

BOOK REVIEWS

Come and Share: An Introduction to Christian Theology By C. S. Banana. Gweru, Mambo, 1991, xxvii, 119 pp., ISBN 086922-495-6, Z\$27,00.

In *Come and Share* Banana grapples with pertinent themes that could guide the Zimbabwean Church towards a truly African outlook. His theological reflections are undergirded and informed by the quest for contextual theology that has manifested itself for decades in local independent churches. The same quest has also lately become familiar in ongoing theological discourse in both Protestant and Roman Catholic churches.

Banana is of the opinion that colonial and neo-colonial structures are as entrenched in the Church as they are in government and other public institutions. He argues that, owing to this colonial outlook, the Church, like other public institutions, is not able to serve its predominantly African constituency, particularly the masses (the 'povo'). With that in mind, the author argues that it is imperative to transform the Church in order to enable it to meet the needs of the African people. The starting point towards such transformation is in the evolution of a theology that is authentically African.

In *Come and Share* Banana discusses three areas that he regards as fundamental in the evolution of African theology. These are: African tradition and culture; Marxist socialism; and the Scriptures — all of which, he argues, are to be given equal value in an authentic and liberating African theology.

In this theological model Banana takes serious cognizance of the political, social, economic and cultural dynamics of the Shona and Ndebele peoples. He specifically highlights the Shona and Ndebele concepts of community, spirituality and unity of worldview, especially the modes of communal sharing and commerce that goes on between the living and the 'living timeless' (a new coinage for ancestors). He also highlights the Shona and Ndebele concepts of life and death as expressed through ritual and myths.

Banana picks out the *kurova guva/umbuyiso* ritual as an example that could inform Christians' understanding of Christian concepts like communion (*Koinonia*), forgiveness, reconciliation, ecumenical worship and celebration. According to the author, if the Church learns lessons from such African ritual practices as *kurova guva/umbuyiso* and from their ways of thinking then it would have no difficulties in knowing the concerns and anxieties of the African people.

For Banana the Church has to be a symbol of the kingdom of God, a form of classless society that should show 'the way' to the world by breaking down the barriers impeding communication and the development of good relationships. This is the state of affairs that he wishes to see in the Zimbabwean Church.

However, although Banana's concern is justified and the theological enterprise he engages in is noble, there are many areas that make his model questionable if not uninspiring. His first concern has to do with the

equality of sources that he calls for when he says that 'Scripture should be regarded as a source of theology equal to others' (p. 41). Another is his ambiguous assertion that the Bible contains 'but a small part of the divine acts of God in human history' (p. 42). The author is also not convincing when he argues that 'Church creeds and doctrines are almost irrelevant and meaningless to our context' (p. 42). Furthermore, he discounts the notion of an eschatological kingdom of God as 'garbage' to the Shona and Ndebele people. He regards the mediatorship of Christ at the Parousia as 'meaningless and nonsensical', again, within the context of the understanding of the Shona and Ndebele people.

Undoubtedly, there is a lot at fault about a theology that emphasizes the local context at the expense of the essential faith and beliefs held by the Universal Church. Banana's model distorts the Christian context and foundation that it purports to build upon. Instead an authentic African Christian theology should 'be ready to discover traces of God's natural revelation outside the Christian religion', in this case, from the African context, without, however, calling into doubt the uniqueness and 'centrality of the Christ event' (*Crossroads*, Oct./Nov. 1991, 26).

Any Christian theology, be it African, Asian, Latin American or Western European, has to engage faithfully with the Scriptures and Church tradition. Christianity not only enjoys the status of having 'sacred writings', it is also a historical religion. As such, Scripture and Church tradition in the form of great conciliar teachings and creeds form part of the Christian heritage that cannot be dispensed with as easily as Banana implies. To undervalue or distort this heritage is to renege on the faith into which Christians are initiated.

While *Come and Share* is meant to challenge the Zimbabwean Church from its characteristic complacent slumber, the overly extreme stance that the author takes is counter-productive. It stands in the way of, rather than facilitates or encourages, further experiments in evolving local theologies. A more conciliatory attitude in subsequent editions of the book will be necessary in order for it to be given a warm reception by the Church.

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Chakwesha By H. Chimhundu. Harare, College Press, 1991, 198 pp., ISBN 0-86925-906-7, Z\$12,95.

Chimhundu's first novel *Chakwesha* is a most welcome and overdue contribution to the slowly developing genre of Shona prose fiction. The author's experimentation in terms of plot and characterization makes this work unique in more than one way.

The title of the novel (*Chakwesha* can be loosely translated as meaning 'confidence trickster') is derived from the anti-social character and behaviour of Moses Marufu, a University student in the colonial education system who chooses to betray the goals of the Chimurenga War for his personal benefit and who is paid as an informer by the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organization. At Independence he returns from self-exile the