

THE
BT
80
.G34
1990

Ref
230.096
5136c

16492

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THEOLOGY

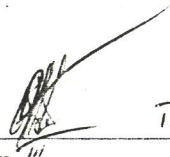
A CRITIQUE OF CANAAN BANANA'S THEOLOGY

BY

EKMANUEL GAHANYA

A Thesis submitted to the Department of
Theology in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree
of Master of Theology

Approved:

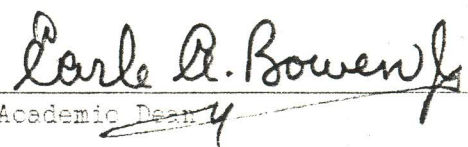


T. ADEYEMO.

Supervisor

ANS Lare

Second Reader



Academic Dean

July 1990

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION -----	1
Importance of the problem -----	2
Purpose of the Study -----	3
Delineation of the Study -----	4
Organizational approach to the Study -----	5
 CHAPTER	
I. CANAAN BANANA'S THEOLOGICAL FORMATION -----	7
The Early History of Zimbabwe -----	9
The Land Issue -----	10
Deprivation of Educational Opportunities -----	12
Economic and Cultural Exploitation -----	14
Banana's Disillusionment with Western theology -----	17
THE THEOLOGICAL CURRENTS INFLUENCING AFRICAN SCENE -----	18
The Role of Theologies of Liberation -----	18
LIBERATION THEOLOGY -----	20
Latin America -----	20
The Tenets of Liberation Theology -----	22
The Weakness of Liberation Theology -----	24
Contribution of Liberation Theology -----	27
BLACK THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION -----	30
Origin -----	30
The Tenets of Black Theology -----	33
II. BANANA'S THEOLOGY OF GOD, MAN AND HISTORY -----	39
Introduction -----	39
Banana's Theology of God -----	40

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD -----	43
Revelation -----	43
The Rationale of Exodus -----	46
Divine Revelation beyond Exodus -----	47
The Role of Old Testament Covenant in the Salvation of Mankind -----	48
Banana's Theology of Man -----	50
THE DOCTRINE OF MAN -----	51
Origin of Man -----	51
The Fall and Remedy -----	52
Banana's Theology of History -----	53
BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF HISTORY -----	55
Old Testament -----	56
New Testament -----	57
II. BANANA'S CHRISTOLOGY AND SOTERIOLOGY -----	62
Banana's Christology Described -----	62
Biblical Response -----	63
Soteriological Role of Christ -----	65
The Cause for Jesus' Death -----	68
Banana's Theology of Salvation -----	69
The Old Testament Doctrine of Salvation -----	72
Content of Salvation -----	74
The New Testament Doctrine of Salvation -----	75
Christ Our Saviour -----	76
Banana's Theology of Sin -----	79
The Old Testament Doctrine of Sin -----	79
The New Testament Doctrine of Sin -----	81
Remedy for Sin -----	81.

IV. BANANA'S THEOLOGY OF THE KINGDOM -----	86
God's Kingdom Secularized -----	86
God's Kingdom as Socialism -----	87
Banana's Concept of Politics -----	89
CHRISTIAN FAITH VERSUS POLITICS -----	90
Definition of the Word Politics -----	90
Biblical Basis for Christians' Involvement in Politics -----	93
Ways of Political Involvement -----	95
TYPES OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS -----	99
Charismatic theocracy -----	99
Monarchical theocracy -----	100
Priestly theocracy -----	100
Some of the Modern Political Systems -----	100
Absolutism -----	100
Anarchy -----	101
Democracy -----	101
V. CONCLUSION -----	106
The Challenge Facing Evangelicals in Africa -----	106
The Limitation of Socialism in Zimbabwe -----	107
The Answer to Man's Fundamental Dilemma -----	111
LIST OF REFERENCES -----	113

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My special thanks to the following people:

1. Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo for kindly accepting to supervise this thesis despite his heavy schedule. He always found time for me and I am truly grateful to him.
2. Dr. Michael Payne who read the first draft and made valuable comments.
3. Mr. Tony Lane for kindly accepting to co-supervise this thesis. I am greatly indebted to his guidance!
4. My sister Mirriam and Petua Sagahutu for typing the first draft.
5. My wife Irene for her prayer support and also for partly helping to type the final manuscript.
6. I would like to thank all those who prayed for me, especially in the view of the fact that I have been working under very difficult conditions, having also had to care for our son Jonathan who incurred brain damage at birth. I of course praise God for His enabling grace.
7. I would also like to thank the Tear Fund office (London) and CNEC for their financial support while studying at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology.
8. Lastly but not least, I am most grateful to my Bishop, Misaeri Kauma, for his encouragement and patience while I was away from the diocese undertaking this study.

DEDICATION

TO THE EXTENSION OF GOD'S KINGDOM IN AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

It is the writer's conviction that a comprehensive evangelical theology of social justice relevant to the contemporary African situation needs to be developed to deal with our problems. For instance, Africa continues to experience political upheavals, exploitation of the poor by the rich and powerful on the one hand, and exploitation as a continent by richer nations of the world through unfair trade imbalances. This is due to the fact that the continent lacks strong bargaining power and as a result, the prices of her exports are determined on the international markets by the developed nations. Consequently, this has continued to adversely affect our economies. It is interesting that due to the fall in coffee prices this year on the international market, Uganda is reported to have lost one hundred million dollars in revenue. Yet the price of imports from the developed nations is going up all the time. This demonstrates how the economies of Africa are vulnerable.

At home, there is the existence of the apartheid system in South Africa which is responsible for the enslavement of millions of Africans in their own country. Unfortunately, some of the white christians continue to defend apartheid despite its dehumanizing effect. These are but a few of the problems confronting the church in Africa. These problems cannot be ignored and a biblical response is necessary. In order to withstand the opposing forces, the church in Africa must manifest maturity in theology and theologisation. What is needed is not just the re-affirming of our traditional theology, but a theological creativity relevant to the African challenge.

However, our theology must be rooted in the scriptures, hence the need to adopt proper exegetical methodologies.

Importance of the problem.

While it is highly commendable that Canaan Banana should address those issues raised by his context, he unfortunately refuses to abide by exegetical principles and instead of studying the ancient text in its context and applying the message to his situation he reads the scriptures from the perspective of the oppressed people during the years of colonial rule in Zimbabwe. He finds in the biblical account of Israel's Heilsgeschichte a parallel to the plight of the poor in Zimbabwe. For instance, he quotes Exodus 5:1 to justify the use of violence in the liberation struggle saying, "when Pharaoh failed to respond positively to the language of persuasion and arguments, God had no alternative but to use the language that Pharaoh himself spoke, the language of force and violence."¹ This argument presents a theological problem and the present writer deals with it in the thesis. In addition, Jesus is portrayed as a political liberator while God's kingdom is equated with socialism. Many of Banana's other claims are also not supported by the scriptures. He only quotes the scriptures to support his own political views without any regard to the ancient text. This is not the way to theologise. Referring to the task of the theologians, Cho rightly says:

They should go from the text to the context in order to avoid the danger of placing the context above the text. Lest relevance be of greater concern than the truth itself, theological contextualization must operate within the limits of sound biblical exegesis. After first seeking to understand the biblical text in its own context, the theologian should select those biblical themes which speak to the issues and questions in his context. The theological task, therefore, involves tension between obedience to the scriptures and relevance to the context.²

This may require us to offer biblical answers to the questions raised by our context. Unfortunately, western theology which is by and large rationalistic, preoccupied with intellectual concerns especially those having to do with relationship between faith and reason, has not prepared us for the task. All too often, it has reduced the christian faith to abstract concepts which may have answered the questions of the past but which fail to grapple with the issues of Africa today. If evangelical theology is to fulfil its task in Africa, it must be released from the captivity to individualism of western theology in order to allow the word of God to work with full power. It must also avoid the errors of liberation theology as exemplified in Banana's theology. There is a danger of reading our politico-economic vision in theology and absolutising our favourable system, whether socialism or capitalism. We must never force the biblical texts to endorse our prejudiced views. Unfortunately, this is what the liberation theologians are doing! The danger is that the popular respectability of these theological systems may make people think that they are compatible with biblical truth. There is a need therefore to challenge some of the issues raised by the exponents of the theologies of liberation in general and Banana in particular, while at the same time reinforcing those good things which we ought to learn from them. That is the task of this thesis.

Purpose of the study.

The primary task of this study is to critically and objectively analyse Banana's theology as expounded in his works. It is evident that he is influenced by the theologies of liberation, and for this reason, the present writer wants to alert the christian church in Africa to the dangers of compromising the gospel for the sake of seeing a just socio-politico-economic order instituted.

Having said that, there is also another danger of belonging to the church of the silent majority which consciously or unconsciously accepts the social economic and political status quo. In this regard, there is a lesson to learn from Canaan Banana and other liberation theologians. The church should never condone the institutionalised violence that deprives the majority of the population of the basic essentials for human life such as housing, health, education, employment, food etc. It should never be satisfied with a kind of religiosity that is self-centred, subjective and pietistic.

The issue at stake is how can one be of this world and yet not of the world! The present writer emphasises the need for relevance to our context while at the same time being faithful to the text. It is absolutely vital to maintain this tension.

Delineation of the study.

The subject of this thesis is self-explanatory as to its extent. Since it is a critique of Banana's theology the writer has studied the available published works by Banana with a view to determining his theological position. The areas covered include his view of God, christology, salvation, sin, kingdom, etc.

Since Banana seems to be influenced by the theologies of liberation, it has become necessary for the present writer to familiarise himself with the exponents of these theologies in order to make a better evaluation of his theological position. Fortunately, there is a lot of literature available on the subject today, originating mainly from Latin America, from the United States of America by black theologians and from South African theologians.

Organizational Approach to the Study.

The first chapter deals with the contradictions of socio-politico-economic problems prevailing in Zimbabwe before independence, and how they shaped Banana's theological views. The external influence such as the theologies of liberation are discussed here. In the following chapters, Banana's theology is closely examined and evaluated on the basis of the authoritative word of God. Similarly, the political and ethical issues that he raises are also discussed in the light of the teaching of the scriptures.

The role of the church within a state features predominantly especially in the fourth chapter. The present writer has suggested some guidelines on how christians can participate in national politics without violating biblical principles or compromising the gospel. The real issue here is to justify political participation as a valid obligation for christians.

In chapter five, the writer assesses the fulfilment or disappointments of some of Banana's dreams regarding independent socialist Zimbabwe which he associates with utopia. An attempt is made to investigate and determine whether socialism has lived up to its ideals.

Endnotes.

¹Canaan Banana, The Theology of Promise (Harare: The College Press, 1982), 21.

²Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur, eds. The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts: An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology (Taichung, Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1984), 79-80ff.

