

Black Consciousness and Black Theology: *Di ya thoteng di bapile* (relationship for liberation)

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The aim of this article is to point out that Black Consciousness and Black Theology are conceptually and philosophically comrades in arms, fighting side-by-side for the liberation of the oppressed masses, especially the black people emerging from apartheid South Africa. Through the literature review, the two philosophical disciplines are historically sketched, defined, and compared. The Setswana idiom, *Di ya thoteng di bapile* (comradeship), like many African proverbs and idioms, is philosophically employed as a way of decolonising theology. The idiom is used to demonstrate the symbiotic relationship between Black Consciousness and Black Theology in fighting against structural injustices in societies. Historical evolution of the two disciplines is narratively presented to demonstrate how the two philosophies can continue to fight together towards the liberation of the marginalised masses in post-apartheid South Africa. The article concludes by sketching some strategic initiatives that can be undertaken to create the space for these two disciplines to symbiotically lead to the liberation of people living under the new form of political, cultural and socio-economic marginalisations. The strategic initiatives include the enhancement of self-reliance, prophetic role, and dialogical processes that lead to emancipation of those who sense self-pity, dependency syndrome, and loss of sense of quality life. These initiatives can be achieved through symbiotic cooperation of Black Consciousness and Black Theology, eventually leading to human liberation from any form of oppression.

Contribution: There is a symbiotic cooperation of Black Consciousness and Black Theology, eventually leading to human liberation from any form of oppression.

Keywords: black consciousness; black theology; *di ya thoteng di bapile*; liberation; prophetic; people; dialogue; self-reliance.

Introduction

There is a Setswana proverb, *di ya thoteng di bapile*, meaning 'as alike as two peas in a pod'¹ comrades in arms or partners in synergy, working side by side in harmony towards a common destiny or purpose. Setswana, like many, if not all, African languages expresses thoughts, feelings, philosophy of life, ethics, and life in general through proverbs, idioms, and fables. Formulation of these expressive thoughts originates from a very rich heritage of culture. Proverbial expressions build themselves around all sorts of objects including animals, humans, vegetation, weather, among others. One observable feature of African proverbs is that they borrow from other cultures they interact or interface with:

An interesting example is that of *Mmangwana o tshwara thipa ka fa bogaleng*, derived from the Bible story of King Solomon attempting to resolve a conflict between two women who both claimed a baby as their own. Another less appreciated characteristic about *diane tsa Setswana* is that although they are meant to communicate a 'secondary' figurative meaning, the 'primary' statement itself is a meaningful, logical statement, which can also be taken at face value.²

The Setswana proverb, *di ya thoteng di bapile* is used in this article to demonstrate the relationship and cooperation of Black Consciousness with Black Theology towards liberation of the oppressed masses from ideologies that prejudice others, especially the victims of apartheid. This consciousness evolved historically, as black people started to feel the negative impact of colonial history on their personhood and life in general. Colonial history has always been associated with European domination, which existed to 'shore up domestic aristocratic bastions, since they appeared to confirm on a global, modern stage antique conceptions of power and privilege' (Anderson 2016:150).

1. See <https://www.setswana.co.za/proverbs/index.php>.

2. See <https://setswanabw.com/diane-le-maele-tsa-setswana/>.

Note: Special Collection: Unthink the West, sub-edited by Fundiswa Kobo and Rothney Tshaka (University of South Africa).

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Black Consciousness and liberation

Black liberation emerged as a reaction against black people's self-pity that came as a result of colonial and apartheid ideology of dehumanisation of Africans, indoctrinating them that they are the *non-personae* who are to be on the receiving end of everything including their human dignity. Black people (including mixed race and Indians) were mentally shaped to be dependent on colonialists that there is nothing good out of them. Their social and economic status, their potential for development, advancement and positive contribution to society were marginalised, devalued, and frustrated by the colonialists. The 1970s saw the increase of black educated elites coming into power, especially in the ecclesiastical structures. This was significantly observed in the ecumenical movements, especially South African Council of Churches, University Christian Movement and others. The result was the emergence of the new vision, 'which saw Christianity as a vehicle of nationalism in terms of the new ideologies of black consciousness and black theology' (Thomas 2002:202). Consequently, although painfully, black people started to view white people as invincible. In response to this view, Black Consciousness emerged as an African attempt for emancipation from white liberalism, capitalism, racism, sexism and dominance. It endeavours to restore the aesthetics in the black culture and resurge a black identity and self-reliance. It is referred to as *Négritude*, meaning the consciousness of the value of black identity, coined by the first president of independent Senegal, Léopold Senghor (Ba 1973:29). However, *Négritude* was used in specific contexts and had negative connotations in other contexts. Pityana (in Adebajo 2020:391) points out that the meaning and intent of Black Consciousness is 'a call to arise, the appeal to courage, freedom and healing'. Black Consciousness has over the years been interpreted as racism in reverse or discrimination against white people. There is no truth in this notion, as Resane (2021) helps us to capture the real meaning and essence of this movement by highlighting that:

Black Consciousness can be described as an awareness amongst black people that their human identity hinges on the fact that they are black. Black people are proud of their skin colour, and aware of the fact that they have their own black history and culture, differing from those of whites. They no longer accept being judged according to white values and norms. (p. 2)

According to Cloete (2016:37), Black Consciousness is the philosophy that 'has sought to position itself as an anticipatory, reflexive moment of Black self-consciousness in the face of White superiority and White supremacy'. It is, according to Thomas (2002:202), 'an aggressive assertion by blacks themselves of their equality and human worth'. One of the most noted South African black theologians, Allan Boesak (2005:9) takes this further that Black Consciousness is the 'affirmation of black personhood with an intensity that overcame centuries of mental and cultural domination and indoctrination'. In other words, it is a sense of nation-ness formed on natural ties that gives the oppressed some sense of possessing what Anderson (2016:143) calls 'the beauty of *gemeinschaft*' (community or relatedness). It was a unifying

force against racial, tribal or ethnic division, which was a bulwark of success for minority white supremacy over black majority masses.

Black Consciousness Movement undoubtedly changed and reshaped South African history since the 1970s through conscientisation of black populations through ecclesiastical formations such as South African Council of Churches, Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC), Student formations such as South African Students Organisation (SASO) and University Christian Movement (UCM), among others. With the dawn of the last decade of the 20th century, the Black Consciousness Movement seemed to retreat into some obscurity. I suspect this because of then emerging spirit of hope for the dawn of new dispensation of democracy. However, three decades later, there seems to be a rising dissatisfaction and disappointments fuelling anger because of unfinished programme of South African liberation project, because the effects of colonialism and apartheid are still lingering in the new South Africa. The democratic dispensation is still marred with racism, economic disparity, a lack of service delivery, corruption in civil service, and especially the rising capitalism, which still sees wealth in the hands of the privileged elite. Hence, there is a resurgence of Black Consciousness calling for decolonisation of the total systems in institutions of learning. According to Pityana (in Adebajo 2020:392), 'the call is for the decolonisation of the university, the assertion of an African identity, and for "radical economic transformation"'. This assertion is attested by #FeesMustFall Movement that radically embodied the ideology of Black Consciousness that prevailed in the 1970s. In the footsteps of black consciousness, #FeesMustFall resonated Black Consciousness's task, which was 'principally to provide a counter-education that would encourage black people to reject or resist the machinations of control put in place by the apartheid system' (Pityana in Adebajo 2020:402).

Black Theology and liberation

Historically, theology and politics evolved in tangencies. In some places theology was used to justify political ideologies, such as it has been observed through colonialism and apartheid. The church and state were in many occasions either bedfellows or enemies. *Ba itaana ka noga e tshela* [They hate each other] and continue in juxtapositions either as *di ya thoteng di bapile* [partners or bedfellows] or *disela-mmapa* [competitors].

The synergy and symbiosis between Black Consciousness and Black Theology is indisputable. Both emerged concurrently, and Black Theology, according to Thomas (2002:203) was 'seen to be an aspect of the nationalist liberation struggle, since it was a strongly contextualised theology'. Boesak (2005:9) affirms this that with Black Consciousness came Black Theology. In fact, he quips that Black Consciousness, Black Power and Black Theology:

[M]erged and emerged as the key which unlocked the door to the future for the oppressed people of South Africa at a time when most of us thought that all was lost. (Boesak 2005:10)

The two are the comrades in arms, as expressed by Motlhabi (2008:22) that Black Theology is 'a logical result and religious counterpart of black consciousness'. Indeed, it is historically evidential that 'Black Theology is also an integral part of the movement' (Resane 2021:4). In broader terms, 'political and cultural trends unite to fight the main enemy – structural white racism and its theological justification' (Hopkins 2005:93). This assertion is also confirmed by Cone (2020:23) that 'culture must be the point of relevant theology... the medium through which the human person encounters the divine and thus makes a decision'. These loaded statements surface the reality of the synergy between Black Consciousness and Black Theology, whereby one sees black political and cultural forces fighting against theological justification of structural injustice. The two forces metamorphosed towards the Black Liberation from the apartheid political onslaught. Black Theology has always been an aspect of the national liberation and struggle, because 'Christian theology is a theology of liberation' (Cone 2020:1). Hopkins (2005:93) continues to point out that the heart of black theology 'is a liberating gospel in contrast to legalised discrimination under apartheid'.

The message of Black Theology is liberation, which is to set at liberty the oppressed (Motlhabi 2008:23), as also asserted by Vellein (in Conradie 2013:173) that 'Black Theology of liberation is a comprehensive project for the liberation of the poor'. The central focus is liberation, not just the ecclesiastical soteriology but also liberation from all sorts of oppression: physical, psychological, socio-political, cultural or economical. This is a wholistic act of God because 'God is the Liberator of black people and gives them a victory that is not made with human hands' (Cone 1992:60). It is a liberation experienced when the oppressed masses are liberated from enslavement of eschatological neurosis of the future blissful kingdom mentality. This religious enslavement promoted through *kerygmatic* activities of some particularly historical white churches, needed to be confronted so that ecclesiastical orientations should play some prophetic roles in calling both the oppressors and the oppressed back to their sensibilities towards human dignity. Black Theology arose to partner with Black Consciousness to condemn this self-serving attitude and the two entered into this partnership 'to serve as a challenge to the conscience of the church for the benefit of genuine Christian love and its implications for the struggle for justice' (Motlhabi 2008:23). As Cone (2018a:71) insists: 'Any theology that is indifferent to the theme of God's liberation of the poor is not Christian theology'. Black theologians, according to Cone (2013:118) 'identified God's liberation of the poor as the central message of the Bible, and they communicated this message in their songs and sermons'. Black Theology, therefore, is sensitive to social and natural injustices, especially when human rights are being violated. That is why it:

[H]as often adopted a deontological *modus operandi* that has critiqued White Christianity for its collusion with slavery, racism and colonialism whilst challenging Black Christianity to critical forms of resistance to White hegemony, promoting Black self-determination and radical agency as its ethical riposte. (Cone 2004:140; Reddie 2018:3)

Black Theology and Black Consciousness symbiosis

Within the framework of Black Theology and Black Consciousness, blackness refers to solidarity in suffering and oppression of the descendants of those who suffered under slavery and colonialism. It is within this context that Black Theology speaks of the necessity of self-love, 'a specific self-named enterprise of re-interpreting the meaning of God as revealed in Christ, in light of existential Black experience' (Reddie 2018:3).

Because Black Theology was seen as an aspect of the nationalist liberation struggle, it built synergy with Black Consciousness because of its contextualised approach. The two ideological forces operated as a symbiosis to fight the oppressive regime that marginalised the black masses and overtreaded social and natural justice. The symbiosis was so strong that some regarded Black Theology as a religious arm of Black Consciousness (Cone 1972:28). This critical stance of course operated in contrast with the mainstream Christian theology that supported the *status quo* or remained dormant in the face of human miseries that sociopolitically marred black people who, as members of human species, are also the carrier of *imago Dei*. Black Theology was conceptualised almost simultaneously with Black Consciousness for some of the Black Consciousness leaders were the same as Black Theology leaders, for example, Biko, Pityana, Motlhabi, Mosala, Maimela and Khoapa (Dolamo 2017:6). This comradeship of these two *di ya thoteng di bapile* is also confirmed by Motlhabi (2008:4) that he became a convert to 'the cause of black consciousness and its related spiritual counterpart, Black Theology'. To take it further, Biko (1978) observed that Black Theology:

[I]s a situational interpretation of Christianity. It seeks to relate the present-day black man to God within the given context of the black man's suffering and his attempts to get out of it ... [it is] committed to eradicating all causes of suffering as represented in the death of children from starvation, outbreaks of epidemics in poor areas or the existence of thuggery and vandalism in townships. (p. 59)

Biko demonstrated his theological commitment and interest by continuing his membership with UCM, to an extent that he drove the Black Theology project in association and partnership with some theology students (Sono 1993:29). It is of great interest to notice, as Dolamo (2017:6) states, that Black Consciousness and Black Theology shared the same ideological basis to such an extent that conclusions such as the following were drawn: 'Black Theology ... is an extension of Black Consciousness' (Pityana 1972:41), 'Black Theology is the theological aspect of Black Consciousness' (Motlhabi 1972:55) and some 'ordinands and lay people were deeply influenced by Black Consciousness and its soulmate, Black Theology' (Duncan 2008:116). Powerful ideologies emanating out of Black Theology were used to invigorate a sense of Black Power (Ndaba & Smith 2017:59). Within the SASO leadership, responsibilities were shared and Biko and Pityana were given the responsibility for political and theological matters (Wilson 1991:29). All these leaders were theologically

inclined in addressing the disrespectful treatment towards black people's dignity and identity. Their integral involvement laid the foundation of justification for theology of dialogue to carry on in addressing hamartiological realities that cripple soteriological experiences for the black people's ecclesiological identities in South Africa. As Black Theology is situational and not time-bound, it continues to address new questions and confront new challenges as they arise. Its current challenges include a lack of service delivery, corruption, political violence in predominantly black organisations, unethical leadership, challenges related to governance, among others. Motlhabi (1972:59) correctly points to the fact that Black Theology challenges black theologians to review what has been lost historically, culturally and religiously. Dolamo (2016:43) points to the fact that 'using Black Consciousness as a handmaid, Black Theology can meaningfully play a role in the democratic South Africa' to prophetically challenge social menaces such as poverty, racism, gender injustice, patriarchy, xenophobia, bad governance, environmental degradation, among others. All these set the liberation agenda for Black Theology to play a prophetic role.

Some strategic initiatives

For centuries, Africa was dubbed a dark continent inhabited by savages and scavengers who needed to be civilised through Christianisation. These inhabitants were regarded as people who could not think for themselves and were forced to be beggars for livelihood (Bediako 1996:2; Dickson 1984:145; Resane 2020:14). Black Theology and Black Consciousness emerged as some of the attempts to redress this unbalanced view about Africans where blackness had to be looked positively rather than negatively. Some of their strategic approaches here to address this bias are sketched as follows:

- **Self-reliance:** Black Theology and Black Consciousness reverberate with the concept of self-reliance. This is one of the innate realities of Africanness expressed in concepts such as *ubuntu* or *botho*, which basically means 'Because I am, we are' (Roberts 1987:39) of Southern Africa. Self-reliance versus self-serving is expressed through *ujamaa* [Eastern Africa especially in Swahili-speaking territories], as a black expression of peoplehood or selfhood (Roberts 1987:40). The founding president of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama talked of *boipelego* [self-help or self-reliance]. Grant (2013:189) quotes this president where he said: 'we were made to believe that we had no past to speak of, no history to boast of. The past, so far as we were concerned, was just a black and nothing else'. This self-reliance is also insinuated by one South African erstwhile homeland (Bophuthatswana) leader, Chief Lucas Manyane Mangope's slogan of *Re na le Rona* [We are with ourselves]. Hopkins (2005:27) elaborates that through Black Consciousness Movement, self-reliance is a black solidarity, applied to all spheres of black life, especially when Black Community Programmes (*letsema*) aim to persuade the community 'to achieve an independent, non-appendage existence'. These are confirmations pointed out by Cone (2020:24) that 'The black community is a self-determining people, proud of its blackness ...' This is an expression of retaliation that, although despised

and demeaned, we remain the people with capacity to do and accomplish things by ourselves, without interference or intervention by outsiders. The white prejudice of undermining the black communities, labelling them ugly, slow-thinkers, unable to do things for themselves can be proved wrong; hence, in another place, Cone (Dibeela, LenkaBula & Vellem 2005:212) declares that 'God's loving solidarity can transform ugliness into beauty'. These self-reliance affirmations were not just political rallying calls, but utterances that agreed with Black Consciousness and Black Theology's ambitions for black people to emancipate themselves from oppressive ideologies that disempowered them, especially their human capacities and capabilities.

Self-reliance is the opposite of dependency syndrome. This disempowering deliberation was promoted through missional-colonial cooperation with intentions of making Africans feel useless and therefore unable to fend for themselves in all spheres of life. Black Consciousness and Black Theology united their voices against this by reverberating Alfredo Fierro that revolution is 'the creation of human beings by and for themselves' (1977:29). This argument is furthered by Cone (2018b:139) that Black Theology such a Black Power believes that the self-determination of black people must be emphasised at all costs; therefore, 'no humanity can exist without a sense of worth'. In another place, Cone (2018a:94) terms this self-worth, 'which was denied or ignored by white theology and its churches'. This self-worth is based on black liberation theology, which is essentially historical (having to do with economics, politics, and the sociality of human existence), cultural (evil societal structures), experiential (troubled and oppressed), and doctrinal (Cone 1992, 2018b). For instance, there is an extensive alignment with ecclesiology in Black Theology, where the black church, 'despite its failures, gives black people a sense of worth' (2018a:94). Anthropology and Christology in black theology, as Cone points out, is that the black people 'know they are somebody because God loves them, and Jesus died for them' (2018a:94). Based on these foundational doctrines espoused in Black Theology, no colonialist or white racist can take black people's worth away.

Black Consciousness in partnership with Black Theology stresses that it is only within the community where an individual manifests transparency, capacity and will. A person is a person within the context of otherness. A person's reference is not an individual but the relation. 'Belonging to a community does not excuse from personal work and from acquiring confidence in oneself' (Bujo 2016:87). Self-reliance is not just about working tirelessly, but one's exertion in all spheres of life, for example, families, churches, communities, and others. Community is at the centre but insists and stimulates one's initiatives and responsibilities. An individual's identity is not annihilated but enhanced through belongingness. It is within the black community that an individual senses personal freedom.

- **Prophetic role:** Black theology emerged as a voice in the wilderness where the oppressed were numbed into emotional and mental immobility caused by racial structures that demeaned African dignity. The prophetic voice speaks above theology, which is part of domesticated faith (Roberts 1987:11). It becomes a voice shouting in the cathedrals, chapels, palaces, parliaments and public squares, rebuking and calling for human sanity and integrity. As a theological dictum, Black Theology never ceased to point out injustices within socio-political structures. This is affirmed by Cone (2018b:94) that 'Justice and blackness are the heart of what black liberation theology is about'. It is concerned about the mission and ministry, therefore priestly and prophetic.

Prophetic utterances are uncomfortably uttered with anger. Cone (2018b:3) captures the fact that 'the prophets certainly spoke in anger, and there is some evidence that Jesus was angry'. Prophetic activities discomfort for the comfortable people and comfort those who are uncomfortable. Black Theology's voice demands 'a radical change in the interlocking structures of this society' (Cone 2018b:2). In another place, Cone (2013) points out that Black Theologians are the prophets expected to:

[T]ake risks and speak out in righteous indignation against society's treatment of the poor, even risking their lives, as we see in the martyrdom of Jesus and Martin Luther King. (p. 61)

Their lives are always in peril and are deemed as disturbers of peace (here peace meaning comfort in injustice). This is how King Ahab of Israel deemed Elijah the prophet: *When he saw Elijah, he said to him, 'Is that you, you troubler of Israel?'* (1 Ki 18:17 NIV). Courage continues to remain a hallmark of prophecy. Black Theology in synergy with Black Consciousness courageously plays the prophetic role to emancipate the oppressed black people from the clutches of unbiblical practices such as oppression and prejudices based on one's race or nationality. The two *di ya thoteng di bapile* are the prophetic opposition to socio-ecclesial structures that promote distortions that hold a majority of human family at the bottom of the ladder. They both speak ecumenically against the 'imposition of Western Christianity as part of the general violence engendered by the contact of the West with Africa' (Tsfai 1996:91).

Black Consciousness and Black Theology are comrades in arms as their prophetic roles find their praxis on the grassroots where people are dying under the yoke of oppression. This is the terrain where people are dying not only because of being robbed of their dignity but also as a result of hunger and suffering caused by malnutrition, diseases and economic exploitation (Tsfai 1996:95). These are the masses whose future is dark and uncertain. In their miseries they need a prophetic voice that brings the message of hope, love, and resilience.

Black Theology is and continues to be a prophetic voice. Like the Old Testament prophets, Black Theology is a voice standing within *vox populi* against the *realpolitik* of the time. It stands with the masses to address the politics of power. VanGemeren (1990) captures it better in the religious context that:

Realpolitik, or power politics, is a pragmatic application of any technique by which an individual or a group can maintain or enhance life. It is manipulative, works at the expense of others, and undermines the essential nature of revelation. (p. 26)

The apartheid context was the context of *realpolitik* where political systems were 'imposed by means of physical violence, political extortion or economic suppression' (Resane & Buitendag 2008:1540). The oppressive system was used for exercising power over all spheres of people's lives – religiously, culturally, economically, politically or socially. This tendency inevitably calls for some theological response, hence Black Theology is ascending the stage. Black theologians are left with no option than to be 'more inclined to maintain a holistic (political and cultural) theological response' (Hopkins 2005:94). Theological response here is a total emancipation of the oppressed masses from socio-political and cultural marginalisations based on racism. After all, 'the purpose of black theology is to make sense of black experience' (Cone 2020:25), and this can be done prophetically through the symbiotic cooperation of the two *di ya thoteng di bapile* (Black Consciousness and Black Theology).

Black Theology's initiatives and activities are expected to be prophetic, hence it is always *kerygmatic*. Prophetic voices of Black Theologians reverberate and echo loudly from pulpits and all possible platforms, hence always critiqued or criticised by their voices – oral or written. Van der Walt (in Venter 2016:244) points it out that 'Proclamation should always happen within a context of dialogue, acknowledging that God's Spirit is already present in those to be reached'. Black Theology is not a secret discipline. It is felt in cities, towns, villages, townships, denominations, synods, conferences, seminars, among others. It is therefore a prophetic witness, proclaiming the alternative faith of deliverance, freedom, and announcing the imminent dispensation of respect, equality, harmonious communality et cetera.

- **Dialogical processes:** Theologising is dialogical. Before it becomes incarnational, theology in all its disciplines, engages dialogical processes. As the queen of sciences, she talks not only from the throne but from the balconies and on the streets. It 'is a special kind of discourse that enables people with different perspectives and worldviews to work together to dispel mistrust and create a climate of good faith' (Resane in Venter 2016:62). Black Theology as a patriotic voice emerged as a *moseka-phofu ya gaabo yo o sa tshabeng go swa lentswe* (voice that speaks patriotically and boldly). Black Theology as *di ya thoteng di bapile* with Black Consciousness is a *moseka phofu* (a herald) – a

prophetic voice that defends the marginalised, the poor, and the oppressed against the supremacists and *prejudists* who take the advantage of the socioeconomically sidelined masses. Its dialogical intentions are vociferous warning communities about the consequences of structural injustices. Resane (2018:2) is of the conviction that theology, including Black Theology of Liberation should engage in dialogue incessantly, and undertaken in transparent procedures and processes. It is a dialogue that is concerned with speaking truth to power driven by passion.

In the hurting world populated with unimaginable miseries of hunger, diseases, broken relationships, pandemics, political corruptions, economic greed, social disintegration, among others, humanity yearns for a spokesperson, a voice that can invite proponents and patrons to dialogue table. Humanity is a community with the rest of creation, therefore, should aim for the kind of community the Trinity enjoys. It is true that 'Dialogue affirms our common life and shared goals for the flourishing of life and the integrity of creation' (Van der Walt in Venter 2016:244). As dialogue between Black Consciousness and Black Theology of Liberation, together with creation ensues, humanity will experience transformation, growth, fulfilment and healing. The *twodi ya thoteng di bapile* that is Black Consciousness and Black Theology of Liberation should encourage partnership through dialogues. Dialogical processes may take long but possess potency to pinnacle into victorious harmony, which is human liberation from the shackles of oppression and bigotries. Dialogical processes pave the path for the Holy Spirit to 'ultimately open our eyes to the supernatural consciousness of the human mystery' (Rutler 2020:76). This human mystery is a discovery of the human likeness with the trinitarian God and it unlocks our eyes to 'cry out fully in indignation against injustice, because the Christian has seen the full revelation of human dignity' (Rutler 2020:96).

Black Theology is missional, because it conveys and proclaims the message of hope through emancipation from negative life influences such as oppression, poverty, disease etc. This makes it dialogical. Mission is a theological endeavour and it is ecclesiastically missional. Van der Walt (in Venter 2016) correctly points out that:

[M]ission is about entering into dialogue with people of different convictions; it is never about imposition, but always about persuasion and freedom-respecting love, putting the dignity of others in high regard. (p. 244)

This assertion is criticised broadly by Protestant believers, especially those of conservative evangelical stream. For them, this is friendship with the world, or as some of them assume: rubbing shoulders with the devil. These convictions propagate 'blinkers theology,' which disregards or ignores the world in which it lives.

The fact remains that theology is incarnational in order to display the character of God and the love of Christ. The character of God echoes with theological and anthropological realities that humanity, regardless of its human classification, is *imago Dei*. The love of Christ does not discriminate as all humanity is Christ's object of love. Theologians who ignore or undermine Black Theology's grassroots involvement disregard realities that South Africa is a 'multireligious nation where religious inclusivity is an inevitability' (Resane 2003:4). Black Theology should innovate possibilities of interreligious dialogues, which strive 'to foster understanding, tolerance, and social cohesion in order to actively shape the relationships between individuals of other religions and worldviews' (Mokotso 2021:10). The new religious and cultural realities in the democratic South Africa create a new platform for all theologies to 'seek not only to coexist with, but to understand those of other faiths' (Lamb in Pfitzner & Regan 1999:164) in their communities. Theology in all its shapes is dialogical and it achieves its missionality dialogically.

Conclusion

This article attempts to demonstrate that the symbiosis and synergy of Black Consciousness and Black Theology are one way of decolonising theology. By using African philosophy expressed through proverbs and idioms, the article demonstrates that Black Consciousness and Black Theology work in synergy to proclaim the message of liberation to people prejudiced because of their skin colour, economic and social standing. The two *di ya thoteng di bapile* that is Black Consciousness and Black Theology are defined as historically inseparable forces that continue to work in partnership for the message of the gospel to the marginalised masses. Their message from both political platforms and church pulpits resonates with liberation from the shackles of oppression. Their message is loud and clear: self-reliance is the demonstration that out of poverty and oppression, through faith in God, the oppressed masses can arise and live. The message is or should be prophetic to instill hope and resilience. This message is realised and achieved through dialogical processes that the two *di ya thoteng di bapile* should boldly engage. Black Theology is missional, and therefore should be prophetic and dialogical in order to be felt and recognised in a public domain.

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Author's contributions

The article demonstrates interdisciplinary approach by engaging the Setswana language, African philosophy and black theology to strengthen the argument that Black

Consciousness and Black Theology are partners towards the liberation of the oppressed. K.T.R. is the sole author of this research article.

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