SOME THOUGHTS ON RELIGIOUS THEMES IN SELECTED POEMS OF JOLOBE IN "UMYEZO".

C. Z. Gebeda.

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C H A P T E R I

INTRODUCTION:

0.1 Jolobe's poems in Umyezo are various in nature but we are going to confine ourselves to five selected ones that have some religious flavour. These are:

(i) Nakubekho Ukukhanya. (p.30) "Let there be light".
(ii) Umngamlezo. (p.37) "The Cross".
(iii) Umthandazo Wangokuhlwa. (p.42) "Evening prayer".
(iv) Akukho hlelo apho. (p.62) "There is no denomination there".
(v) Indlov' enomxhaka. (p.69) "The formidable elephant" (The Almighty).

0.2 The translated meanings of these titles are as literal as could be. Further explanations on them will be provided in the full analysis of each poem. We shall endeavour to deduce what the writer's feelings and message are in each of these poems. We are, therefore, going to oscillate between Jolobe's religious theories and the philosophy of religion.

0.3 Now a word about the author himself. James J. Ranisi Jolobe was born in 1902, son of a Presbyterian priest. In all his writings, from his school days, he has put some religious tinge. Evidence of this is found in his poems and in his "Story for boys" (Iindlela ezahlukeneyo) which were christian methods of bringing the boys up. We also come across traces of traditional Xhosa religion especially in some poems like "Ilanga likaQilo", "UThuthula", etc. and in "UZagula" and "Elundini LoThukela" where superstition is also given a hammering of attack. We can see, therefore, that Jolobe's outlook and background as a man is religious. Vilakazi, W.B. has also observed this and has remarked: "Jolobe is a Christian who has a reverent approach to sacred things and sees the hand of God in everyday happenings." (Vilakazi, 1945, p.344). James Jolobe is presently still a priest in pastoral charge of a Prebyterian parish in Alice in the Cape.

0.4 Since our subject here revolves around religion, philosophy, and poetry, it will be of great service to our treatment hereof to attempt some brief definition of each of these aspects. There seems to be a universal definition of religion and this phenomenon is relative to other considerations.

We shall then adopt the broad view held by George L. Abernethy and Thomas A. Langford who state that ..."Religion is a pervasive and almost universal phenomenon in human societies." (Abernethy & Langford, 1968, p.1). Another explanation of this definition is drawn by these two authors from A. N. Whitehead where he says: "... religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts; something which gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond all reach; something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest." (vide Abernethy & Langford, p. 77). The depth and complexity of religion is illustrated by the presence in it of a philosophical "something" which is humanly indefinable. This is why we have numerous religious theories and philosophies of religion such as Deism, Humanism, Empiricism, Atheism, Existentialism, and others. We do not, however, hope to classify Jolobe under any of the -isms.

0.5 On the surface, philosophy may be variously defined but in essence, it is a science which is primarily concerned with life at the level of sensory experience and logical analysis. It is, therefore, in the words of Colin Brown, " an intellectual discipline which is concerned with the nature of reality and the investigation of the general principles of knowledge and existence." (Brown, 1971, p.8). We shall not go into the various disciplines of philosophy such as naturalism, Idealism, and the other -isms.

0.6 Poetry is, as it were, the art of expressing in melodious words the thoughts which are the creations of feeling and imagination. Poetry is a kind of garment, though verbal, which clothes our thoughts and ideas and gives colour and meaning to the picture of mind which the poet attempts to present through his imagery, language, and imagination. We shall not classify here the various categories of poetry such as narrative, descriptive, and others, nor do we propose to place Jolobe in a particular school of poets.

0.7 Having given brief definitions of religion, philosophy, and poetry, we should now briefly show how these three phenomena are related before we attempt to combine them to deduce Jolobe's religious theories expressed in his poetry. We shall first discuss

the relation between religion and philosophy, then take the relation between religion and poetry, and finally see if there is any relation between philosophy and poetry.

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY:

0.8 Religion and philosophy are both sciences dealing with the whole of reality though differing in attitude. Religion may be said to approach its subject with a question-answering theory while the philosophic enquiry is question - asking. There is, however, very little affinity between these two disciplines. Colin Brown explains the diversity between them and explains that the relationship between philosophy and the christian faith cannot be described as an ideal marriage because, "There are christians who regard an interest in philosophy as a dubious and dangerous flirtation" while on the other hand .."professional philosophers have today serious doubts as to the intellectual respectability of courting religious belief." (vide Brown, p.7)

RELIGION AND POETRY:

0.9 To understand more fully why Jolobe chooses poetry as a vehicle of his philosophy of religion, let us investigate the relationship between poetry and religion. Donald Whittle says that there is a distinct affinity between poetry and religion for both religious and poetic experience are concerned with a heightened awareness and a sense of unity. (Whittle, 1966, p.56). V. Buckley, criticising Matthew Arnold says, among other things, that the strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry. The product of this religion and poetry relationship is perhaps religious verse which is inspired verse. "Writers of devotional verse are usually writing as they want to feel rather than as they do feel." (Buckley, 1959, p.27).

PHILOSOPHY AND POETRY:

1.0 There can be very little relationship between philosophy and poetry except perhaps where a poet philosophises in his poetry. Both poetry and philosophy are intellectual disciplines which operate on the field of investigation into general principles of knowlegde and existence. Since philosophy and poetry are both concerned with reality and truth, they cannot be estranged from each other

completely. The above definitions and explanations lead us to a further consolidation of our subject matter. We are now to find Jolobe's "religious theory" as well as his own philosophy of life. We have to try and state briefly what is meant by a philosophy of religion and a philosophy of life.

1.1 A person's philosophy of life is his overall view to life. It presents and interprets his answers to theoretical problems. It also exposes his ideas and beliefs concerning reality, man, and life. In deducing someone's religious theory, then, we have to examine his basic philosophy of life in as far as it embraces his beliefs and ideas about God, the deity, and religion as a whole. We are, therefore, dealing here with an aprioristic and supra-rational subject which is a phenomenon as much part of the historic past of the individual as of his present.

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION:

1.2 Yinger, J.M. in a treatise on The scientific study of Religion states: "Philosophies of religion are usually specific expressions of a general philosophy. Speaking of the philosophy of religion, then, seems to mean indulging in a repetitive pattern of protestations, charges and counter-charges. Karl Barth, a distinguished theologian, is quoted by Colin Brown as observing that "the job of philosophy of religion was to look around for objective proof for non-Christian reasons for Christian faith." (vide Brown, 1971, p.46). This may sound paradoxical but the point to be emphasized is the objectivity of the inquiry. Like all other philosophies, the philosophy of religion is concerned not so much with the content of religious experience as with its form and the questions raised by it. This is to be seen in Jolobe's poems. Its primary datum is the christian experience of God in Christ. We are to ask ourselves in this regard how Jolobe uses his religious experiences to influence the life of his audiences whom he meets through his poetry.

1.3 Philosophy of religion can be called a "border" or "bridge" discipline because of the reciprocal influence of theology and philosophy. Abernethy and Langford continue to say that while these two disciplines cannot be fused completely together, disparity

between them does not exist so much for both "reason and revelation are but two sides of the same coin". (vide Abernethy & Langford, p.95). The philosophy of religion is thus an effort to discover so far as we can what there is in religion which is accessible to our reason. Since religion can be philosophical, as we observed, and philosophy cannot be religious, there can be no such a converse statement as 'religious philosophy'. The five selected poems by Jolobe are all religious or they all have at least some religious tone in them. As we attempt to analyse what the author's speculations in them are, it can be expected that Jolobe's underlying philosophy will differ in each of the poems.

1.4 The five poems of Jolobe under discussion are found in his book Umyezo (The Orchard) which was one of the selected few to be published in the list of "The Bantu Treasury" in literature of the University of the Witwatersrand. The poems are:

a) Makubekho Ukukhanya. (Let there be light).
which is based on the story of creation as found in Genesis chapter one verses 3 - 5.

b) Umnqamlezo. (The Cross)
which is an exposition on the significance of the Cross to a believer as contained in St. Luke chapter nine verse 23.

c) Umthandazo Wangokuhlwa.(Evening Prayer)
where this kind of prayer is regarded as a general practice in a christian home.

d) Akukho Hlelo Apho. (There is no Denomination there)
which is a reference to the fact that the church today is so denominational in structure that much attention is paid to this fact than to anything else.

e) Indlov' enomxhaka. (A praise name for God depicting His might - The Almighty - literally meaning - The formidable elephant.)
This is a praise song based on the devine acts of God as contained in Scripture.

We shall proceed to take these poems one by one to infer the writer's theories as propounded by him in each one and deduce his argument on religious grounds.

C H A P T E R II.

MAYUBEKHO UKUKHANYA:

2.1 The short poem here is based on the Biblical text of creation as contained in the book of Genesis chapter one verses 3 - 5 where we find the following words: "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day."

2.2 Jolobe imagines that before light was created the world was a confused black mass. Before the light spread its wings over the oceans, the total beauty of the world could not be fully appreciated. In the second stanza we learn that the wind swelled up and the Father decreed, "Let there be light!" The firmament then tore open and the visibility of this wonderful creation blinded the eyes with its beauty. This suggests that when the light came, it broke through the sky and took the world by surprise with its very bright rays. Jolobe is highly imaginative here. In the third and last stanza Jolobe deals with the implications of darkness, wind, and light to the world. He poses a big question which refers to the fact that now that light came to dispel the enveloping darkness and the then raging winds, and since the world seems to be on the march forward and this is acceptable and allowed by the Omniscient One, will this light not help towards the discovery of new lands yet unknown? This may well be regarded as a rhetoric question for we all know that the answer is in the affirmative. Jolobe does not refer to voyages of discovery and colonialization reminiscent of old but he obviously concerns himself with the spread of the Gospel of Christ to other lands such as our own. This last stanza then, apart from being an appraisal of the coming of the light of God on earth, is also a poet's tribute to the foreign missionary pioneers who came out into the dark unchristian world bringing the gospel of light to all. Therefore, the author places the importance of the creation of light and likens it to revelation of God to man and the light is like the gospel itself. The pith of Jolobe's theory in this analogy could be summarised to some extent in the popular scriptural phrase which runs something like this:

"Let the Gospel so spread on earth among the nations of the world that no peoples may miss it". To me this is an appropriate thought in this situation.

2.3 Jolobe theorizes on the importance of this stage in the act of creation. He admits that God created nature and made it beautiful but all that beauty would not be appreciated fully without the presence of light:

"Babungebonw' ubuhle bezwe ncama."
(The beauty of the world would never be seen)

After the light was created, this beautiful nature was almost blinding to the beholding eye:

"Le ndal' intle yaphandla amehlo."
(This beautiful nature blinded the eyes)

The author, who has distinguished himself as a keen observer of nature, lauds the light which to him represents good. In the last stanza the author stretches the idea of light to suggest that through light the world can progress:

"Njengob' ilizwe mgama lihambela"
(As the world moves forward)

and new countries, as in voyages of discovery, are being found:

"Akuyi kutyhileka mazwe matsha na?"
(Will there be no new lands discovered?)

Jolobe's theory on the significance of light and its religious implications is true to light and appropriately applied to it. Seeing that the Bible makes numerous references to light, the appeal or call for light :- "Makubekho ukukhanya" by Jolobe is a significant and natural call. Jolobe's underlying message here could well be summed up as embodying the "Light of Christ" doctrine of the Eastern Church. (Underhill, 1960, p.24). This could further be interpreted in the words of biblical text which runs thus: "In thy light we shall see light" which to Jolobe implies that light marks the beginning of life. Jolobe also lands the almighty - "Mninikwazi" or the omniscient who declares Himself in Isaiah chapter 45 verses 7 and 8 where it is stated: "I am the Lord ..... I form the light and create darkness .....".

.....

C H A P T E R III.

UMNQAMLEZO:

3.1 In this poem Jolobe theorizes on the significance of the cross or the crucifixion. The author draws his inspiration from the text in the Gospel of St. Luke chapter 9 verse 23 where it is stated that: "And he said to them all, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me'" These are obviously the words of Jesus Himself and they provide us with a definite condition for being a follower of Christ, namely, to be able to give oneself over completely, to deny oneself and to carry the cross all the time. We leave the biblical text and interpret the author's own views on the subject with the biblical text in the background. Having read or heard about J.J.R.Jolobe's religious background and his own calling as a priest, one wonders if, in this poem, he does not speak from personal experience and thus being subjective. Right from the opening lines the author suggests to us that the cross is a symbol of suffering:

> "Umqondis' obuhlungu wobomi."
> (Painful symbol of life)

This is further elucidated as the suffering of a Holy Nazarethian- "UmNazarethe oNgcwele". In other words the cross is the symbol of sacrifice and suffering besides being a symbol of Christianity to followers of Christ.

3.2 When Jolobe enumerates the acts of Christ, we are left in doubt about the assertion that the life of a christian is the life of dedication and resignation because Christ 'did not spare himself' which means "Ongazibandezanga yena" but took upon Himself the task of proclaiming the new kingdom - "Ubukumkani obutsha". This certainly draws a parallel with the biblical tale of how God called all His angels and archangels and asked for volunteers to come to the world to save mankind from sin. It is said that Christ offered to come for no one else would. Following up this story the poet further to say that Christ 'did not cower in the face of difficulties'or as Jolobe puts it, "Ongabuphephanga ubunzima" so that the Gospel of truth is spread or preached. For Jolobe, there is a

sound reason for every act of sacrifice on the part of Christ or a christian. This inventory of christlike deeds proceeds to include such facts as - He would rather sweat himself away to fulfill a promise and to win other souls. He paid the price with his life to bring about forgiveness. Because only through him could salvation come, so he made himself a sacrifice of blood. In the last words of the first stanza Jolobe summarises and evaluates all these acts of Christ and comes to the conclusion that they are worthy of his calling and appropriate to his situation:

"Wakuthobel' ukwalathwa kwakhe
Ngezi zinto uyabalisa,
Kambe loo Mnqamlezo umnyhweba".

(He submitted to his calling
By these things he relates,
Yet this cross is blessed)

In other words, these deeds mean just the cross. To be able to offer this service with your life is to be able to carry the cross and to be able to do so is in deed honour, says Jolobe.

3.3 In stanza two we find a turning point where the poet expounds the meaning of the cross to an ordinary man-in-the-street. He has explained what is symbolized by the cross and having defined it, he is now busy illustrating the information with common day to day experiences. The broad message of stanza two is: "Somewhere in the centre of our life, there is the burden of the cross. This life is the one of trial-and-error even to an infant. In this land of light we also see and walk in darkness. In this land of laughter and joy, there are bitter tears as well. A person is often confronted with strife and struggle. All this is the cross and, if it is carried and endured for the sake of the good that comes with it, great service will have been rendered by the bearer of the cross." A broad interpretation of the author's theory here is that at one stage or another, one is bound to meet with problems in one's life. Even a small child is destined to have problems. There is always the good side and the bad side of life. One then wonders if Jolobe is not a firm believer in 'predestination' if he is not trying to adopt a balanced view of life by accepting both the good and the bad of life. But, however, he sums up his views

as usual by telling himself that all this has to be so because of the cross. This means a lot to live up to even for a christian. It certainly means an awful lot more to endure for the non-christian layman. Evelyn Underhill says that the joy and peace felt by those adhering to Christ is ..."perhaps specially felt in their deep mystery and reality in times of suffering, when the spirit transforms the national rebellion of body and mind into acceptance of frustration and pain." (vide Underhill, 1960, p.19). St. Paul calls this characteristic 'the fruit of the spirit'- which is long suffering and gentleness.'Jolobe then suggests implicitly what Underhill expresses explicitly that all of us need this grace of long suffering, the carrying of the cross, in respect of our own life of prayer.

3.4 In the last stanza Jolobe asks us to examine our own achievements and those of others. He says that every success is preceded by the carrying of the cross, sacrifice, self-denial, and perserverance by someone desirous of doing good - in Jolobe's words:

> Enxubele ukuze kulunge,
> Elangazelela impumelelo.
>
> (Desirous of doing good,
> Hoping for success.)

In the closing phase of the poem the author applies his theory to human and everyday experience of man. He warns us that everyone of us is expected to carry his or her cross each moment of each day of his or her life so as to lead a perfect christian life:

> Abalandeli bakhe ngabo
> Bathwala iminqamlezo yabo
> Ngenxa yothando nombulelo
> Kuloo mthwali-tanci womnqamlezo.
>
> (His followers are those
> who carry their crosses
> because of their love and thanks
> to the first bearer of the cross.)

Here Jolobe theorizes that the followers of Christ have to identify themselves by carrying their crosses in love and appreciation to Him who bore His cross first. This task is presented to us as both a duty and an obligation of a christian. This willingness to suffer with Christ is reciprocal "ngenxa yothando nombulelo" or because of his love and gratitute to Christ who set this memorable example. Russell Maltby agrees that "the cross is the

chosen symbol of christian faith, and the word of the cross is the gospel of salvation." (Maltby, 1936, p.33). Maltby speaks of the paradox of the cross and says that, "..... originally and plainly a cross is just two pieces of wood, nailed together to make an instrument of torture, and death by torture with no associations attached to it whatsoever. Therefore, if it were stripped of its specially christian associations, a cross might fitly have symbolised the incredible cruelty of man to man. (vide Maltby, p.33). The event of crucifixion then with all its extended christian associations has helped to bring us to believe that God will allow His chosen to suffer. The event actually teaches more than anything else.

3.5 The words "Take up the cross" have been and may be used to exhort christians to accept some hardships, to go on doing something a little uncongenial, and to increase a subscription - this is an abusive usage of this otherwise christian exhortation. To take up the cross means a frame of mind in which you are not afraid to lose your life because you have already given it away. The indication of carrying the cross for others is given by Jolobe when he says:

> Hlola ngaphaya kwempumelelo,
> Kukho obethwel' umnqamlezo,
> Wazincama wazikhama,
> Esindasindeka, ebulolo.
>
> (Look beyond success,
> Someone carried the cross,
> With sacrifice and denial,
> In a lonely struggle.)

This implies that someone often sacrifices something so as to cause the success of one of his kind. We should be prepared to give ourselves a ransome for the others even if entails fighting a lone battle. On the significance of sufferance as symbolized by the cross, Leslie Weatherhead says that it is necessary to suffer for our living ..... "for if we do not feel pain, we perish." (Weatherhead, 1935, p.55). The carrying of the cross may well be welcome to a christian but it is certainly cause for complaint and dissatisfaction to the others. On the other hand, Herbert Farmer seems to be moving very close to Jolobe's appraisal of the cross for he sees it as a healing cross which must always be at

the centre of the christian message. He adds a useful warning though and says that if the cross is taken too much for individual salvation, "it will seem too small to be true". I am afraid Jolobe is not absolutely innocent on this count. Farmer's second warning is that "if the cross is its confession, nescience, tone of awe, and the mystery of God, it will seem too confident to be true." Jolobe maintains the mystery of the cross in so far as it symbolizes the presence and the spirit of God but he takes it rather too much for granted as to render it confident. Farmer's third and final warning on the issue of the christian cross is that "if it is made to bring comfort, and peace and joy not in and through challenge and demand, it will seem too easy to be true." (Farmer, 1938, Introduction, p. IX).

3.6 While Jolobe's unreserved faith and acceptance of the hard line way of the cross is to be appreciated, we must not lose sight of the fact that suffering as such is resisted by man for we cure ourselves when we suffer pain, and suffering as such does not bring gain to character as far as we are concerned. This is probably why Weatherhead feels that "the saints became saints not through suffering but rather in spite of it." (vide Weatherhead, p. X, Introd.). Jolobe just speaks of voluntary suffering on the part of the christian. The extent of this suffering is suggested to us by Wheeler, Robinson who recognises three levels of suffering which is often transmuted into sacrifice as an offering to God. The bottom level is to him biological or physiological or even psychological; the second upper level is moral suffering, and the third or highest level of suffering is spiritual. (Robinson, 1940, p.38). Jolobe expects a christian to undergo suffering in all these three levels but he certainly does not expect much volunteer support for spiritual suffering for he seems to lay emphasis on material sacrifices. So much so for suffering and sacrifice. A word of caution does not come from Jolobe but from Weatherhead who states that "it may not be the will of God to suffer, though suffering may at times be unavoidable. Man is, however, gifted with a free will and choice despite the role of fate on him." (vide Weatherhead, p.55). On the other hand Jolobe says that christians must be grateful to Christ if they have to carry the

cross - because in Jolobe's words:

Ngenxa yothando nombulelo
Kuloo mthwali-tanci womnqamlezo.
(Because of their love and thanks
To the first bearer of the cross).

Jolobe then preaches and challenges the christians to live up to what the layman expects of them.

C H A P T E R IV.

UMTHANDAZO WONGOKUHLWA:

4.1 This is what we would normally call "an evening prayer" but here it is an exclusive family affair. One of the religious legacies bequeathed to the African convert by a European missionary besides the famed Sunday church attendance and the saying of grace before every meal, is the practice of a family evening prayer before everyone goes to bed. This, for a very long time, was a mark of a genuine christian home and even today, I dare say, the majority of African christian homes still follow this practice though in some of them not as strictly as before. These prayers, though private, are communal among the members of the family for the man takes charge or control of the devotion in which the rest of the members participate in one way or another. Children's prayers are often recited and some religious choruses sung by the children. This usually turns out to be so routine and fixed that members of the family know all their parts very well off by heart. Popular hymns are often sung.

4.2 In this poem Jolobe gives us a complete picture of the setting and the activity during the conduction of this family devotion. He goes into such details as to throw light into what goes on before, during, and after the devotion with appropriate quotes of actual words or utterances as are frequently encountered in the true situation. The time is evening when everybody is back home from various kinds of work such as mealie-field work for women, collecting firewood for girls, herding the live stock for the boys, and going to school for small children. These, Jolobe says, are common duties well distributed in a christian home. It is perhaps no mistake that no job is assigned to men. The family unit is quite big as it includes daughters-in-law. After the evening meal, before they all assemble in the main hut after the call for prayer, they all wait on the elders of the home to summon them to prayer. The call is," Ngumthandazo!" (It is time for prayer!). Jolobe says that the dignity of that assembly is striking with the old man who acts as a priest "umbingeleli" sitting at his small table and all being quiet as if they are on holy ground - in Jolobe's words

again:

Bezolile bethe cwaka,
Bakumhlab' ongcwele.

(They being quiet,
As if on holy ground).

Jolobe suggests that the style of life in such a home is slightly different from the traditional pattern with children going to school - "nosatshan' esikolweni", and the use of tables - "kuloo tafilana yakhe", which is all as a result of contact with European missionaries. The poet also suggests that the family takes this prayer very seriously. The Bible and the hymnbook are brought in and the old man puts on his spectacles: "Lizinxibile iintsimbi zalo", as Jolobe writes.

4.3 Jolobe has a good word to say about the form of this devotion and he appreciates it as he also quotes the actual conventional phrases of convocation such as, "Masifunde izwi likaThixo" - (Let us read the Word of God). The children get their turn to sing and recite their 'good night chorus' - "Ronani" which is quite a common practice in African christian families of yesteryear. All this takes place in a formal situation that Jolobe paints for us from his own personal experiences. In the last stanza the poet gives us the gist of his theory on the subject of 'family evening prayer' and says that it is a good sacrifice on a good altar and should be done everyday so as to refresh our spirits and to taste that peace which was procured by the original sacrifice (Christ) for all the homesteads.

4.4 Jolobe is not alone in persuing a theory on prayer, for, it is generally recognised by students of religion that prayer is not merely a common characteristic of religion but rather its central phenomenon. Farmer himself, a student of religion, says that in prayer there is expressed the answering activity of man as self-conscious personality towards God. He explains this point further and argues - "That prayer is essentially a response of man's spirit to the ultimate as personal is shown by the fact that in its most living and spontaneous utterance, it takes the form of petition." (Farmer, 1943, p.129). This is what Jolobe has in mind as revealed by the contents of a family prayer and the objects of its petition.

This also means that the essence of prayer lies in its being involved in man's personal relationship with God. This requires something of Jolobe's idea of the state of mind in which the eyes are thus open to God and the soul is surrendered to rest thankfully in Him. Jolobe's idea of prayer on devotion corresponds to a certain extent to Farmer's who claims that in his own words and analysis:

a) Christian prayer, which must be a petition must be an expression of divine love in Christ and must include that imaginative self-identification with the other man's situation.

b) Prayer must intercede for others so as to endeavour to create that deeper fellowship of persons with one another in God.

c) Prayers must be corporate to be prayers of fellowship, prayers of the church such as family prayers - where the family is a unit of the church.

d) The christian must bring all that engages his own daily activity to God and pray for its success only in so far as it is related to his supreme preoccupation with the work of God in the world. (vide Farmer, p. 130).

I have only mentioned here those points which appear to be embodied in Jolobe's theory of a family prayer. The limits to a christian field of prayer are only posed by the divinely illumined insight on the part of a praying christian. Jolobe calls the leader of the family who leads the prayer - 'umbingeleli' - the priest which goes to prove that prayer is not restricted to the clergy, lay people, as in the author's case, can be also great teachers of prayer. Edward Ely writing a preface to Northcott's book - The Venture of Prayer - calls the life of prayer a difficult life for it may be described as a "pilgrimage" and no pilgrimage is easy. (Northcott, 1950, p.10). Supporting Jolobe's notion that prayer is essentially individual in as far as a family can be regarded as a single private unit, Northcott warns that this private and individual communion with God must be preserved from eccentricity so that people should participate in public worship as well.

4.5 Jolobe must have had at the back of his mind when he composed this poem the text of Jesus in Matthew's chapter 6 verse 6 where we find these words: "When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber and having shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee." The main emphasis in Jolobe's family worship is on the presence of the spirit of God which refreshes our own... "Uhlaziyekil' umoya". Jolobe does not mention silent prayer for in his opinion corporate worship should always involve vocal prayers.

4.6 There is one form of prayer which sort-of stands in the middle in the life of a christian and that is the prayer of intercession, a prayer for other people in general as well as for specific individuals. This kind of prayer also occupies a major position in Jolobe's family worship for he says:

"Eyaleza eli khaya",
(Commending this home)

The home here may mean remembering to God as he prays, the home, the family, and those related to it, commending them all to His safe keeping. Prayers for others often involve not only their souls but also material things such as disease, money, and other circumstances. The author implicitly urges us as the Bible does to continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving. As St. Paul does, Jolobe believes in supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks being made for all men.

4.7 A.L. Lilley, a scholar of christian theology, studied the question of prayer in christian theology reviewing various ideas and theories on the subject by such men as Cicero, Clement, Cassian, and others. The gist of his message is that the motives and needs for prayer may or may not be legitimate. He says that "the subjects of our prayers are the objects of our desires". (Lilley, 1925, p.22). Jolobe does not appear to subscribe to such an idea. He merely leaves out all other scholarly speculations about prayer and presents us with a simple act of worship which may take any form, but where the central activity is prayer. 'When we pray, we do not pray

that Thy will be changed but Thy will be done'. Holmes speaks of three kinds of prayers, namely, the right, the wrong, and the doubtful prayers. He explains why and how he arrives at these three kinds of prayers. (Holmes, 1912, p.52). Jolobe's theory is not based on whether the prayer is God-centred, self-centred, or demanding, but he suggests that corporate family prayer is appropriate and religiously good as a daily evening activity. Jolobe, unlike Holmes, believes in formal prayers in as far as sitting, standing, kneeling, and singing, and talking goes. This is typical of African family prayers. Formality includes both posture and procedure. Their frequent occurrence is what Jolobe advocates when he says: "Kukuziva yonk' imihla" (It is to feel yourself daily). This procedure is, as it were, common routine in all christian homesteads or "Kumakhaya ngamakhaya". (In every home).

C H A P T E R V.

AKUKHO HLELO APHO:

5.1 The author acknowledges that some portions of this poem are taken from English and translated into Xhosa. He does not, however, indicate in the poem itself which lines are borrowed and which are not and what the original source is for the borrowed facts. The poem itself presents a dramatic argument for church unity on the denominational level. Dialogue and free speech are frequently encountered here. Again, before we examine the undertones, let us summarise the message. Some verses are too short here while others are extremely long. The poet sets off by relating that he and a friend were talking about church denominations till late one night. What follows in the rest of the poem is the dream of that particular night. He calls the dream, "Eloyikekay' iphupha." (a fearful dream).

5.2 Watching from the banks of this big overflowing river the first to attempt crossing it was an Anglican in full dress and a prayer book and all. Obstinate to advice against crossing, he got over minus all his possessions and nobody quiried that the other side nor was he asked to prove he is Anglican. The next to come was of the Salvation Army also clad in uniform with a drum in hand. Having crossed he also reached the other side minus all his marks of membership of the "army" and this seemed all very well for not a single angel felt concerned about the lost articles. The third to arrive was a Presbyterian with full marks of presbyterianism. He lost his possessions in the water and was received too on the other side. Then came a proud Methodist with tickets and catechism which were all swept away by the raging waters so that he entered into glory without them. The next was a Roman Catholic carrying traditional elements of his church. The elements went off down the stream and the man crossed over. Then came two church wardens of different faiths. After criticising each other's manner of baptism, they separated and crossed but were both united across the river and taken in together. The last lot to cross was a full congregation divided into two; those that follow the Old Testament and those who believe in the New Testament. The floods

took them all in and when they reached the other side, all their differences were forgotten for the way is one. In the last stanza the author summarises all the experiences gained in the dream saying that at the end of our lives as christians our faith will win us a seat in heaven and not our denominational identity or attire or uniform.

5.3 I do not think that there is any special significance attached to the order in which these various people of different denominations appear in the poem. There is, however, no doubt that Jolobe has more to convey to us than meets the eye in these lines. We notice at once that the poet is putting forth a case for church unity or ecumenism. The church as a whole has been undergoing a series of splittings and reunions. The so-called established churches versus the sects and so on. This has lead to a situation of competition whereby various faiths compete with one another for recognition and popularity. Jolobe uses an example of a river across which all ecclesiastic differences disappear in heavenly company of all christians after death. A.C. Headlam writing on christian unity, says: "It is true that from one point of view christianity is intensely individual. We are alone and individually responsible for the way in which we live our life in the world before God." But, Headlam continues, and states: "In relation to the world and to our fellowmen, Christianity is essentially corporate. It is a fellowship and a comradeship and it should be as wide in its content as the human race." (Headlam, 1930, p.10). Jolobe clearly acknowledges the equality of all christians before God. He advocates that all differences are in fact to be ignored. This will then necessitate that we revise our rules and customs of our own churches.

5.4 Jolobe regards the grounds and conditions on which the church is divided as rather trivial. He ridicules the emphasis placed on uniform, convention, and custom in the churches. Such things as gowns, "iingubo ezinde", and prayer books "ncwadan' imnyamana intle", are insignificant in the final analysis though quite useful at times. We get the impression that Jolobe is being

objective and impartial in his assessment of the situation for he condemns church disunity outrightly. Though it is a known fact that Jolobe is himself a priest and must, of necessity belong to one or other denomination, he does not justify that fact to condone his own denominational affiliation. The author's view of christian unity appears to be much broader than the mere fusing together of different but similar groups of christians. He does not seem to suggest, as others do, that "uMtshetshi" (Anglican), "Owomkhosi woSindiso" (Salvation Army), "UmRoma" (Roman Catholic) and others should attempt organic unity. He urges these groups and others to recognise and accept one another and to co-operate with one another in a spirit of mutual respect, emphasizing what is common and central among them and keeping as of less avail their exclusive identities. One may interpret Jolobe's theory to revolve around the idea that the christian divisions which separate us from one another, which prevent us from exercising in any real or effective way our brotherly relations, which destroy our fellowship in Christ, are fundamentally inconsistent with the christian ideal.

5.5 It is a fact that different aspects of the christian faith have undoubtedly been preserved and developed in separate communities. Headlam's view on complete christian unity is a rather pessimistic one. He writes: "Despite our prayers for unity, we need not expect that complete unity will come until the kingdom of God is fully established, but ironically enough, christian unity is the only possible ideal." (vide Headlam, p.11). While Headlam is not clear on the kind of unity he envisages, Jolobe calls specifically for spiritual unity here and now where ostensible differences occur. He warns that however proud and arrogant we may feel about our particular religious name, in the hereafter, we are all grouped together for we do not take along our traditional symbols of identity. Nothing of the kind of a united protestantism or united Episcopal churches will satisfy the poet. Jolobe as a poet-scholar of church history must be finding himself in a dilemma because, while the world was already aware of the need for christian unity as early as in the second decade of this century, only as late as in the thirties was the voluntary creation of new denominations by the so-called established churches taken to be a mark of christian development especially here.

5.6 Jolobe sees as main obstacles to christian unity, tradition, convention, and practice in liturgy and the administration of the sacraments. Headlam adds to these obstacles people's conservatism in religious matters even to such objects as the structure of the church building, society, and habit or practice. There are also the spiritualists to be reckoned with. (cf. Headlam, p.21). We notice that Jolobe observes the people's tendency to cling so much to ways that make them different from others that they even become stubborn and bitter at times towards outsiders. This is seen in the resentment shown by the poet's characters to advice towards a change even of attire or religious garb or of such objects as prayer and hymnbooks. Even if we agree with Headlam that all these differences are superficial and on the surface, we must, nevertheless, agree with Jolobe as well that they are irrelevant. Jolobe does show us here that all the denominations he has mentioned are basically christian and they share unity of belief in one God the Trinity and the various doctrines. The church is one, being one body of Christ from within or without. It has one faith and one doctrine; one spirit and one heart. This is why all Jolobe's characters have one purpose in mind and move in selfsame direction. Oliver Tomkins adds a soothing note to Jolobe's problem by stating that ....."all christians agree that, in some sense, God wills their unity." (Tomkins, 1949, p.44). But, of course, not all christians participate in the ecumenical movement in order to achieve unity.

5.7 The Bible has several instances where a call to church unity is made. St. Paul exhorts the christians to unite in his letter to the Ephesians chapter 4 verses 4 - 6 where we read:

> "There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all, and in all."

The poet must have been cherishing such an idea as expressed in this passage when he wrote this poem. The World Council Of Churches is also aware and unhappy about church disunity. It has then issued many statements urging unity among christians.

5.8 It has been observed, as Jolobe has, that there are forms of loyalty to truth which are the enemy of unity such as loyalty to 'that church' as an end result of one's faith. (cf. W.C.C., 1948, p.140). The council, while desirous of organic unity, maintains that unity is not uniformity of either doctrine, organisation, orders, or life and religious experience. Jolobe would certainly not quarrel with that view. He has mentioned some of the main points of difference such as the sacraments. On this, Gustave Weigel says: "There are numerous points of difference (among christians) and yet there are also many points of common interest which are interpreted differently." (Weigel, 1962, p.86).

5.9 On the sacrament of baptism, which Jolobe also mentions, the Bible, which serves as a basis of Jolobe's theory on the subject, says:

> "For in one spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all made to drink of one spirit."

The crux of the message here is that while we uphold our principles and points of view, let us see if we cannot modify them for the sake of unity. Jolobe summarises his own theory in the last stanza where he tells of heaven as a home for all. The river before heaven serves as a purification medium so that we get into heaven rid of all earthly and unwanted markings such as we get from various religious equipment. Without these traditional identities we are the children of God if we are just christians. This is Jolobe's moral message and theory here. He tells us that if we have the spirit of Christ in us, we shall cross the "river" and get "home" and as soon as we arrive there, we shall no longer be aware of any differences with those among us there.

C H A P T E R VI.

INDLOV' ENOMXHAKA.

6.1 This poem is religious only in so far as it speaks of God and His characteristics and deeds. It is actually a praise song for God both in form and content. It is a praise song in that Jolobe sings or says praises about scriptural events where God's power, holiness, love, and presence are manifest. Here Jolobe does to God what a chief's bard does in saying praises that touch on the chief's achievements and other commendable deeds. This poem sounds so spontaneous and emotional that its essence is only fully appreciated when it is read aloud and with feeling for the author meant it to be treated that way; for the ear and not so much for the eye. Some of the scriptural references may not be exact but their religious significance is kept even out of context so as to maintain the smooth flow of a praise poem. It is not possible here to give a historical background to this poem as I have done with the others because the subject of this poem, God, has no known history and the poem itself has no "message" as such. The best we can do then is to give a summary of what Jolobe thinks of God as he praises Him. The tone and feeling of this poem is so typically African that European reflections on the concept of God may not be of much use.

6.2 Many religious books speak of God in various fashions. We read of God as the "First Cause" (Aquinas), the "Unmoved Mover" (Aristotle), the "Prime Mover and Great Designer" (Kant) and the other views. (vide Brown, 1971, p. 26). It is clear that Jolobe combines these ideas about God and accepts for his "Duma-barwaqele" who is also "Ulityе lenyengane" (strong rock) and "Ulothetha ngelizwi, kuvele indalo" (The one who decreed the creation of nature), all these expressed ideas. Jolobe's God is also not different from the God of the Greeks of old, the 'Alpha and Omega' because in the poem the author enumerates some of the wonderful works of God right from the beginning of the Old Testament account to the New Testament story of Christ. Jolobe then illustrates to us that God is only known through His own revelation which is

itself, at times, manifest in His deeds as mentioned by Jolobe here. The Bible says of God's revelation, among other things; in Romans chapter 1 verse 20:

> "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead so that they are without excuse."

6.3 Jolobe indeed recognises this fact about God and he does not offer any excuse about such things as Noah's floods; the Jewish crossing of the Red sea; the manna and other miraculous gifts of God in the desert; the event of the burning bush and the Ten Commandments; the story of David and Goliath; Daniel and the lions; the triumph of Meshack, Shedrack, and Abednego; the death of Elia and its mysteries; Jona's story and many other incidents that Jolobe relates in his poem; for all these wonders, Jolobe says that there is no excuse other than that God has revealed Himself in them and has demonstrated His power and presence to mankind.

6.4 There is no doubt that Jolobe is posing a challenge that 'who else but the almighty God can do these things?' Again, here, the poet's theory of God cuts across and combines ideas of cosmology, that God is everywhere, humanism, that God possesses human characteristics such as mercy, love, anger, compassion and so on. Jolobe accepts God as being omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, transcendent, and immanent; a real and truly "Indlov' enomxhaka!"

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