

Networking Cedara

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Tuesday, 15 August: Collaborative Research Group (12:15)
:Institute Liturgy (5 pm, Luigi Morell M.Afri presiding)
Saturday, 19 August: Cluster Sports and Family Fun Day
Tuesday, 22 August: Institute Liturgy (5 pm, Ewen Swart OMI presiding)

EXCHANGE PROGRAMME WITH THE COLLEGE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

Application forms are now available on the academic notice board near the stairs. The deadline is Friday, 25 August. Please contact Sue Rakoczy IHM or Luigi Morell M.Afr for more information.

MARRIAGE, AS AN INSTITUTION OF OPPRESSION?
Cebelihle Cibane OMI

Following the series of presentations and research on the aspect of Marriage and Sexuality in some of our African culture, mostly the patriarchal cultures I find it fitting to scrutinize these cultures as giving less voice to women. In light of the activism against violence and abuse against women and children and in the month where we commemorate the women, I feel this reflection is fitting. Upon reading an article by Nompumelelo Zondi titled *When Marriage as an Institution Ceases to Be a Partnership: Contested Issues of Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Abuse as Condoned by Culture*, reflecting on how culture becomes an institution that protects man abusing women in marriage I also found other similarities from other cultures outside that of my own.

When marriage is to take place in a Zulu traditional setup, the male representatives of the groom approach the male representatives of the bride in order to negotiate the proceedings of this marriage. This is of course after the consent from both the bride and the groom. To make this point clear, Zondi (2007:21) quoting Msimang asserts:

Ancient Zulu society saw marriage as essential for the continuation of a man's lineage so that he could achieve the status of 'ancestor',

revered and remembered by his descendants for generations. A woman was 'brought in' as a kind of 'borrowing' to 'do the job' of producing children for the man and his clan. The idea of 'borrowing' soon became one of 'buying the services of' due to the greed of the 'lending' family. Hence, the institution of ilobolo (dowry or bride price) and ukulobola, the process of obtaining a wife through the exchange of property, came into being.

This clearly shows the subordination women experience and continue to endure in some traditions, the establishment of 'pay-pal' methods in order to attain their services that are at most cases abused. Do women have a say in what culture prescribes as tradition? In this regard I would beg to differ. As much as this has been tradition carried out through the ages, I would ask if they protect women from the abuses that come with these traditions. When a woman is to get married there is always an advice passed on by the elders that **'in marriage women should persevere'** and interestingly this advice is given to the bride prior to getting married and moving to the groom's family. Is this the way to say 'culture accepts' abuses?

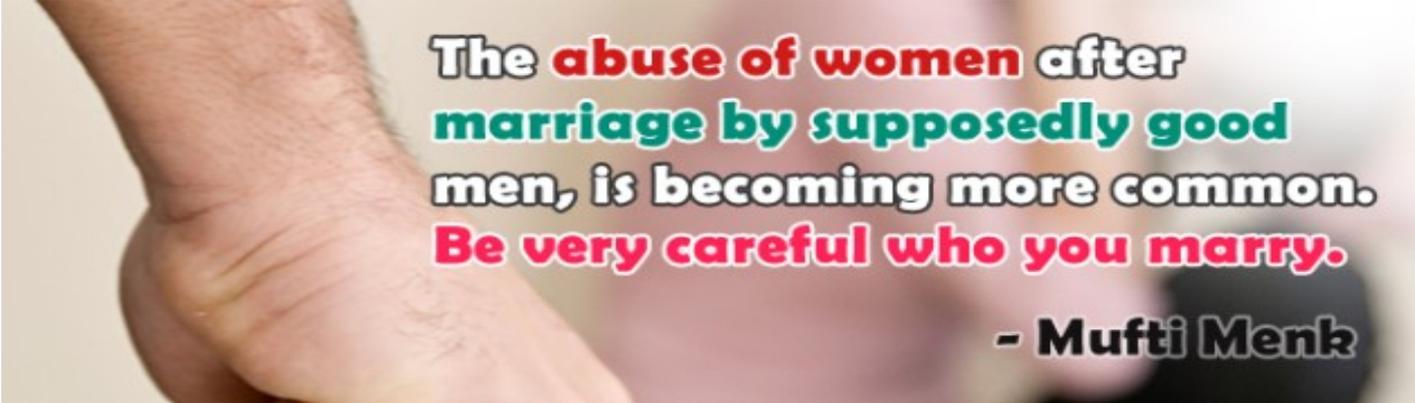
The issue of arranged marriages is also an example of marriage becoming an institute of oppression. A twelve year old grows up unable to pick their preferred partner because there is already an agreement between the father and another man of another household. In this regard a girl cannot contest this decision, in some cases even young man. A girl enters this marriage not even aware of what sort of a person she is being given to. She is often reduced to property because she was 'given' and no matter what sort of abuse she experiences, it is hard to go back home because the family **'gave her away'**.

Child marriage is a common practice in some of our African cultures, girls are given into marriage as early as fourteen years in some cultures, often marrying men who are older than them. This kind of relationship is most likely to result in an inability to negotiate. The effects of such a practice are to be perceived and are perceived at a social and traditional level; 'because a husband frequently expects his wife to bear children soon after marriage (the couple's families often have similar expectations), child marriage also permits sexual exploitation and places a girl's health at risk. In addition, children of adolescent mothers start life at a disadvantage, thus perpetuating a cycle of poverty and relative deprivation' (Maswikwa et al 2015:58).

In one of the presentations given on the understanding of marriage in Zambia, a video clip was shown of a girl; fourteen years old who was being prepared for marriage, she was being taught by her elder kin on how to handle a household, that includes the husband. One of the things that was emphasised was the sexual aspect, and one wonders in a manner of speaking if this was a way of also giving a lee way to possible sexual abuses. Men in that culture are surely aware of this rite of passage their brides go through and thus opens for abuse. If a wife is trained for this surely the conception would be that she must provide these 'services' no matter what.

The Masai practice of 'wife-sharing' is also an indication of women subordination. The notion instilled in women by this practice is that they are objects. Entering into

marriage in this regard opens to abuse even though this will be perceived by tradition as 'cultural' therefore good. Do women accept this because it has been a practice carried through the ages, or it renders them the fullness of their being? These and the many practices within marriage need to be looked at in a different eye, they are not all oppressive but are they open enough to the voice of women?



The abuse of women after marriage by supposedly good men, is becoming more common. Be very careful who you marry.
- Mufti Menk

(Image source: <https://www.nikahexplorer.com/blog/oppression-in-muslim-marriages>)

**IS THERE ANYTHING MORE TO SAY ABOUT
EVIL AND SUFFERING? PART I**
OCTAVIO F. BERNARDO SCJ

Suffering, and its purpose has given rise to confusion throughout human history. For most, it has been a burden but some accept it with joy. Suffering has driven many away from belief in God. Conversely, it has deepened the faith for many others. Theologians, Philosophers, Psychologists and many others have attempted to find the origin and why some people are doomed to suffer. Even those who have borne extreme suffering fail to understand. In this article, I will grapple with the mystery of suffering and explain Teilhard's understanding of its mystery.

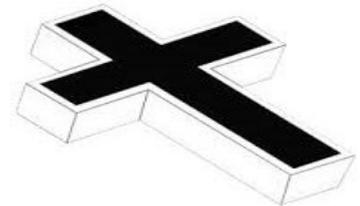
Over the past few years, Teilhard has been severely criticized. He has been accused of being naively optimistic in his approach to the problem of evil and suffering. Quite a few theologians and philosophers have played down Teilhard's ideas. I will present a different approach. Obviously, the last thing Teilhard wanted was for people to remain stuck with his thought but to go forward with his thought. Therefore, my approach here will not be a mere apology but a critical reflection on Teilhard's viewpoint. It is important to note that the criticisms of Teilhard's theories might have been genuine but they are also unfair. Surely he is an optimistic thinker but for all intents and purposes, he is not naïve. He experienced the death of many of his loved ones and had his own sufferings. At any rate, he was a man fully conscious of evil and suffering. In all this, he knew in whom and in what he believes. And as he once said "even if I lose my faith in God I will not lose my faith in the world.

There are quite a lot of things at the root of Teilhard's thoughts, one is the emphasis on progress, which was the French philosophy of his time. The belief that the world is constantly becoming better permeates the thought of Teilhard, not because of naivety but because of a careful observation and contemplation upon reality. It is also important to note that progress was not just an accidental or empty word but was

Something real. He begins the chapter of the future of Man with ‘e pur si muove.’ We are moving we are going forward. Furthermore, at the very beginning of the future of man he acknowledges the dilemma which has been permeating philosophy all throughout history. He points out that ‘it is a pleasant and dramatic spectacle, that of Mankind divided to its very depths into two irrevocably opposed camps one looking toward the horizon and proclaim with all its new found faith, we are moving and the other without shifting its position, obstinately maintaining, nothing changes. We are not moving at all’. This paradox was put forth so strongly by Heraclitus and Parmenides. As history records, Plato, as well as Aristotle, had come up with solutions to settle this issue.

Our attempt to wrestle with evil and suffering will always be feeble if we fail to take the cosmic history very seriously. As Teilhard spells out ‘we have discovered that there is a whole of which we are the elements. In other words, we have found the world in our own souls’. So many people have remained stuck in life because of one or two things which have happened to them. Many others have taken away or cursed the gift of life because they could not cope with suffering. Why do innocent people have to suffer? Why do bad things happen to good people? In addition to that many have wondered away from the paths of God because of evil and suffering that exists in the world. Some went even further to the point of condemning God to non-existence because of the evil and suffering which exists in this world. *(To be continued.....)*

Theology matters



DOING THEOLOGY

KELVIN BANDA OP

The study of science, calculus and possibly engineering is shown within the parameters of an external world, whereas the study of God, through theology, is shown within the boundaries of the persons’ own self. Human persons need to continue discovering themselves who they really are and what humanity really is with the study of theology. This article seeks to give a brief practical explanation of what it entails to do theology other than taking theology.

Doing theology ought to meet the application of pastoral care for the people it seeks to serve to ‘interpret human needs’. This understanding and interpretation of human needs points to a theological and hermeneutical analysis of a practical-pastoral problem. Campbell (1987:188) is helpful with his understanding that doing theology is concerned with the well-being of people in communities. There is a tendency among some theology students and even some theologian to talk of theology other than doing theology. Talking theology remains only on an abstract level without doing anything to change society in a practical way. For example, doing something against the injustices, wars, poverty, crime, rape and or abuse of men, children and women. Talking theology is a situation where one sees the injustices or oppression

happening yet does nothing to stop it.

Aden and Ellens (1988) ask whether a theologian could separate the notion of being part of the church from that of contributing to pastoral care; could one assert to be part of the church and its faith traditions, however, turn ones back upon pastoral care towards people? By purely being part of the church and its faith tradition, a theologian, to a more or lesser degree, interprets one's own theological convictions. The essential question for doing theology is whether this interpretation brings a theologian to a point of contributing to pastoral care. Aden and Ellens (1988:36) argue that contributing to pastoral care is the formal expression of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and challenge readers to ask themselves: "So what is the status and role of pastoral care in the church? Is it an essential form of Christian ministry, or is it a secondary function that is important only if it fulfils the primary task of proclaiming the Word?" Doing theology needs to take us beyond our comfort zones. Therefore, a theologian needs to be at the centre to eradicate all forms of injustices, oppression or abuses.

David Tracy's (1983:76) states that, 'doing theology is a mutually critical correlation of the interpreted theory and application of the Christian faith and the interpreted theory and application to the contemporary situation'. It is therefore, getting involved in the lives of others; uplifting them as Christ did; bringing life to others and not condemnation. Theologians need to believe that it is necessary to underscore ones convictions that practical theology will find the energy to sustain itself from within the philosophy of the theological self. Every theologian must endeavour to balance the theory and the praxis of doing theology since theory becomes the means and motivation for taking a theologian into the application of theology. Theory must go beyond just taking theology. Tillich challenges the business of some modern theological lifestyles to which some theologians become so accustomed, as this business becomes a smokescreen to hide theological inabilities, or unwillingness to care.

De Gruchy (1986:8) helps us understand that doing theology will always be set within the specific context of the caregiver and the care-seeker. Clinebell (1984:14) challenges that theology outside of its context becomes inappropriate. Therefore, since doing theology seeks to be practical in bringing theology to people, a theologian should not lose sight of the fact that this help should be given within the context of the people it seeks to liberate. Being theologically correct, application will be of no value unless it is liberating within the paradigm of the people it seeks to help.

Msomi (1993:75) is even critical of this point when he speaks out against Western-based care without considering the context of local people in Africa. Some Westerners see as loving care often becomes offensive to the receivers of this care in Africa. The reader can understand that this well-intended care often becomes a point of conflict between the caregiver and care-receiver. Some African theologians have fallen into the trap of Westerners.

They cannot apply their theological faith to the contemporary issues happening in Africa so as to stop the abuses that derive from cultural and ethnic conflicts. Brown-ing (1985:20) underlines this strongly as he writes: For practical theology to be

genuinely practical, it must have some description of the contemporary situation, some critical theory about the ideal situation, and some understanding of the processes, spiritual forces, and technologies required to get from where we are to the future ideal, no matter how fragmentarily and incomplete that ideal can be realised. I wish to urge theologians firstly to clematises themselves with the existing position of the care-seeker before they can evaluate what is wrong with the situation, if anything is wrong at all. Only then can a theologian generate a theology that motivates the application of pastoral care that is needed within the context of the care-seeker. Without this, such a theological faith is horrific.

Therefore, this article challenges theologians to grapple with doing theology, in order to motivate the application of doing theology. Being practical in nature, doing theology cannot be freed from its application. It can be stated that doing theology, though motivated through theological persuasions, cannot be separated from its practical out-working of the faith it professes.



(Image source: <https://catholicmoraltheology.com/what-is-theology-moral-theology-is-messy/>)

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