention is borne out by the fact that this is what Ela himself did when he returned to Yaounde a few years later to resume his academic work, and to consult the libraries which he urged all African theologians not to use. The fact that he can choose to be with the poor and opt out demonstrates that his “dream” is as unrealistic as it is impractical. Ela needs to remember that what the poor needs least of all is the sympathy of academics like Ela or their attempted demonstration of their staying power among the poor and oppressed as if the latter enjoy the dehumanizing conditions to which they are subjected. Rather the poor and oppressed are struggling to break out of their dehumanizing socioeconomic conditions. Therefore, we would be doing them a better service if, we in solidarity with them, struggle against the
forces of death and oppression, employing multiple approaches and resources at our command so that at last everyone might become free.

Prof. Simon S Maimela, University of South Africa.
Wallis, J. and Holliday J. (eds.): CRUCIBLE OF FIRE — The Church Confronts Apartheid.  
Maryknoll, Orbis Books 1989  
XII + 163 pp. R24.95 (Paperback).

Many people are wondering whether the church has any role to play in the struggle for freedom in South Africa. Jim Wallis and Joyce Holliday allow the church to speak through its selected leaders on its stand in the face of the corrosive and brutal apartheid.

While the majority of the parishioners may be lukewarm and apathetic, some church leaders are being teargassed, hosepiped, ridiculed, detained and made to feel like nobodies. The church has recently organized and led powerful marches to Parliament in an attempt to draw the attention of the South African racist government to the atrocities of apartheid. While the marches were aborted by the action of the police, the intention and message of the church were well received.

Not only are the insides of the church leaders ripped open through their sermons and interviews, the bible is made to be the source of their inspiration and the springboard from which the injustice of the government is attacked. The role of the international community is analysed, the hidden agendas of some exposed while the honesty and sincerity of others is appreciated. The opening words of the foreword usher in the election of George Bush as the president of the United States and the significance of his victory for South Africa. The Editorial after the election of Mr. Bush is quoted as saying: “The forces against Apartheid in the West have been called to a halt, and the policies of the previous administration will be continued” (p1X).

State President P.W. Botha is not singled out because he has been the worst ruler of this country but because it is mainly during his time of office that the church, through her leaders, steps forward and attacks the injustice of the state, not only in words and resolutions, but with defiance in the form of civil disobedience. Annoyed at the muzzling of the press and the gagging of the mouth of the opposition to the government e.g. the silencing of the 17 political organisations, the church perceives itself as the only body left to speak for the voiceless. The march is a demonstration of that truth. Following the prophetic tradition, church leaders yoke themselves to each other and symbolically march to the place where the oppressive laws are made with a clear message.
In the first chapter, Jim Wallis portrays the church as “stepping forward.” It is as if the church has been asleep all the time and has suddenly woken up. The banning of such progressive political organizations such as AZAPO, U.D.F. and Cosatu etc. demonstrates that the only authority the government knows is that of the gun. The Church, having chosen the path of non-violent resistance, is willing to step into the political vacuum and into the “Crucible of fire.”

The problem of the church for too long has been, and still is, for many so-called christians, to live with a “mystical Christ, the Christ of personal experience and inner emotions. This tendency or emphasis rather, Wallis says, “immunizes people to the real gospel.

Chapter two is a powerful sermon by Allan Boesak in which he tells the government that “Your Days are over.” Here the Dutch Reformed Church is criticized for calling itself reformed “but has denied every basic tenet of the Reformed tradition.”

Chapter Three is another powerful sermon by Desmond Tutu with the caption “Clarifying the Word.” Here Tutu demonstrates the power of the Gospel which cannot be silenced in the face of brutality and injustice.

These two sermons are followed by six interviews in which each forms a chapter on its own. This is a very incisive part of the book. The sharp and penetrating questions by Wallis are matched with equally penetrating responses from Boesak, Tutu, Frank Chikane, Charles Villa-Vicencio, June Chabaku and Beyers Naude. The reader becomes more enlightened about the past history of the interviewees, their perception of the present situation and their hope for the future. From these interviews the reader is left in no doubt about the embarrassing connivance of the church with the forces of evil.

Apartheid, as one of the respondents points out “was first conceived in the Church. And the church was used as the model for the state” (p.47). In the Dutch Reformed Church (D.R.C.) apartheid was implemented first around the communion table. The silence of the church at a time when it should be speaking is compared with the attitude of the German Christians during the time of Hitler when the “Niemoellers, Bonhoeffers” and many others were intimidated and persecuted. What should fascinate the reader of this book is that the harsh words said, about the church, are said by the very people who love her. A way forward is suggested. Like many prophetic utterances, it does not end with words of condemnation and judgement but with words of hope if the church wakes up and take her faith seriously.

Dr. L.D. JAFTA, Lecturer at the Federal Theological Seminary, Pietermaritzburg.
J Okure, Teresa: THE JOHANNINE APPROACH TO MISSION


The book is in soft cover, spans 311 pages without the preface, the foreword of the editor, a list of contents, a list of charts and illustrations, a list of abbreviations, the introduction, selected bibliography, index of selected passages, index of ancient and modern authors, index of Greek words and index of subjects.

This work is unique in three respects: (a) The use of mission as a valid paradigm for the study of John 4:1-42, which affords the work opportunity to become (b) A contextual study of John 4:1-42, and thus concomitant with (c) a critique of Western theology or its definition of mission in terms of geographical categories like “foreign mission” or “foreign mission aid.”

The author takes christology as a point of departure for the understanding of mission: the role of the Father as the one who sends; the role of Jesus or the Son as the one who is sent, and salvation as the purpose of mission. The Father is thus both the origin and goal of missionary enterprise, “the unsent sender of the Son, of the Holy Spirit and of John the Baptist” (p23).

The content of the missionary enterprise is truth communicated by the word of the one who is sent. The truth becomes the object of discipleship; the characteristic of truth is that it liberates or makes you free (John 8:32).

The focus on christological truth engendered by mission approach to the Johannine studies tends to give the biblical texts the voice and disclosure that unleashes a moral claim on the hearer of the Gospel. Needless to say, the geographical definition of mission reduces the reader of the Gospel to no more than a hearer of the good news.

From the global or macrocosmic pre-occupations with mission the author then discusses mission in relation to John 4:1-42, which is about Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman. The pertinency of the author’s approach is confirmed by the fact that research has revealed that contemporary discussion on the mission theme in 4:1-42 centres on verses 31-38 which refer explicitly to the sending of the disciples and to “others” (namely Jesus) who laboured before them (p64).
The author is at pains to demonstrate that although scholars see a clear and strong emphasis on the post-Easter missionary activity of the disciples or of the church (i.e. a Geographical perspective), they exhibit a corresponding reluctance to see Jesus’ work in Samaria as a missionary activity. The author then cogently attributes this reluctance to some “tacit agreement that mission refers only to the post-Easter activity of the disciples (as it does in modern terminology)” (p65). The author argues that her theological interpretation of mission is consistent with modern research on the subject of mission in John’s Gospel.

Perhaps, we should turn to the question of methodology, or the impact of the author’s approach on the exegesis of John 4:1-42. In the first place, the history of research on the pericope reveals two diametrically opposed lines of argument. There are those who laud the artistic unity of the passage and consider it one of the most skillfully written in the Gospel. The passage is thus attributed to one biblical author. There are others, however, who detect in the passage joints, aporias and thematic incompatibilities which they contend, testify to the presence of many hands in the composition of the passage (p59). The survey concludes (p63) as follows:

Of the 42 verses in the pericope, only 11 (i.e. 5-7; 16-19; 28-30 & 40) are assigned in part or in full by wide consensus to the pre-Johannine level, while the remaining 31 verses are attributed to the Evangelist. The survey thus reinforces the author’s synthetic approach to the passage.

Regarding methodology the author presents the contextual method as one which combines rhetorical and literary analysis in the quest for theological meaning. Such meaning is viewed from the standpoint of the Evangelist and of his intended audience (p50). The following are the characteristics of the contextual method:

1. The contextual study emphasizes the canonical text in its final redaction as the work both of the final author and presented in a form his audience would have understood. In this regard, we wish to vent our agreement with Okure but would add the following: A comparison between the pre-existing material and the final editorial activity reveals the theology of the final redactor. However, in the case of certain redactors who are given to a high literary and artistic ability like John and even Luke, it becomes difficult to distinguish between the Christian tradition reflected in the text and editorial activity. Things are easier where a clear allusion to the scriptures is made or hinted at. There is also a question of literary dependency on other Gospels which has other ramifications, like dating, literary agreements and variations etc.
2. The total context of the Gospel is seen as a "book" i.e. one passage is used to highlight another and the relationship of the different parts are stressed.

3. The *Sitz-im-Leben* is also that of the Evangelist and of the audience of his final published work.

The second most important feature of contextual methodology for determining meaning, especially in controversial passages, is the giving of logical priority to the viewpoint of the biblical author and the order established by him. In a nutshell, this states what is obvious (p50). The aids given in the Gospel itself for determining the viewpoint of the biblical author include:

1. The knowledge which is attributed to or presupposed in the characters, and the way in which these characters understand and interpret the events of which they are part.

2. The structural order and context in which the events are placed.

3. The Evangelist's own interpretations given either as asides (4:9) or by the use of some interpretative formula (stin mehrgumenon wristY). 1:41 cf 4:25. Thirdly, the contextual approach works on the presupposition that the Evangelist is reasonably consistent in his use of terminology, and so looks for his meaning in the disputed passage both in the immediate- and remote context. (P51)

Last but not least, a contextual study is described as a listening approach in that it lets the book dictate its own hermeneutical principles and pays attention to different levels of rhetoric (p31).

Finally, those who are still imprisoned by history to recognize the relatively of culture, those who have fallen prey to invincible ignorance through sheer prejudice, those unable to free themselves from cultural imperialism and its superiority complex as well as their counterparts who have resigned themselves to inferiority complex, will do well to read what the editor of the series, namely Martin Hengel, has to say about the glories of Africa, and its contribution to knowledge, from ancient times in the foreword.

Perhaps Teresa Okure best epitomizes the dreams of Black consciousness, which sought to merge the useful from the West, and the valuable from Africa; even as she employs science to articulate meaningfulness. It may be that just as physicists and natural scientists have succeeded in splitting the atom to release energy, exegetes will have found the formula to unleash the power of the word to improve the lot of humankind.

Dr. W. Sebothoma, Department of New Testament, University of South Africa.