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# DOES BLACK THEOLOGY HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN THE DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA?

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## ABSTRACT

Black theology was conceived in South Africa in the mid-1960s and flourished from the 1970s, when White supremacy perpetuated by the apartheid state was at its zenith. The struggle against apartheid was aimed mainly at attaining national political liberation so much so that other forms of freedom, albeit implied and included indirectly in the liberation agenda, were not regarded as immediate priorities. Yet two decades into our democracy, poverty, racism, gender injustice, patriarchy, xenophobia, bad governance, environmental degradation, and so on need to be prophetically addressed with equal seriousness and simultaneously, for none of these issues can be left for some time in the future. Using Black Consciousness as a handmaid, Black theology can meaningfully play a role in the democratic South Africa.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

According to Motlhabi (2009:173), Black Theology in South Africa (BTSA) needs to develop a new paradigm urgently:

a paradigm that will address itself to the multiple present-day problems and evils such as ongoing poverty, slum-dwelling, crime, family violence, and child abuse, HIV/AIDS, corruption and greed in public and private service, and other related evils still bedeviling South Africa today.

Prior to 1994, South African liberation movements had their eyes fixed almost exclusively on national political liberation. BTSA was no exception. Indeed,

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other forms of injustices, patriarchy, economic inequality, poverty, and environmental abuse were mentioned only in passing, because the idea seemed to have been that once national liberation had been achieved, then, in the context of democracy, other forms of injustices would be addressed. I remember some discussions we as Black theologians had in the 1980s; feminism was regarded as a way whereby White people in South Africa wanted to delay political liberation; it was a way to have Black women fight Black men, while racism would be removed from the national liberation agenda. But, as Motlhabi aptly put it earlier, BTSA must put all the other injustices firmly on its agenda, if it wants to be relevant in the present democratic dispensation. "An Agenda for Black Theology" as propounded by Goba (1988) needs to be updated in order to meet the needs of a politically liberated South Africa. The aim and objective of this article is to argue that BTSA should enter the fray and make its contribution to enhance democracy and promote a human rights culture. With its secular ally, Black Consciousness (BC), BTSA has principles and values that have been cultivated over the past five decades; these can be revisited and brought to bear on enhancing our democracy. A selection of those values and principles has been made, in this instance, as an example of what BTSA and, by extension, BC can do to remain a crucial theological player not only in South Africa, but also in Africa and globally. The relationship between BTSA and BC is examined and the influence of Black Theology in the United States (BTUS) on BTSA is described. A kind of a new agenda for BTSA in the democratic South Africa is suggested so as to guarantee the relevance of BTSA. Methodologically, this article was researched through literature review and finalised after being presented at an international conference on Black Theology held at Unisa in August 2015.

## **2. BLACK THEOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA (BTSA) AND BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS (BC) IN BROADER CONTEXT**

One cannot speak about BTSA without directly or indirectly speaking about BC, and one cannot paint a complete picture of BC without mentioning the collaborative relationship that existed and still exists between the two. Before discussing this relationship, I shall take a brief step back in history in order to position this article within a broader context.

BTSA owes its existence to BTUS, which started in the early 1960s, while BTSA followed in the mid-1960s. BTUS was embedded in the philosophy of Black power and fuelled largely by the Civil Rights Movement. It places Black power in a theological context by seeking to

destroy alien gods and creating value structures according to the Biblical God of freedom. The “Black is beautiful” slogan by James Brown was appropriate, because it attacked all the negativity ascribed to blackness by the White establishment. BTUS was, therefore, considered the religious counterpart of Black power (Cone, in Motlhabi 1972:28-36). The same could be said of BTSA, which was conceptualised at about the same time as BC was being conceived and promulgated. BTSA has been embedded in the BC philosophy since its inception and propelled by the *Amandla* slogan. In fact, the advocates of BC were also proponents of BTSA in some areas in South Africa. People such as Steve Biko, Nyameko Pityana, and Mamphela Ramphele visited theological institutions such as the Federal Theological Seminary (Alice), St Peters Seminary (Hammanskraal), and the Lutheran Theological College (Maphumulo) not only to preach BC, but also to challenge the theology students to formulate a theology that would be truly liberative (Duncan 2008:115-140; Motlhabi 2008:3-7; Stubbs 1978:158). Theology students such as Sabelo Ntwasa and Biko, who was himself a member of the University Christian Movement (UCM), succeeded in launching BTSA, which was considered the religious arm of BC (Duncan 2008:131). “In political and theological matters Biko and Pityana led the field” (Wilson 1991:28-29).

Although Sono (1993:34) may be slightly exaggerating, he is nonetheless correct in his judgement when he asserts that

Black Consciousness as it is known and articulated in South Africa ...is lock, stock and barrel a Black American invention, exported to the South African [B]lack radicals almost *verbatim*.

The same could be said of BTSA. Many BC advocates and Black theologians moved to the United States and Black theologians from the United States moved to South Africa. James Cone himself collaborated on several projects with South African Black theologians, a contact that was continued by scholars such as Dwight Hopkins and Linda Thomas. In fact, Hopkins received his second doctorate from the University of Cape Town.

BTSA was embarked upon approximately ten years after the majority of Southern African countries were becoming independent from their colonial masters, with Ghana being the first among them in 1957 (Marsh 2013:300-302). Those liberated countries were, therefore, focusing on matters of governance, reconstruction, and economic development, among many other projects. As for churches and theology in Africa, attention was focused more on enculturation of the gospel and indigenisation of the church more than on anything else. Motlhabi (2008:48) wrestles with the views of some of the African theologians who did not want to recognise BTSA as an

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African theology in its own right. Motlhabi (2008:46-47) wondered whether BTSA was an antagonist or a soulmate of African theology. Martey (1996) offered a very helpful intervention, arguing that BTSA must be recognised as an African theology in its own right. Earlier in its development, it might have emphasised one aspect of liberation over others, when responding to the South African situation at the time of the struggle against apartheid. Motlhabi (2008:48) is, therefore, justified when he asserts that,

[i]n the final analysis ... it matters little which of the two names African Theology or Black Theology is adopted as long as the scope it covers is the same. The two names can even be used interchangeably for, all things considered, Black Theology is African Theology and African Theology is Black Theology.

In any event, whether theology is political, social, economic, enculturating, indigenising, etc., it must be liberating, because “the content of the Christian gospel is liberation” (Cone 1972:32). For, according to Buthelezi (1972a:121-122),

[t]he Christian Gospel is designed to fill man with hope in order that he may realize that life is worth living and that he has a role to play in improving the quality of the life of his fellowmen namely, filling them with the same hope which has sustained him.

Not long after BTUS and BTSA started their interactions, BTSA was exposed to Latin American Liberation Theology (LALT) with its preoccupation with the plight of the poor on the continent, in particular, and globally, in general. Strengthening of ties between BTSA and LALT would be experienced with the formation of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). EATWOT is an association comprising theologians in Africa, Asia, the United States, and Latin America, as well as those Blacks in the diaspora. Another important aspect that was added to BTSA with the formation of EATWOT was the quest for religious pluralism, a subject very close to the concerns of Asian theology. A further aspect that was bequeathed to BTSA through its association with EATWOT was feminist/womanist theology. EATWOT took women’s issues so seriously that a commission was set up and nearly half of the organisation’s funds were spent on women’s theology. African women engaged their context theologically under the leadership of Mercy Amba Oduyoye. By 1989, an organisation known as the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians was established, simply called the Circle. One of EATWOT’s theological methodologies was to remain close to secular organisations such as the World Social Forum (WSF) and the World Economic Forum (WEF). To this end, an organisation known as the World Forum on

Theology and Liberation (WFTL) was formed, which consisted mostly of progressive theological movements and formations from across the world. For example, WFTL would routinely convene a week prior to conferences of the WSF to discuss its agenda from the perspective of theology. For BTSAs theologians, all of those developments brought to the fore the critical nature of social issues globally.

### 3. PRINCIPLES AND VALUES OF BTSAs

This article argues that, although BTSAs did not address some issues during the apartheid era, succinct principles and abiding values were espoused that could still be brought to bear on the way in which theology is currently done in South Africa, in particular, and in Africa, in general. The environment has totally changed, from apartheid to democracy and with all that a democratic dispensation entails. The BTSAs should take the African context seriously and respond well to its challenges, hopes, and aspirations. A few of those values are discussed below.

#### 3.1 Black identity

What colonialists and missionaries did when they invaded the African continent and lands elsewhere belonging to indigenous peoples was to empty them of their identity. Colonialists regarded the inhabitants as savages and uncivilised, and missionaries branded them as heathens or pagans. The conquered peoples would then be remoulded and given new identities. A new culture that was European and a new religion that was Christian were prescribed as a new way of life. But, interestingly enough, the process was selective in that the methodology adopted was to make the conquered peoples submissive and subservient to the colonial masters. They were regarded as perpetual minors to be put under the tutelage and guardianship of Whites. Those who resisted were murdered using the superiority of the weapons brought along from Europe. Genocide was committed in many countries in the Americas, Africa, and Asia (Marsh 2013:237-286).

In South Africa, the Khoisan, especially the San, were killed in their thousands. Frontier wars were fought, especially during the trek of White settlers from the Cape Colony into the mainland (Odendaal 2012:3-22; Changuion & Steenkamp 2012:27-43). Black Consciousness (BC) was acutely conscious of this history and, when the leadership of liberation movements was scattered through exile and imprisonment, young people in the 1960s led the struggle from the front until national political liberation was obtained in 1994. Blacks were alerted to the fact that their history,

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culture, civilisation, and religion were just as good as the imported ones, if not better, in some respects. For BC, all people are created equal and, therefore, there was no basis to consider Blacks inferior to Whites. All human beings must be treated with dignity and respect. For BTSA, all human beings are created in the image of God and there is no religious basis to assert the superiority of White people over Black people. When Motlhabi (1972:2) compiled the essays on Black Theology, his intention was to dispel once and for all the notions of White supremacy on theological grounds, and as Buthelezi (1972b:3) eloquently puts it:

... the phrase 'Black Theology' comes out of an attempt to characterize by means of some word or phrase that reflection upon reality of God and His Word which comes out of that experience of life in which the category of blackness has some existential decisiveness.

But, for true liberation to take place, Blacks needed to first be liberated mentally, psychologically, and spiritually. As Moodley & Mtinsio (1991:152) assert:

In shedding the internalized colonial mentality and liberal tutelage alike, Black Consciousness laid the ground for the self-confident challenge to the apartheid state, whether through refusals of co-optation or astute negotiations.

Until and unless this attitudinal change takes place, no struggle against any injustice can succeed. For example, women's domination by men cannot end before women are mentally and spiritually liberated. Economic exploitation of workers by big business cannot be combated if workers are still divided along party political lines. Until we are conscious of the fact that, as human beings, we need creation to live and thrive more than creation needs us, we are headed for a catastrophe that will make human life very difficult and extremely uncomfortable in the near future.

A new self-understanding as a continent is integral to our identity as Black people. Currently, 54 countries in Africa are members of the African Union (AU). All of these countries, in Northern and Southern Africa, share a common past of slavery and colonialism, and must, therefore, face a common present and future of nation-building, democratisation, and socio-economic development. The seeds of the African Renaissance were sown when the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was formed in 1963. Its successor, the AU formed in 2002, had as its main objectives the strengthening of African cohesion and unity as well as giving itself more power and authority over all African countries. To this end, the Pan African Parliament (PAP), the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)

as well as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) were established. The AU Commission, for example, is able to act swiftly and decisively to coups by imposing sanctions and suspending the membership of unconstitutional states. PAP wants to be more than simply an advisory body; it seeks to become a legislative body that can impose laws on all African nations. This African consciousness must be strongly strengthened by religion and BTSA should not allow itself to be marginalised again by African theology. In fact, all perspectives of African theology with its diversity should be employed in order to address the issues of the continent, spiritually. For example, practices of xenophobia in Africa, notably the attacks perpetrated against other Blacks by Black South Africans in 2008 and 2015 are to be condemned in the strongest possible terms. Africans are one people regardless of where they have settled over the centuries or where colonialists settled them after the 1885 Berlin Conference. Borders for African peoples were determined by colonial powers and can, therefore, be legally undermined by African countries assisted by the AU.

### 3.2 Education and research

The slogan "Liberation first and education later" cannot have originated in the ranks of BC movement and BTSA, although it is sometimes attributed to Biko. I can state without fear of contradiction that education was highly valued, so that it would be correct to say that the mentality was more of education for liberation than liberation without education. In the 1960s, both university and seminary students studied very hard as they were also engaging in political discourse and activism. This endeavour led to the formation of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) in 1969. But then a question arose as to what would happen to the students after graduation. This led to the formation of the Black People's Convention (BPC) in 1971. By the way, SASO emerged out of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), while the Christian University Movement (UCM) sponsored BTSA. Once BTSA had taken root, many seminarians went to Europe and the United States for postgraduate studies, especially doctorates, and then returned to South Africa to fortify the Black theology project (Motlhabi 2009:169). Among them, I could mention Desmond Tutu, Alan Boesak, Simon Maimela, Bonganjalo Goba, Takatso Mofokeng, Luka Mosoma, and Mokgethi Motlhabi. Some of the 1976 students who went into exile without completing their matriculation returned in 1990 with master's degrees and doctorates. Although it was clear that Bantu education provided an inferior education to that of White people, students lapped it up and today's leaders such as Cyril Ramaphosa, Tito Mboweni,

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Mathews Phosa, Frank Chikane, Nyameko Pityana, and Molefe Tsele are some of the products of the historically Black universities.

A number of formal and informal research projects were instituted jointly by BCM and BTSA. These initiatives were necessitated by the realisation that Blacks had become objects of research. At the time, it was thought that Blacks were victims of racism who needed to be pitied and patronised. Paternalism by, and condescension from the White liberals in respect of Blacks irritated BCM, “and so BC activists were determined to transform research and publication by and about black South Africans” (Ramphela 1991a:161). Research would also be both reflective and reflexive.

Biko founded *Black Review* in 1972 to counteract the negativity about Blacks by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) as well as by newspapers such as *Post* and *World*. These publications projected Blacks as “... a people without any achievements, a community of failures who were noted for murder, rape, theft, and family disorganization” (Ramphela 1991a:162). BC activists, who obviously included Black theologians, needed to embark on research

which would take seriously the problems of the [B]lack community, their survival strategies, as well as their efforts to transform their life circumstances (Ramphela 1991a:162).

Welile Nhlapo and Tomeka Mafole assisted Biko with research and writing of the *Black Review*. Biko also founded *Black Viewpoint* and *Black Perspectives* in 1972 and 1973, respectively. BTSA also collaborated with BC on publications such as *Special Project for Christian Action in Society* (SPROCAS), owned by the Christian Institute and SACC, and *Pro Veritate*. Motlhabi (2009:168-170) mentions that, in addition to the research conducted by BC, Black theologians had also embarked on their own projects. The Black Renaissance Convention (BRC), headed by Fr Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, held its last conference in Maseru, Lesotho, in 1975. The Black Theology Project (BTP) was given new life with the founding of the *Journal of Black theology in South Africa*. An added boost for BTSA was its incorporation into a theological organisation called the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT). It was also under the auspices of ICT that BTSA’s agenda was broadened to include items such as gender justice, class, landlessness, and environmental justice. Two important publications emerged from this new paradigm shift, namely *The unquestionable right to be free* (1986), edited by Mosala and Tlhagale, as well as *Hammering swords into ploughshares* (1986), edited by Tlhagale and Mosala. BTP held other conferences under the auspices of an organisation known as Community of Black and African Theologians (COMBAT).



Unfortunately, after 1994, BTSA projects and activities were halted. BTSA, in conjunction with BC, therefore, has this valuable legacy that should be resuscitated, namely that education and knowledge are liberation. Teaching is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and BTSA has an abundance of theologians who can contribute to the education of the nation. Theologians should interrogate government policies and assist in ensuring that delivery of learning and teaching materials is done in time. Tertiary education must be made affordable to students by pressuring the government to increase financial support to deserving students. The quality of research must be improved and should be responsive to the needs of society. BTSA must get involved with teaching and research institutes, both formal and informal, to ensure that other aspects of liberation are also attained. God provides gifts of life through given social structures and the passport is “opportunity of education, employment and a character of diligence” (Buthelezi 1972a:129).

### 3.3 Development projects

Early in the development of BC and BTSA, it was admitted that, considering the might and power of the apartheid state, political liberation was still far on the horizon and that something should be done in the meantime while waging the war of emancipation. Development projects were conceptualised and implemented. Biko (1978:38) emphasised the belief that

[t]here is a lot of community work that needs to be done in promoting a spirit of self-reliance and [B]lack consciousness among all [B]lack people in South Africa.

Ramphela (1991a:156) adds more substance to Biko’s statement:

The dual onslaught of political impotence, induced by state repression, and economic dependency, resulting from poverty and welfarism, wrought havoc on the self-image of [B]lack South Africans, who lost self-confidence as a people.

To this end, the latter part of 1971 saw SASO engaging in community projects such as literacy advocacy, adult education, employment initiatives, as well as health and skills training under Black Community Programmes (BCP) (Sono 1993:70; Ramphela 1991:154-178). University and theology students, for example, would spend their academic vacations in townships and villages running and working in community projects. Through those engagements, the philosophy of BC was also imparted to the communities (Sono 1993:71-72). Ramphela (1991a:154) asserts that these projects were

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“tools of empowerment and symbols of hope”. Buthelezi (1972a:129) puts it aptly:

Our ultimate ethical responsibility is not only to serve man by removing the symptoms of alienation from the wholeness of life, but to equip them with the tools which will enable them to stand on their own feet.

Several projects were launched, with varying degrees of success:

- The New Farm Settlement Project was founded in 1969-1971 in Durban. But Richard Turner, who gave the community money and offered assistance free of charge, undermined its self-reliance aspect. Biko and Ramphele were furious to say the least.
- The Dududu Project was established at the Natal South Coast for literacy work, preventative health care, and agriculture.
- The Winterveld Project in Pretoria was established to assess the community's socio-economic needs. Father Clement Mokoka of the Roman Catholic Church and some medical students, among whom Ramphele, assisted at the clinic.
- In 1975, Ramphele managed the Zanempilo Community Health Centre, a flagship of BC built near King William's Town, when it opened its doors to the community.
- Solempilo, founded near Adam's Mission, was proscribed even before it opened its doors with the banning of BC-affiliated organisations in 1977.
- The Zimele Trust Fund was geared to assist ex-political prisoners who would routinely be sent to remote areas where employment would be near impossible to find. A small financial grant would be offered by the SACC to establish home industries and to communally create employment. Bursaries were granted to their dependents.
- Ramphele herself started Ithuseng Clinic in Lenyenye near Tzaneen, to where she had been banished (Ramphele 1991a:166-168; Wilson 1991:46, 51; Stubbs 1978:180).

Christ said that we will have the poor with us always because of humanity's sinful nature. Poverty is, therefore, here to stay and the challenge is that strategies must be put in place that will fight against the scourge. Poverty is massive and global, especially in Third World countries. In South Africa, unemployment especially among youths has reached catastrophic levels and we are said to be the most unequal society in the world. BTSA, in conjunction with other Third World theologies, must pursue this principle of self-reliance to help restore the dignity and self-worth of

the poor. BTSA must be that critical voice that should prophesy against greed and graft that eats into the national budget. BTSA must seriously critique government policies that are aligned to the neoliberal economic policies of the monopoly capital, where profit comes before human beings. Welfarism, where free, cheaply built houses are given to the poor, or young pregnant women are given child grants, is not only unsustainable but is also degrading to the beneficiaries. Charity and compassion cannot be ends in themselves; teleologically, they must be the emergency means to a liberating future. The government must rather assist with grants and loans to small businesses and enterprises that will generate more jobs and empower the poor to take care of themselves. Internationally, large business and financial institutions as well as wealthy governments are only tending their own interests. BTSA must drink from the well of self-reliance as it did in the past. As Duncan (2008:121) mentions,

community programmes had a dual purpose: to improve the actual living conditions of suffering people and to liberate them from debilitating mental attitude.

### 3.4 Leadership and governance

Biko believed in a leadership of the collective, a principle that he inculcated in the BC organisations such as SASO and BTSA. According to Sono (1993:93),

[h]is leadership qualities were such that he never reviled his foes and opponents, only their *principles*. He refused to descend to the level of vilifying his opponents or foes on a personal level.

Pityana (2008:4) points out as an example the fact that many of the essays in *I write what I like* emanated from the intense discussions held between BCM leaders and Black theologians. There was a deliberate and conscious effort to fight against creating a leadership cult, according to Stubbs (1978:158). Consensus politics defined the SASO management style:

There grew into being a particular style of leadership which recognized an enormous advantage of widespread consultation to win over a proposal but the creation of an atmosphere where individual opinions were considered and taken seriously. They were valued equally (Sono 1993:27).

Biko and others always consulted with all the liberation movements, namely the ANC, PAC, and New Unity Movement (NEUM), with the view to the possibility of BC students, who had fled the country after 1976, joining them. The ANC refused and insisted that non-members should join the

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organisation as individuals (Mokoape & Mtinso 1991:140). Sono (1993:101) fervently believes that, had Biko lived, he would have worked closely with the ANC at CODESA. Sono (1993:105) asserts that Biko

strongly believed that South Africa's future could only be bargained for, negotiated for, by [B]lack who would have assumed a pivotal role in shaping the agenda on the table.

Of course, the Bantustan leaders were not to be included in the envisaged negotiations, according to Sono (1993:106). Biko rejected violence with every fibre in his body, stating that, even if pacifism would take twenty years to achieve liberation, he was willing to wait (Sono 1993:106). BCM regarded itself as an internal liberation movement whose responsibility was to continue with the struggle until the exiled and Robben Island leadership had returned home to govern. The formation of the Black People's Convention (BPC) in June 1972 emphasised this notion: BPC was not replacing any of the liberation movements. It was not an organisation in competition with the other liberation movements, but it was geared to become a unifying force to create a national consciousness embracing the entire liberation movement. Leadership in exile and on Robben Island would be recognised as true and authentic leadership. Under *Black Communalism*, BPC organised meetings held in 1974-1975 between the ANC and PAC (Wilson 1991:55, 64; Ramphela 1991b:222).

Such visionary leadership and accountability in governance are what Africa needs at present. There is a general lack of transparency in the way in which African countries are being run. There is a great deal of collusion among Western countries and big business with many African leaders, and corruption has become endemic. South Africa has a long list of corrupt practices, at the apex of which is the internationally noted arms procurement scandal and, internally, the Nkandla one. Except for few individuals who prophesied against some of the scandals, BTSA as a collective has been quiet about those corrupt practices. Not even the SACC has been sufficiently vocal, mainly because Black theologians opine that, if one criticizes the democratically elected government, one would be regarded as disloyal and unpatriotic. Lack of visionary leadership and bad governance as well as secrecy in the way in which African governments are conducting business have led to volatile environments where military coups were carried out. During the Cold War, the world's two superpowers, namely the United States (and its Western allies) and the Soviet Union (and its allies) entrenched African dictators and tyrants in power as they protected their respective interests. Through what is currently known as "colonialism by remote control", euphemistically known as globalisation, these foreign

powers continue to exert their influence negatively in Africa. The WB, IMF, WTO and many foreign governments continue to impose their notions of democracy on African nations, to the extent that sanctions would be imposed on “errant” countries at best and regime change effected at worst. In other words, those African countries, which accept the unfavourable lending conditions imposed by the financial institutions mentioned earlier, are rewarded, while those which refuse are severely punished.

This is the political environment in which BTSA must do theology nationally, continentally, and globally. As an African theology, BTSA should partner with other African theologies and ecumenical churches and organisations as well as other religions in Africa to help address Africa’s critical challenges. Jesus Christ gave us a model of leadership known as servant leadership. A true leader is not there to lord it over his/her subjects, but to serve. When the sons of Zebedee went surreptitiously to Jesus to ask for positions of power, he warned them that they did not know what huge responsibility they were asking for, and when his disciples argued among themselves as to who was the greatest among them, Jesus warned them that the most powerful leader in his Kingdom shall be the slave of everyone (Mark 10:35-40, 9:35; Matthew 20:26-28). The AU and its organs should be theologically accompanied as they address the problems arising from within and outside the continent. Efforts by individuals and foundations that encourage good governance, such as the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, should receive moral support. BTSA should encourage African leaders to revisit some of the African cultural traditions that advocate for visionary leadership and good governance. Fathers of African independence such as Julius Nyerere and Jomo Kenyatta have experimented with some of them, namely *Ujamaa* and *Harambee* respectively (Ng’weshemi 2002:71-83). These are some of the principles and values of the philosophy of *botho/ubuntu* that put family and community in the centre of the African culture – *motho ke motho ka batho/umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (A person becomes human through other humans). They did not succeed, not because those practices are bad, but simply because part of human nature is such that it is prone to evil. It seems that evil and good are in an oppositional relationship in human nature, as the Apostle Paul laments the fact that the good he wants to do, he does not do and the evil he does not want to do, he does (Rom. 7:19). Buthelezi (1972c:75) assures us that,

even as a sinner, man has not crossed the boundary between the human and the brute. To be sure, he very often behaves like a brute and sometimes adopts the law of the jungle for regulating his relations and dealings with other men. Yet, as a sinner, he is redeemable.

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### 3.5 Gender justice

I must admit at the outset that neither BC nor BTSA is taking issues of gender justice in terms of women's issues seriously in pursuit of national political liberation, as alluded to earlier. In fact, none of the liberation movements discussed patriarchy as an obstacle to women's emancipation. Ramphele (1991:225) alerts us to the fact that liberation movements operated continentally within the same mindset, where the war against sexism was suspended until liberation, and, in fact, also perpetuated in post-independent Africa.

Wilson (1991:36) submits that Biko's attitude towards women bordered on chauvinism:

Sexism, as a form of oppression ... did not enter his head. Even when it was pointed out to him by women in the groups he worked in, it tended to be set aside.

Wilson (1991:36) mentions that Pityana affirms this attitude when she asserts that that was the general attitude at the time and that women were involved in BCM not as *women*, but as Blacks. Feminism was regarded within BCM as irrelevant to the needs of Blacks in South Africa and "was dismissed as a bra-burning indulgence of bored, rich White Americans" (Ramphele 1991:221). Although women in the inner circle, such as Ramphele, Mtintso, Mashaba and Matshoba, refused to do chores such as preparing food and taking notes and minutes at meetings, many of the women in these organisations, including BTSA, were not highly regarded. According to Mtintso, "[t]here was no way you could think of Steve making a cup of tea or whatever for himself" (Wilson 1991:60; cf. Ramphele 1991b:214-227).

Men offer women the idiom of including them in the just cause to which they themselves are dedicated, although often a woman's functional task under these circumstances is to prepare food and drink, and to provide a home, relief, and comfort. With it goes the assumed superiority of the man's intellect and choice of work, which is given time and space to be expressed (Wilson 1991:60).

The Black Women's Federation (BWF) was formed in December 1975; 210 women participants attended the launch, including Fatima Meer, Winnie Mandela, and Oshadi Phakathi. Addressing sexism was not on their agenda. Women focused on supporting their male counterparts in fighting a common enemy, namely White racism (Ramphele 1991b:216). Ramphele (1991b:224) also draws our attention to the position of the ANC Women's League and the Federation of South African Women:

[they] ... saw their role as that of mobilizing women for the national struggle against racial discrimination. Little or no energy was directed at concerns about women's rights as persons.

Women regarded their participation more in terms of their role as mothers, wives, and significant others to their male colleagues than as participants in the struggle against colonialism and apartheid as such. They were generally happy to be confined to the patriarchal and patrilineal system (Ramphela 1991b:224). In any situation where there are oppressors and the oppressed, exploiters and the exploited, and so forth, such relationships are characterised by fear. In South Africa, we always pointed out that White people will not live in peace until Blacks were liberated. Whites did not enjoy their power and wealth, because they were always afraid of the "swart gevaar", the black danger. Ramphela (1991b:226) also argues that sexism hurts men as much as it hurts women. Men are afraid of women succeeding without them, if the shackles of sexism were to be loosened. In fact, women may succeed where men have been or are failing. Men are pressured to conform to patriarchal expectations to such an extent that some would commit suicide, or family murders, and other forms of domestic violence. Ramphela (1991b:226) argues that successful transformation of gender relationships, would entail the courage to risk facing fear of the unknown and interrogate tradition and culture:

It remains to be seen whether such non-sexist rhetoric will be translated into concrete programmes to redress the inequalities of the past.

An African womanist theologian of international repute, Madipoane Masenya, shares some of the values and principles of BC when she states that Black women need to be liberated mentally and spiritually from self-negation, self-worthlessness, and an inferiority complex. She complains about the lengths to which some Black women were, and still are, willing to go in order to look like White women, as if whiteness is the norm for beauty (Masenya 2008:145-147). Maleness, she adds, is not a norm for being human. Women should work hard for their self-worth as women. Marriage, laments Masenya, has been idolised to such an extent that unmarried women regard themselves as incomplete at best and subhuman at worst. Defining *bosadi*, a concept with which she has become internationally identified, Masenya (2008:151) mentions the following:

The concept of mosadi (woman) is defined to mean a complete adult woman/female person who is a whole person in her own right without any attachment to a male person in marriage.

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African women and girls are challenged to embrace their femininity as their full humanity (Masenya 2008:148). They are, therefore, not merely helpers of the male species, but are equal partners in humanity's history. A woman also has good her-stories to tell (Phiri *et al.* 2002).

Biko's articulation of the need for all human beings to affirm their intrinsic worth should be embraced by women of Africa in their quest for self-discovery and self-affirmation (Masenya 2008:149).

Recently, there has been a dire shortage of Black women theologians in Africa, in general, and South Africa, in particular. Even in churches where there were women theologians, they have been denied ordination. At present, the situation is somewhat better. Some main churches such as the Anglican, Lutheran and Methodist churches ordain women, but many women have given up, mainly because they were supposed to minister in a patriarchal environment. Some got married and did increasingly less theology; others entered vocations such as teaching and politics, while yet others simply left the country for countries in the West, where they would be respected as human beings. A theology done by women for the continent should be allowed in academies and churches. The establishment of the Circle in 1989 was meant to carry out such a mandate. Women of Africa came together to theologise on their plight. Religion and culture as well as tradition were interrogated. The Bible, as a liberating document, was found to also contain patriarchal elements that were oppressive to women. BTSA must honestly and earnestly revisit African cultural practices such as genital mutilation, levirate marriages, child brides, marriages by kidnapping, and so on; members of the Circle are already doing so (Kanyoro & Njoroge 1996; Njoroge & Dube 2001; Phiri & Nadar 2006).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Black theologians used to visit churches and address ministers of religion in order to spread the gospel of liberation. The same methodology should be followed to conscientise the churches and society at large about the issues that are currently challenging society. BTSA still has a pivotal role to play in the present democratic society. According to Buthelezi (1972a:122), the hope for the world lies in the original covenant that God made with Israel whereby God's promises are guaranteed, providing that Israel sticks to its obligation of being faithful to God. He continues christologically by saying that, in Jesus, this covenant was taken a step further when God made it with all nations and the integral part of it was grace. In spite of the world's unfaithfulness, God would not turn His back on the world. God's project is liberation – nothing and no one can stand in the way of this revolution.



The few issues discussed in this article are not exhaustive. For example, interfaith relations and ecology should be regarded as important on the BTSA agenda. Wars, including terror attacks, are being fought in the name of religion and God. Climate change and the natural disasters that follow as direct consequences of the misuse of the environment should awaken us to the fact that planet earth's death spells the death of humanity. BC and BTSA used to mobilise people at grassroots level for their projects by convening conferences, running workshops, and so on.

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