

## **The past and future of Black Theology in South Africa: in discussion with Maimela**

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### *Abstract*

This article pays tribute to Simon Maimela by engaging with some of the views on Black Theology which he expressed during his active days as academic writer. It tests the waters regarding the future of Black Theology in South Africa. Maimela wrote much on Black Theology, but his contribution seems to have been forgotten – especially since 1994. The article addresses this situation in two parts: The first part looks at Maimela's essays on Black Theology, especially his contributions on contextualisation, gender and ecumenism; central themes; and the significance of his work by way of a historical evaluation. The second part is an attempt to look into the future to see whether or not Black Theology can be revived. The following aspects are some of the contemporary problems that are addressed: renaming Black Theology; spirituality; revisiting and redefining racism; principles; relationship with the theology of the clergy; the visibility of women in theology; view of collective evil, which increase the personal suffering of victims of oppression and poverty, violence, criminality, unemployment and homelessness.

### **Introduction: Aims and background**

#### *Aim and method of the article*

The first aim of this article is to analyse the goals and vision of the Black Theology movement during the decade from 1976 to 1986 when Black Theology in South Africa peaked and racial discrimination prevailed. This analysis will be done by describing the views of Simon Maimela as one of the local academic leaders of Black Theology and it will reflect the sympathies and bias of this author towards Black Theology. In order to achieve this aim, a literary review of Maimela's work will be done and his works during this important period will be interpreted according to his historical engagement with Black Theology. This engagement immediately leads to the

second aim of this article: to look at the past in order to see the future of Black Theology. This will be done from the author's perspective that Black Theology has to be revived and to have a place in the future of theological development in South Africa.

### *Background*

Maimela has produced books and articles that have a lasting message for the future development of Black Theology in South Africa and worldwide. However, since the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa, developing Black scholars and theologians have not taken due interest in contextualising Black Theology in the new dispensation. Therefore, the time is right to reflect on the past and present status both of Black Theology and of Maimela's contribution to Black Theology in determining its future for both Black and White people in South Africa and Africa at large. Because of the changing political conditions in South Africa, it is necessary to evaluate the relevance of Maimela's contribution during a time when Black Theology thrived and to relate it to the future. Maimela is chosen because of his academic engagement. His opposition to racism was clear in his church ministry and services in seminaries (Maimela 1983:48). More importantly, Maimela (1983:48) indicated that Black Theology had to be discussed within the broader context of Liberation Theology (of which Black Theology is part). He addressed and encouraged a theology of inclusivity among Black people in South Africa and Africa that went beyond gender. The central question regarding his writings and thinking is whether or not he intended to open ways for future orientations to Black Theology.

Of course, Maimela did not work alone in tackling Black Theology; there were other Black theologians who worked with him who will also be singled out in this article. Most of the Black theologians of the 1970's and 1980's worked in groups and shared mostly similar point of views that "God was on the side of the oppressed". This is clear in the writings of scholars like Cochrane and West (1993:13–41) who mention Biko, Buthelezi, Boesak, Chikane, B Goba, Maimela, Maluleke, Mazamisa, Mazibuko, Mofokeng, Moila, Mosala, Motlhabi, Mozorewa, B Tlhagale, Ngcokovane, Nengwekhulu, Setiloane and Tutu. As independent thinkers, these men shared similar aspirations for the plight of Black people in South Africa.

### *Personal experience*

I became actively involved in Black theology through the Student Christian Movement (SCM) in Gauteng around 1975. It was through this body that I build a political interest in opposing apartheid. Already in senior primary school, I participated in protest marches and rallies against the racist policies

of the apartheid government. The 1976 uprising was affected us directly and I became more curious about the role of churches in the struggle during this time. When the Wilgerspruit Conference took place in 1983, they were already politically involved; in fact, churches were expected to provide direction and remain the mouthpiece of society. This was a time when everyone, young and old, who were in solidarity with the masses and were called comrades. By 1978, I went to Hwiti High School in Limpopo and thereafter to Stoffberg Theological Seminary (Dutch Reformed Theological School) at the University of the North in Turfloop. At this time, I was further influenced by the church and political leaders like Frank Chikane, Dr Teme and Dr Sam Buti. By 1983, I was a member of a number of Christian Youth Clubs, such as Youth Alive in Soweto and Mohlakeng Christian Youth Club in the West Rand. Wilgespruit was known for youth retreats and other community meetings (including that of trade unions), and at almost all the political situation in South Africa was discussed. Maimela participated in the Wilgespruit Conference in 1983 and made an important contribution<sup>1</sup> from the academic side. At this time, I had a keen interest in the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM).

However, it was through the workshops that were held by the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) that I became interested in Black Theology. I met Maimela the first time at Unisa while he was a lecturer in the Department of Systematic Theology. I used to accompany senior Black theologians to the cafeteria for tea and they often discussed the political problems in the country. These senior Black theologians included Goba, Mofokeng, Mosoma, Sebidi, Sebothoma and Motlhabi. I recall one day when Maimela asked how one could chase birds from a huge tree. All of us responded differently and he said one just has to go under the tree and shake it. This was figurative to me: when one tries to solve a problem, one has to face it head on. Maimela is a theologian who tackled current issues head on in his writings and expressed his theological and political activism through Black Theology in South Africa.

### **A review of Maimela's contribution to Black Theology**

As was explained in the introduction, the first aim of this essay is to describe Simon Maimela's contribution to Liberation Theology through Black Theology. His contribution will be evaluated from the perspective of engagement and not of criticism. I shall look at the four main areas in which he contributed theologically: (1) as a church-rooted academic, (2) on the ecumenical scene, (3) on gender and (4) on the contextualisation of theology.

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<sup>1</sup> His topic was "Current themes and emphasis in Black Theology of Liberation".

*Maimela's contribution as an academic*

Maimela started his career as a clergyman and lecturer in the Lutheran Church. In a Unisa study guide for Systematic Theology (Maimela 1983), he referred to and defined Black Theology as a conscious, systematic theological reflection in response to Black experience. And experience was characterised by humiliation and suffering in racial societies. Continuous struggle against the forces of racism, domination and oppression blotted history and included times when Black churches broke away from White churches because of racial, political and theological reasons (Maimela 1992:33). Maimela was well informed about what was going on during the apartheid era.

The academic articles that Maimela wrote during his early academic years had themes like "Man in White theology" (1981); "Atonement in the context of Liberation Theology" (1982); "Current themes and emphasis in Black Theology" (1987); "Jesus Christ: the liberator and hope for oppressed Africa" (1988); and "African anthropology and Christian Theology" (1992). The titles of his books *We are one voice* (1989) and *Proclaim freedom to my people* (1987) echo his commitment and contribution to the struggle. His works raised interesting debates on liberation from racism in South Africa and Africa as a whole. What is mentioned here is just the tip of the iceberg; many more of his work were published in the *Journal of Black Theology of South Africa*, of which he was once the editor, and other journals in languages other than English.

Maimela's activities are well reflected in the report of the Wilgespruit Conference that was held from 16 to 19 August 1983. The ideas on which he reflected (in books and articles) were collaborative in that his discussions echoed the unified voice of Black Theology against racism. The 1983 Conference that was held under the title "Black Theology revisited" focused on different subthemes, including the conference review, origins of Black Theology, labour, the Black Consciousness Movement and its impact on Black Theology, liberation and women's liberation (ICT 9183:1-55). Maimela and his peers broke new ground and this was reflected in the interest and outcomes of the conference. However, not only racism but also its aftermath had to be dealt with theologically in order to bring about peace and freedom for the South African communities. An organisation that played a major role in Maimela's theological career is The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Most of EATWOT's information on Maimela is contained in their journal *Voices from the Third World*.

*Maimela's contribution on the ecumenical scene*

In 1984 the executive secretary of the Ecumenical Association of African Theologians (EAAT),<sup>3</sup> Father Mveng, viewed South African (White) theology as a challenge to the Word of God as it is contained in the scriptures. According to him, the Bible (as it was read by South African racists) had lost its credibility (EATWOT 1984:31).<sup>4</sup> This in itself mirrored support for Black Theology in South Africa and protest against racism. It refuted the neutrality of theology and appeal for African Theology and Black Theology to be committed in addressing oppression and domination in Africa. This very commitment was also viewed as the primary objective of theology in various African churches. Maimela was once a leader of African section of EATWOT. Although I will not discuss "EATWOT" in this article, it is worth mentioning that Maimela was a former leader of EATWOT's African Section.

*Insights on gender issues*

Maimela was a gender sensitive scholar and perhaps this was largely due to his ministerial work. In one of his article entitled "Seeking to be a Christian in patriarchal society," Maimela (1995:27–42) delved into the issue of gender and expressed his concern for women issues in Black Theology in South Africa. Isasi-Diaz (1996:192–194) responded to Maimela's article and was helpful in making him understand how women felt about their role.

Other women feminist theologians have indicated that they were inspired by him, for example Denise Ackermann said that she started her feminist theology by reading Gustavo Guterrez, Leonardo Boff, Juan Segundo, Johanan Baptist Metz and others. She also read the works of contemporary South Africans such as Simon Maimela, Alan Boesak, T Mofokeng and Basil Moore.<sup>5</sup>

Mercy Oduyoye has indicated that they focused on Maimela's work in their studies on Religion and Culture at EATWOT Africa. And it was the

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<sup>3</sup> A colloquium on "Churches and Black Theology in South Africa" was held in Yaoundé, Cameroun, in 1984.

<sup>4</sup> The Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) is an association of men and women who are committed to the struggle for the liberation of Third World peoples by promoting new models of theology for religious pluralism, social justice and peace. EATWOT members, as Third World theologians, take the Third World context seriously by doing theology from the vantage point of the poor seeking liberation, integrity of creation, gender co-responsibility, racial and ethnic equality and interfaith dialogue. Thus, Third World theologies offer an alternative voice to the marginalised and exploited people of the world. This organisation has published most of Maimela's work

<sup>5</sup> See <http://web.uct.ac.za/depts/ricsa/projects/sochist/print/itsa.pdf>.

growing international recognition of circle studies on religion and culture that lay behind the invitation for her to be a keynote speaker at the 1996 World Mission Conference in Salvador, Brazil (Phiri & Nadar 2006:37). This shows that Maimela's commitment to an influence in all areas of life, including gender, cannot be downplayed.

#### *Contribution to contextualisation*

Orlando Costas (1979:23) has indicated that contextualisation has two stands or ranges: (1) long range universal formulations of older theologies had to give way to new shorter ones and (2) shorter theological ranges were more relevant to the life mission of the church. These ranges include Black Theology, which is not a direct outgrowth of traditional theologies' theological factories of academia. Black Theology emanates from the short range of contextualisation. It developed from the peculiar situation in which many Christians found themselves while trying to live out their faith and fulfil their vocations. Costas raised another concern: whether Black Theology has any permanent relevance in the lives of Black people.

In South Africa Black Theology was a project that fell under Contextual theology.<sup>6</sup> This change was confusing, particularly since the Institute for Contextual Theology (ICT) was meant to house all African theologies (including Black Theology and African Initiated Churches) in the hope of identifying different models that could help to combat apartheid effectively. In 1981 Chikane joined the ICT, a theological think tank that was highly receptive to Liberation Theology, and became its general secretary in 1983. In 1985 a group of 151 clergy released the Kairos Document, a Christian indictment of apartheid, and Chikane played a key role in drafting it. In 1987 Maimela became the director of the ICT (when Chikane was appointed as the general secretary of the South African Council of Churches [SACC]), but has since left.

We can conclude that Maimela did not only write articles and books, but also participated and occupied a high position in the communities he served. Probably this is what reduced his momentum in writings on Black Theology. Antonio Edward (1999:79–88) has warned of God's own identification with "blackness" and that Black theologians should reject any conception of God which stifles Black self-determination by picturing God as a God of all peoples. Either God is identified with the oppressed to the point that their experience becomes God's experience or God is a God of racism. This is a real concern for anybody who would like to know what went wrong with Black Theology in South Africa.

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<sup>6</sup> Refer to <http://www.bethel.edu/~letnie/AfricanChristianity/SAContextual.html> .

I concur with Maimela (1981:42) that the barometer for contextual change or analysis is the Biblical source that if God's power is sufficient to bring about a great miracle of resurrection and ushering in the coming Kingdom, it surely cannot fail to change us into the "beings" God had intended us to be – capable of meaningful and creative interpersonal relationships. This was the basis of the Christian justification for the proclamation of a positive anthropology, which we should not only believe in and pray for but also have to work hard to embody and realise in our relations and dealings with our fellow human beings to whom Jesus Christ relates as a Brother and God as a Father (Rom 8:14–17).

I also agree with Maimela that God is all-powerful and cannot fail to change situations; however, it is unclear how he viewed future Black Theology in its contextual position when Contextual Theology came into the picture. Some maintain that Contextual Theology was Black Theology. It seems though that Black Theology was indeed a project within the frame of Contextual Theology. This has to be verified. Maimela has referred to the period from 1977 to 1983 as being crucial in his political career.

### **Organising theology**

It seems that a major challenge for Black theologians was to identify a preferred option between Black Theology and Contextual Theology. Theologians such as Allan Boesak, Walter Gill, James Cochrane, Renate Cochrane and Tonny Saddington were among those who were doing soul searching in the 1980s to find a theology that would respond to the situation of oppression in South Africa (Speckman & Kaufmann 2001:19). Since this time, not much has been heard regarding this from Black theologians in South Africa (including Maimela).

### **Criticism against Black Theology**

The other challenge came from certain quarters of the EATWOT regarding the need for a comprehensive African Theology. They felt that African Theology had to broaden its scope to address the concerns of Black Theology. According to Motlhabi (2008:49), the call for a single African Theology can among other things, be attributed to the fact that South Africa is part of Africa and therefore shares many of the problems and concerns of the continent and its Christians.

The establishment of the ICT in South Africa was one option to house African Theology and Black Theology as projects alongside other projects, for example mission churches' theologies. Why was Black Theology no longer defended as a theological tool for Black South Africa's liberation? This question is relevant since the exponents of Black Theology became

stakeholders in the founding of the ICT in 1980 (prior to 1989). Black theologians (including Simon Maimela, Bonganjalo Goba, Allan Boesak and Frank Chikane from the Black Consciousness Movement) supported the idea of the ICT housing Black Theology as one of its projects. One would have expected from them stronger support for Black Theology to exist independently, though not in a permanent crisis. On the positive side though, it seems that Black Theology can be revived. However, its revival depends on its historical significance for the future.

### **Significance of the early years of Black Theology for Maimela**

Maimela views the years between 1977 and 1983 as the most crucial in the struggle of liberation and theology in South Africa. A number of threads run through this view, all of which have a direct impact on Black Theology. The first was the increasingly repressive government. Alongside the repressive terror and in the wake of the banning of black organisations and the flight into exile of many Black activists who had escaped death, imprisonment or banning, there was a lull in black resistance (Moore 1973).

It was at this time that a number of factors jointly paved the way for the return and dominance of the ANC after 2 February 1990. One was the shift away from racism as a category of radical social analysis among young academics towards class.<sup>7</sup> Another was the growth of the ideology of non-racialism as an organising principle of the Trade Union Advisory Coordinating Council (TUACC) in its struggle against the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA) with its notion of creative parallel unions structured on parallel lines. The unions rejected this for the practical reason that the racial policies made workers weak. In the process, “Black versus White” language was replaced with “boss versus worker” language, which possibly strengthened the hand of the academic class analysts. During these years, Maimela was very active in the theology of liberation.

The end of 1983 can be labelled as the year in which resistance politics were revived with the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the National Democratic Forum (NDF). There was a hiatus in Black resistance politics and Black Theology became almost invisible. In 1990 President de Klerk signalled official acceptance of the end of apartheid and unbanned the major liberation movements the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). ANC politics triumphed over Black consciousness politics and Black Theology split from the ICT and re-emerged as an independent movement (interview with Maimela on 10/2/92).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Refer to Basil Moore’s interview with Maimela (10/2/92) : <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/theology/bct/moore.htm> .

<sup>8</sup> Basil Moore (1992): <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/theology/bct/moore.htm> .



At the same time, a rapprochement with the ICT seems to have begun. The Black Theology Project and the ICT co-organised the 1993 International Conference on Black Theology, which was sponsored by the EATWOT. This joint venture did not only build bridges, but also highlighted the potential of breathing a new lease of life into Black Theology by providing Black theologians in South Africa with an urgently needed sense of solidarity and support (Moore 1992).<sup>9</sup> However, since that time, Black Theology has remained silent.

### **Central themes in Maimela's theology**

Some of Maimela's subthemes include the constant struggle in the world between the oppressors and the oppressed, preferential options for the poor, salvation, social facts and history – which are all viewed from the fact that people are supposed to be conscious of their own God-given potential for creative action in shaping the world (Maimela 1987:19). He sees Black Theology as a theology that teaches people to believe in themselves. His book *Proclaim freedom to my people* focuses on three major areas of interest for Black Theology: ideology, gospel and liberation; Christian hope; and social responsibility.

Maimela (1987:preface) argued that Black Theology of liberation arose as a challenge to the church and all Christians by affirming Black humanity and dignity and by calling for the transformation of society so that justice and freedom could at last become the common property of all South Africans. In doing this, Black Theology turned the gospel into an instrument of liberation and Black Christians could appeal to the gospel ethos to resist the extreme demands of racial domination and bondage. In proclaiming liberty to the poor, the oppressed and the downtrodden, Black people became witnesses to the Biblical God who has special concern for those who are trampled underfoot by the powers that be in any society.

For Maimela, the responsibility of Black Theology presupposes future developments that oppose injustices and promote peace on the basis of the biblical God's principles that liberate. During the Wilgespruit Conference of 1983, the question of ideological theory was raised. The concern was theory and praxis for Black Theology. Some of the delegates favoured it, while others were against it. The link between theory and praxis<sup>10</sup> was questioned and this resulted in the adoption of new analytical tools to reconcile the then present racially broadened praxis (ICT 1983:61 & 62). The conference agreed that the difference between race and class had to be resolved in different

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<sup>9</sup> Basil Moore (1992): <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/sorat/theology/bct/moore.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> The link between theory and praxis would always be difficult in that Black Theology itself was mainly proactive in the academic institutions than in the churches and Black community at large.

ways by Black theologians and Christians. The issue of biblical interpretation was another burning issue during the discussion – and it was also an area in which Maimela had shown keen interest. Later, themes on atonement, Jesus as the life of the world, the hope of humanity, categorised power and truth, and reflections on church and state featured in Maimela’s theologising.<sup>11</sup> Mosala’s (1989) *Biblical hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa* and Mofokeng’s *Sword and the Cross bearers* (1983) and *The cross in the search for true humanity* (1989) were among the publications that emphasised Black theologians’ interpretations of the Christian Bible to address the challenges of the time.

The process of promoting Black theological views in the past was difficult due to lack of free and public political expression. International exposure was limited because of restrictions on travelling abroad. Most of the Black theologians who studied overseas did so either through the facilitation of their churches that were mostly affiliates of mother churches or organisations like the WCC, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Catholic Bishops of South Africa.

In those days, there was no guarantee to travel safely and unhindered abroad (especially when you were a political activist) and Black people who were afforded such trips were monitored either by South African Intelligence, the police or the Department of Home Affairs. Also, the fact that Black people in institutions of higher learning were in the minority when compared to White people meant that they did not stand a chance against the intellectual deprivation in publishing and self-expression. However, there were Black scholars who worked under racial constraints and yet produced quality publications (like Maimela). Their campaign appealed for a theology of change through the mighty pen rather than guns and mortars.

Maimela maintained that theology was not absolute and expressed this in his article “Jesus – the life of the world” (Masamba 1983:17). He contrasted the injustices and isolation that Black people faced with the powerful exponents of apartheid. Desmond Tutu (1983:57) refers to the fact that theology is not eternal nor can it ever hope to be perfect, although the true insight of each theology should have universal relevance. Both Maimela and Tutu promoted the diversity of theologies (Tutu 1983:57). It is therefore no wonder that in the 1980s Contextual Theology and the Kairos Document<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Refer to the Maimela’s *Proclaim freedom to my people* (1987).

<sup>12</sup> The Kairos Document is a [theological](#) statement that was issued in 1985 by a group of Black South African theologians who were based predominantly in the Black [townships](#) of [Soweto](#). The statement challenged the churches’ response to what the authors saw as the vicious policies of the apartheid state under the [State of Emergency](#) that was declared on 21 July 1985. It evoked strong reactions and furious debates, not only in South Africa but world-wide. The Kairos Document called for a return to the Bible in the search for a relevant

were met with such high interest by Black theologians – even more than Black Theology.<sup>13</sup> Indeed the realisation that theology in general could not be viewed as absolute lead to questioning the status quo on women's femininity.

### **Looking to the future of Black Theology**

The second aim of this article, as explained in the introduction, is to investigate the future of Black Theology from the perspective of its history. Roberts (1987:116) views the Black Theology agenda as an unfinished dialogue between African and Afro-American theologies. The new concern should be directed to hunger and xenophobia. Also at the heart of biblical and theological scholarship, the contribution of liberation theologians to Christology and ecclesiology will be very much relevant. Black Theology will help to enrich and deepen the understanding of Jesus Christ and the church in all theology.

I argued in my previous work (Molobi 2000:10) that the future of Black Theology cannot be determined without reference to its past. Villa-Vicentio and de Cruchy (1985:126) define Black Theology as a direct aggressive response to a situation where Blacks have experienced alienation at political, economic and cultural levels. The symbolic value of the word “black” captures the broken existence of Black people; it also summons them collectively to burst the chains of oppression and engage themselves creatively in the construction of a new society. “Black” in Black Theology underlines the uniqueness of the experience of the underdog. It is suspicious of a Christian tradition that accepts uncritically the economic and political institutions of the day. However, Black Theology today is under strong attack, including attack from its propagators.

At a recent gathering of Black theologians at Mosala's place,<sup>14</sup> senior Black theologians indicated that they had already played their role in the struggle and that now is the time for developing scholars to reveal their visions for the revival of Black Theology. It is still difficult to map out a clear mandate for such a theology. However, the agreement was that such a theology is a necessity. My thought (Molobi 2004) on “a vision for mission” for the three theological categories<sup>15</sup> should be explained. The Wilgespruit Conference of 1983 required further research on “the link between Black Theology and the African Independent Churches and African Traditional

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message to the South Africa experience at the time. It was designated a prophetic theology on the one hand and a state theology and church theology on the other (Speckman 2001:38).

<sup>13</sup> This could also have happen because of lack of resources, including proper facilities and funding.

<sup>14</sup> The gathering of Black theologians at Mosala's place was on 9 February 2010.

<sup>15</sup> The three categories are: African Theology, Black Theology and the African Indigenous Churches.

Religion” and “the question of content of Black Theology” (ICT 1983). Like the Wilgespruit Conference, the meeting at Mosala’s place provoked thoughts on a possible new suggestion for the future of Black Theology. Other suggestions (including the renaming, spirituality, revisiting and redefinition of racism, and the principles and methodologies of feminist theology and feminist hermeneutics) were to be revisited as part of such an agenda.

Black Theology requires an interpretation of faith that will treat Black Theology holistically as a critical theme. Adequate attention has not yet been given to how collective evil increases the personal suffering of the victims of oppression and how faith in God enables people to find meaning in their survival (Roberts 1987:115). In the same vein, Tshilenga (2005) addresses the topic of “collective sins in Africa” by expounding the very fact that Roberts refers to: “poverty, violence, criminality, unemployment and homelessness” are just a few of the many problems that have to be addressed.

Perhaps I should highlight here that the quality of Black Theology cannot be discussed without understanding Maimela’s views and my intention. I am attempting to identify pointers for the future of Black Theology by looking at Maimela’s thinking. This is not requesting special and privileged criteria for Black Theology because of the word “black.” Instead, I am only trying to identify the necessary principles that are appropriate and relevant to the nature of the object of this investigation. The reader should therefore be aware that my intention is not to put Maimela under scrutiny. Black Theology is an engaging theology and it validates itself as being in the mainstream of the biblical and Christian tradition. Its modern character should also be emphasised and correlates to its development according to the evolutionary stages of a modern discipline. A rigorous and painstaking descriptive analysis and the identification of what Maimela actually says or means had to precede any critical estimate. However, although my comments regarding Maimela’s work are not dealt with to the fullest, they nevertheless encourage and contribute toward a meaningful debate.

### **Conclusion**

This article established and recognised the enormous contribution of Maimela’s work to Black Theology in South Africa. Two aims were identified to investigate the future of Black Theology in South Africa. The first concerns the internal focus of Maimela’s writing during the struggle against apartheid. He emphasised the will of the biblical God in liberating the marginalised in all ages, for example in the times of Israel’s captivity, but also spell out the liberative way-out just as Christ has freed the people of the world through his death and resurrection which symbolise the new life for the people of the world. The second is more futuristic and seeks to uncover possible ways to take the arguments further and address current problems in

the townships and other places. Some areas are highlighted as tasks that should be tackled in the future. Theology therefore has to be related to the educative process in all its aspects. Black Theology is both academic and religious; it therefore has to be introduced once more in the colleges and universities. It embraces part of the historical struggle of South Africans and those elsewhere in Africa (and worldwide) and reminds us about the evils of collective oppressive practices that deny people the right to a good life. At its core of biblical and theological scholarship and the contribution of liberation theologians to Christology and ecclesiology, Black Theology will help to enrich and deepen the understanding of Jesus Christ and the church for all theology. For this, we thank Maimela for being one of the theologians who provide us with a background to begin to search for the relevance of the future of Black Theology.

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