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## Theology and Human Experience

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### 1. Introduction

Every human community that wants to last beyond a single generation must concern itself with theology. Every nation that intends to maintain its ideologies and worldview through generations would have to be constantly open to a religious interpretation and scrutiny of its life and activities. The function of theology is to maintain the vision, values and aspirations of a community so that the latter could uphold its self-concept and mission in the world. A community that neglects and shuns this religious interpretation may find it difficult to maintain its identity in times of great trouble or in the face of weird circumstances. The Hebrew Scriptures represent the anthology of a community that lasted over several generations. The people of Israel were able to survive for several generations even in spite of experiences of oppression in the land, of the cataclysmic experience of destruction of the land and the exile from the land, and also in spite of the difficult conditions of life during the post-exilic period. The survival of Israel was thanks to the continuous prophetic interpretation and reinterpretation of the covenant in the light of these experiences, which lifted the people from their disillusionment, gave them new hope and sustained their vision. Theology, therefore, sustains a given community as it struggles with eccentric internal and external threats to its stability and opens it to hope.

I have chosen to discuss the relationship between theology and human experience for three reasons. The first reason is this: an assessment of the state of life in most African nations reveals that they seem to



operate without a clear vision and ideology. They have lost or they are about to lose the vision and the mission that inspired the struggles for independence and statehood. Almost all African nations are tossed about by uncertainties concerning continuity and discontinuity, of vision and non-vision, and of relevance and irrelevance. One specific reason is adduced to this: absence of an adequate theological enterprise. A generation without theology is likened to the post-Joshua age, when people did what was right in their own eyes,<sup>1</sup> and sooner or later syncretistic and idolatrous practices give rise to a historical process that would lead to the death of the nation. It is either African theologians do not understand their task or they are not doing enough to make the required impact or the society does not encourage their labor. I wish therefore to encourage theologians to do more in leading their country folks to interpret their experiences of war, of natural disasters and other religious and socio-political experiences of a disorientating nature.

My second reason is related to the first. In many African nations, the lay person has no access to theological education. Theology is taught in seminaries and in ecclesiastical institutions which are not easily accessible to the lay person. Moreover, the theology taught in these ecclesiastical institutions does not have the character of theology made in Africa and for Africans. Very little, if any, of its reflections concerns the problems of the African. Very few institutions who recognize the importance of theology for nation building and national stability are beginning in the very recent past to offer lay persons the opportunity of access to theology. In spite of this, theology as an open discipline has not become popular in Africa as it is in Europe and America. Meanwhile, the much the lay persons know about the teachings of the Church comes from the heavy instruction for the catechumenate and the pre-communion and pre-confirmation catechetical instructions, which are imposed on the learner and most of the time taught by those who do not have enough education to explain the content of their teaching. After this early stage of education, the Christian is left unattended to as the author of his or her

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Judg 21:25.

own faith. The present essay, therefore, offers an invitation that is surely urgent. Everybody needs theology because everybody faces the threat of the dark moments of life. Theologians should stand up to the challenges facing them and even devise effective means of making their output accessible to all.

My third reason is not unconnected to the previous two. The contemporary African is persistently jeopardized by life and faith-threatening experiences. The African is confronted with problems of witchcraft, diabolical forces, and enslaved to cultural religious practices that violate the rights and dignity of the children of God. Some Africans spend their lives struggling to develop a life project in the midst of the meaninglessness and hopelessness that characterize Africa. Some others immigrate to and reside in foreign lands, places which have been ordered and cleaned out by others. The rest abandon themselves to the muddle and are trashed by it. The way in which theology could forestall the process from meaning to meaninglessness is the major motivation of the present essay.

The subject of this paper is developed in five parts. After the first part, this Introduction, the second part offers a working definition of human experience and theology. Part Three discusses the relationship between Scripture, theology and human experience. The fourth part of the paper is a detailed presentation of the different areas of human experience which should occupy the stage of the theological dialogue in Africa. The fifth and last part is the conclusion.

## **2. A Working Definition of 'Human Experience' and 'Theology'**

The concept of 'experience' is an imprecise and elusive term but we can understand it to mean that which arises out of lifelong encounter with reality. As human beings congregate into a given community, they interact among themselves, form a social unit and become existential subjects. As existential subjects, human beings are constantly conscious of their very existence and they ask questions about it. These questions arise out of their struggle with life and their attempt to cultivate themselves in a given environment. Their encounter with concrete life situations, the dialectics of reality, the continuity and the discontinuities of life, and the answers they attempt to provide for



those fundamental questions about the world form the corpus of their experience. Experiences undergo sedimentation and form the core of their being out of which their personality and identity are fashioned. Therefore, the human being is always a product of experience. The personality of a person is undeniably constantly conditioned by the accumulated experiences of his or her encounter with reality. Similarly, various societies, races or cultural traditions are so called because of their unique worldview. In a similar sense, selfhood and identity, whether of the individual or group, draw heavily from the material of the immediate environment.

Experience does not happen in a vacuum. The world is both the context and the raw material of experience. It is the here and now of concrete human living. This context refers to the existing condition of a society. It refers to the political milieu, economic, cultural, religious, technological, scientific, anthropological, social needs, problems, concerns, fears, and yearning of the people. This context extends to the struggle for a more just and equitable society. It extends to the unjust social structures by which our world, and especially Africa, is ruled. Given these, it is not uncommon that perception and response to any external stimuli is *prima facie* determined by who a people are; their general attitude and way of life. It is that which constitutes their history and their uniqueness.

Human experience is the story of a particular people at a particular time and place. The storyteller is an active participant in the event of the story. The story is what happened to the people; it represents the people's personal or collective experience of events. This notion of human experience presupposes the communal character of human life. The community shapes the perception and governs the personal experience of individuals. Speaking on this communal character of human experience, W. Brueggemann says, "it is a deception to speak of private experience; for all human experience is deeply social".<sup>2</sup> The next paragraphs offer a working definition of theology.

<sup>2</sup>W. Brueggemann, *The Creative Word. Canon as a Model for Biblical Education*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982, p25.

What is theology? From a simple understanding of theology as a discourse about God, it has acquired a wide array of meanings. This is evidenced in the views of many scholars. For instance, John Macquarrie<sup>3</sup> holds that theology is the study which, through participation and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the content of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language. This opinion is not far from Karl Rahner's who advances that theology is the science of faith.<sup>4</sup> Another author defines it as the scientific, methodical and systematic disclosure and development of the reality of divine revelation grasped in faith with the aim of making this reality as understandable as possible to human thinking.<sup>5</sup>

Central and particular to the varied meanings of theology is the character of systematic study and critical analysis of the question about God and faith. Useful as this unique element of theology might appear; nevertheless, it imposes limitation on the necessary responsibility proper to theology. It extricates the practical and prophetic function which theology embodies and ultimately confines it solely to a theoretical enterprise governed by impersonal logic. Consequently, theology becomes merely a discipline charged with abstract explication of divine revelation and formulation of propositions about faith, and which has no relation to material issues of human existence. Thus, rather than liberating, theology imprisons the 'God Talk' in lofty inaccessible metaphysical categories. In the same connection, doctrinal, pastoral, moral, ecclesiological and missiological languages become bereft of satisfactory meaning. In the last analysis, theology would appear irrelevant to present day challenges and existence. It is not uncommon that such theology becomes inauthentic and falls into unavoidable dilemma.

Ludwig Wittgenstein once remarked that "theology is a grammar".<sup>6</sup> It is so only in the sense that "essence is expressed by grammar". In other words, theology has to be credible; it has to give account of itself; it has to answer the question "what is God in a given human experience?"

<sup>3</sup>J. Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, London: SCM, 1966.

<sup>4</sup>K. Rahner, *Encyclopedia of Theology*, New York: Seabury, 1975, p1687.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. B. Wolfgang F.S. Fiorenza (eds), *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, New York: Herder & Herder, 2000, p699.

<sup>6</sup>L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, New York: Macmillan, 1958, p371.



This then demands a new and operational definition in which theology takes challenge, interprets meaningfully and accepts responsibility rather than filling gaps. It demands a situation in which human experience pushes one to theologize. Such a theology assists the gospel to show light to cultural traditions and bring such culture to conversion. We are, therefore, challenged to re-assess our whole idea of theology lest we run the risk of non-prophetic and sterile theology.

Traditional Christian theology usually takes as its starting point the truth of faith as revealed in the Scriptures, tradition and the history of doctrines. However, this truth must be contextualized. It must be made meaningful to the addressee of this truth, taking cognizance of their history, psychology, culture, politics, economy and other related social factors. Traditional theology must be flexible, creative and vibrant. It should take as its key point human beings as persons with stories to tell. It must have the capacity to understand the people's condition, and reformulate their experiences in the light of the message of the Gospel. Theology must be able to give account of God in a given context of human condition. G. Gutierrez and C. Geffe understood this aspect of theology when they say that it is a critical reflection on praxis in the light of the word of God.<sup>7</sup> This then suggests that mere affirmation or the expounding of truth is incomplete in itself; truth has to be translated into meaningful action.

In order for it to meet human beings in their cultural context, concrete life situation and experience, theology has to be elastic so that the liberating implication of the Gospel could be realized in its fullest. It is only when this is done that we can lay credible claim to the great evangelization mandate of Jesus Christ. Theology has to be responsible and relevant in that it allows us to conceive properly the Trinitarian God not in abstract cosmological categories but as a relational being manifested in perfect unity of differences. In this way, theology clearly holds enormous promise for the community.

<sup>7</sup>G. Gutierrez C. Geffe, *The Mystical and Political Dimension of the Christian Faith*, New York: Herder & Herder, 1974, p69-72..

### 3. The Dialectics of Scripture, Human Experience and Theology

There is a relationship between the authoritative word of God in Scripture, theology and human experience. This relationship is conceived as dialectical and fragile. Scripture has a dynamic character in the sense that it allows the freedom of fresh articulation. Theology is that discipline that gives fresh articulation to the meaning of Scripture on the basis of human experience. Theology gives Scripture the character of the living word of God which can give vitality to the community. It permits Scripture to continue to have vitality, authority and relevance for people in their different historical circumstances. On another note, the relationship between Scripture, theology and human experience is a fragile one. The fragility of this relationship depends on the theological enterprise because on it hangs the burden of proving the ongoing authority and relevance of the revealed word of God in the life of the people.

In their journey through life, human beings are shaped by their immediate environment. This same human being is called to live in communion with God through Christ. The givenness of experience at once becomes a foundational resource for theological reflection. The talk about God must be situated against the background of the people's conception of themselves and the history of their existence. In this sense, theological fruits are sown in a given cultural setting using as its raw materials the people's worldview. Experience is a veritable theological resource, providing data on which authentic theology is presented. Such theological enterprise attempts to respond to given human experience. It questions the relevance of the Christian faith in concrete human situations. It seeks to understand how Christian faith, Church life and divine revelation operate in the life and world of the people to whom the message of the Gospel is addressed. It listens to people's experiences and attempts to construct a map in which these experiences could be located and given meaning. Theology questions the meaning of the human person against the background of culture and revealed truth. Accordingly, experience has to relate to theology. While it is a raw material for theology, theology in its turn provides an interpretive frame work from which experience and human condition could be explained.



Understanding the human person means interpreting the relationship between the inner and external factors which unite to make the person who he or she is. The message of the Gospel should, therefore, involve itself in the life and world of the people to whom the word of God is addressed. Human experience comes first as the primordial resource; then theology comes in to interpret. Theology exists as an interpretation of the core situation of the people. The formulations of doctrines or explication of the divine revelation can only be credible if it is possible to base them against the background of core human experiences.

Martin Luther's critique of the significance of theology might be helpful here. For Luther, "experience is of vital importance to theology; without experience theology is impoverished and deficient, an empty shell waiting to be filled".<sup>8</sup> Therefore, rather than being the impersonal and logical exposition of rule of action, theology should explore the meaning of action. To this, one could add the words of Eberhard Jüngel who states, "the analogy of faith brings God into speech in such a way that he comes nearer to humanity and thus nearer to individual persons than they are capable of coming nearer to themselves".<sup>9</sup> Theology is, therefore, challenged to provide language and method for meaningful interpretation of people's experiences if it must be relevant and credible. This then demands a new dimension to the understanding of theology. There should be a necessary proportionate interaction between human experience and theology.

The central object of theology in this regard is meaningful interpretation of the paradoxes, contradictions and ambiguities that confront the person in his or her world. Human life is riddled with paradox, intervening contradictory phenomenon that tends to undo the tenets of divine revelation as enshrined in the Scriptures. These experiences are universal phenomenon that often limits the potency and relevance of the faith claims. There are innumerable face value experiences that tend to negate the whole course of faith and God's existence. Sometimes, the proclaimed faith appears irredeemably

<sup>8</sup>M. Luther, as quoted and discussed by A.E. McGrath, *Christian Theology. An Introduction*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Oxford: Blackwell, 2001, 193

<sup>9</sup>E. Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1983, p300.

incapable before various difficult and intricate human experiences. In some situations, God is experienced as being absent and far removed in people's experiences. Theology has to assume an interpretive responsibility and try to make sense out of seeming contradictory experiences in the life of people. It interprets human experience and demonstrates how it can be a reliable guide to the knowledge of God.

In this perspective, theology must be able to provide useful interpretation to the dilemma of faith as evidenced in many African Christian communities of today. The African theologian can respond to this problem because as an expert in the knowledge of God, as one who has the passion for true religion, he or she can locate the edges of the ominous peril of chaos in the lives of the people and articulate for them a future in which they could find coherence and assurance.

Theology must make itself relevant and responsible by dialoguing with the cultural practices which constitute human experience. Similarly, theology and experience must ground and affect each other in a symbiotic dialectical process. This entails mutual interaction based on proper understanding of the models of theology and experience as a necessary arm of evangelization. In this regard, theology must be able to recognize the important values of the people which their experiences embody and demonstrate genuine willingness to dialogue with it in order to incarnate the gospel without undue insistence on practices that are foreign to the particular culture. Similarly, human experience should at the same time appreciate the dogmatic duty of theology to define in precise terms the belief and faith of the Christian Church. For theology to be authentic, it must be courageous. It must not exhibit indifference in the face of human condition, human experiences and the deepest aspirations of the people.

#### 4. Spheres of Human Experience Demanding Theological Interpretation

The following paragraphs present the areas of human experience which theology should address.

##### 4.1 Africa: A land of fullness and of hope

Beauty, variety, multiplicity, fullness are words that describe the



African reality. Yet if many Africans are asked to describe the world in which they live, one would get answers that range from gloom, sadness, disappointment, trauma to death. Africa is really beautiful, yet many Africans are blinded from seeing it. It took the present writer many years of life outside of the African continent before she was opened to an appreciation of the manifold blessings of God to Africa. Africans do not experience the extremities that characterize life in Asia, Europe and America. They enjoy a blissful weather that keeps their heart warm throughout the year. The cost of living may be high for the African, but it does not include a budget for keeping warm in winter or for cooling the home in summer. The first image that greets any visitor to Africa is beauty. The multilingual nature of the continent reflects the wealth and the uniqueness of the cultural heritage that beautify the different peoples of the continent. The abundance of natural ingenuity, creativity, music and dance all add up to characterize the peoples of Africa. Moreover, Africa's very large share of world's mineral resources and its vegetation zones place her as the continent with the largest potential to be the richest in the world.

Considering all these, and more which the present paper is limited to articulate, every theology on the African soil should begin with a good appreciation of how richly God has endowed the African continent with blessings of nature, the gloom that characterize existence on it notwithstanding. Theology should open the mind of the African to the positive aspects of their reality. When Africans discuss themselves and their environment, expressions of ugliness seem to overshadow those of beauty. This pessimism and lack of enthusiasm for the continent is clearly obvious especially in liturgy. In liturgical settings, where our experiences of joy and sorrow form part and parcel of the worship we render to God, the aspect of communal praise is clearly absent. God is barely thanked for his blessings on our respective countries. The extent to which lament outweighs praise should arouse the concern of every theologian. It is the task of theology to underscore and to bring the people to a positive awareness of God's gifts and a befitting appreciation of them in such a way that it opens their mind to hope. The reality that overshadows the beauty of Africa are the experiences that come from the political sphere of human existence on the African soil. This is the topic of the next paragraph.

#### 4.2 *The political sphere*

The contemporary African political society is riddled with dehumanizing history. It is repeatedly unstable and tied to dictatorial one party system of government. Due to the level of selfishness and violence that characterize the actions of individuals in this continent, one would dare describe Africa as a jungle of competing savage interests. There has been wanton abuse of power. Abuse of human dignity and denial of the fundamental rights of individuals is almost synonymous to African political systems. There is inequitable access to justice. These and similar issues characterize the political order in Africa. The central issue is that the persons under this political order are human beings endowed with the dignity of God, the image of Christ, and who are called to participate in the divine life of God. Thus the political order proper should be the domain of the Church's mission of salvation.

For theology to be relevant in the situation thus described, it must be able to stand out prophetically amidst these degrading political situations. The methodology that this political situation requires from the theologian is not the revolutionary type; rather, theology is required to be analytical in this situation. Analytical theology does not treat the populace as helpless victims deprived of responsibility. It neither proffers solutions nor incites revolutionary actions against the oppressors. Rather, it brings every member of the community to the knowledge of how and where history had gone awry and how each had contributed to the current state of affairs. Analytical theology explains the present through a critical assessment of the way in which the immediate past has betrayed the founding vision of the community. It interprets the meaning of the actions of individuals in the light of revelation. Its precise function is to provide the community with tools for self-assessment, to help them to come to repentance and to give them the inner ability to reclaim their vision.

A clue to what is expected of African theologians could be drawn from the work of the Deuteronomist, Deutero-Isaiah and Ezekiel; from their theological reformulations of the covenant history of Israel before and during the exile. These theologians led the people of Israel to make sense of their failed history. They helped them to rise from their



disillusionment with a God who they thought 'had not kept his covenant promises',<sup>10</sup> and to trace the landmarks of their journey of disobedience from the grace of the Davidic kingdom to the grass of the exile. In the view of the present author, if we understand how these biblical theologians dealt with difficult national matters of discontinuity and flexibility, we may arrive at the urgent sense of the relevance of the theological enterprise for Africa. The work of the theologian defined in this way, it clearly holds enormous promise for Africans who need to be helped to reclaim their vision and rearticulate their mission.

Secondly, in order to stand against unjust political order, it is demanded of theology to encourage the Church and her institutions to bear concrete witness to the Kingdom of God. This involves denouncing injustice, helping victims of injustice, but most especially refraining from injustice. The Church should not liaise with political authorities in perpetrating injustice through unholy alliances. Instead, she should encourage her members to involve themselves in politics and actively guide them to enthrone a just political order.

This political sphere of human experience is discussed at length here because it plays a primary role in shaping the experiences of the people. It affects all other areas of life. On it hangs the state of wellbeing and stability of African nations, especially in the socio-economic and religious spheres.

#### 4.3 *The Socio-Economic Sphere*

The responsibility of African theology in regard to the socio-economic situation of Africa is enormous. Africa has the potential to be the richest continent in the world. However, its citizens experience the scourge of poverty because the continent has suffered exploitation from political leaders of the continent's different historical periods. Poverty is one of the issues that have made Africa the most humiliated continent in the world, with the result that the name 'Africa' is synonymous with poverty and suffering. The poverty-stricken

<sup>10</sup>Cf. for instance Ps 80; 89.

economy has affected other areas of life in the continent: family stability, health, education, child care, employment, to mention but a few. The scourge is all over the continent and despite the awareness of its presence it continues to feed deeper on the flesh of the continent and that of its citizens. This blighting condition of the African should be a source of concern to the African theologian. In the face of this situation, the role of the theologian is multiple.

Firstly, in the face of the response which the biting effects of poverty demand from the Church, one of the glaring weaknesses of theology is its search for solutions in the generosity of Christians or its focus on national and state governments as the key solution to the problem of poverty. Secondly, the paradoxical situation in Africa comes from roots deeper than the political. Therefore, although the socio-economic situation of any community depends largely on the political order, the theologian should know that an adequate response to the plight of the poor should be addressed to the community that produced poverty in its socio-economic relations. Lastly then, the work of the theologian is to address the very cause of poverty and oppression. They should address the cankerworm of insincerity, lack of integrity and exploitation which has eaten deep into inter-personal relationship of Africans in the religious, political and social orders, and at all levels of existence. It is no longer possible to separate the oppressors from the oppressed because only a slight change of circumstance turns the oppressed into an oppressor. The government cannot be blamed for this 'way of life' in Africa; rather, it is a way of life that has produced leaders in different sectors of life and which is also breeding tomorrow's leaders.

#### 4.4 *The religious sphere*

Contemporary writers and interpreters of the practice of religion in Africa concur in their view that the problem of Christianity in Africa is that of its superficiality.<sup>11</sup> The following challenges are outlined as issues which the theologian must respond to: the preponderance of the phenomenon of syncretism among many African Christians today, the

<sup>11</sup>Cf. E. Ezenweke J.E. Madu, "Skin-Deep Christianity: The Outcome of Evangelization, Cultural Neglect and Upsurge of Pentecostalism" in G. Nnamani (ed), *The New Religious Movements: Pentecostalism in Perspective*. Proceedings of the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria, Benin City: Ava Publishers, 2007, p265-281.



recurrent issue of witchcraft and demonology, pervasive influence of practices unacceptable to Christian faith, the progressive or successful influence of independent churches and effervescent effect of Pentecostalism, and the indifferent attitude of Elites / intellectuals towards religion in the contemporary African society; all these pose serious problems of interpretation of the religious experiences of the African for the theologian.

Scholars have long recognized the profound changes that came into Africa as a result of the new religious movements and Pentecostalism. The result has been a more individualistic type of piety as a central feature of religion. Another outcome of this is the obscurity of the communal ritual celebration of the mysteries of religion and its importance for national and individual existence. In theological language, this ritual celebration is called the 'cultus'. It is important to note that we cannot interpret religion in Africa simply in individualistic categories of private piety. African theologians expend their efforts in critiquing private piety and neglecting to interpret and project the 'cultus' as a vital ingredient in the stability of every nation. In most religions, national existence is believed to be upheld through the rites of the 'cultus'. Piety is only derived from the reality that the cult celebrates. This is particularly true of both the Jewish and Christian religions.

The need to draw the sketch and to interpret the meaning of this important change is an important item in the agenda of the theologian. On the one hand, theology should do more in educating the people towards the importance of the 'cultus'. A piety that is not derived from the celebration of the sacrificial event of Jesus is the reason for the cross-less spirituality that the new religious movements are promoting all over Africa. On the other hand, it is important to underscore the positive contributions of these movements and of Pentecostalism to the practice of religion in Africa. Nevertheless, the theologian should carefully understudy these movements and identify parts of their belief systems that do not promote authentic Christian values, especially prayers against the enemy and the 'Holy Ghost fire' saga which do not promote Christian forgiveness and love of the enemy. As Africans struggle with realities that becloud their vision, the theologian should

be able to accompany them in this journey through a responsible and matured faith in the God of Jesus Christ.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has discussed the ways in which theology could make the tenets of faith credible to the modern-day African through a grounded interpretation of human experience in the light of revelation. Contemporary Africa is replete with paradoxical experiences from different spheres of life, which question the tenets of faith. Therefore, by critically and systematically interpreting human experience in the light of divine revelation, theology should help to maintain the human mind undistracted by the surrounding hazards but focused on God's truth.

The role of the theological enterprise for Africa, as presented in this paper, attaches special interest to the contribution of theologians to the most immediate need of the African continent. Fundamental to the role of the theologian is the duty to underscore and to bring the people to a positive awareness of God's gifts and a befitting appreciation of those gifts in such a way that this awareness inspires spontaneous praise of God and opens the mind of the people to hope. On another note, it cannot be overemphasized that Africa faces the risk of passing from a series of gradual social and political changes into a condition of relatively permanent disintegration. Theology's specific contribution in this regard is found in the way in which it gives vision and orientation to the traumatized peoples of this continent. I have suggested above that a clue to theology's role could be taken from the work of Israelite theologians who gave guidance and fresh orientation to the people first after the death of King Josiah in the sixth century B.C. and then after the devastations that led to the exile.<sup>12</sup> In a similar way, the distinctive experiences of the African in different areas of life should shape the development of theology in Africa. We may claim that theology in Africa has been following this methodology since the

<sup>12</sup>Cf. §4.2 above.



inception of Inculturation theology for more than forty years now. Nevertheless, so long as signs of conflict, disorientation and disintegration still occupy the centre stage of life in Africa, then theologians should question their relevance and rethink their methodology.

