

What did the Reformers think of Africa and its people?

O que os reformadores pensaram a respeito da África e seu povo?

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ABSTRACT

Scholars have long been aware since the 16th century of the Reformers' indebtedness to African theology (esp. Augustine, but also to the pre-Augustinian African Fathers). However, with regard to the Reformers' attitudes toward African culture and their African contemporaries the scholarly community has remained silent. Considering that, this paper endeavors to make some first tentative steps in addressing this range of issues. Its primary agenda is to provide a text study of the writings of Luther, Zwingli, Anabaptists (esp. Simons), and Calvin regarding what they wrote about Africa, the African people of their day, and the institution of slavery.

KEYWORDS

Reformers. Africa. Slavery.

RESUMO

Os estudiosos sabem da dívida dos reformadores para com a teologia africana, especialmente Agostinho e os Pais da Igreja Africanos antes dele. Entretanto, no que diz respeito às atitudes dos reformadores para com a cultura e seus contemporâneos africanos, a comunidade acadêmica permaneceu em silêncio. Considerando isto, este artigo busca oferecer alguns passos preliminares na abordagem deste tema. Seu foco principal é fornecer um estudo dos escritos de Lutero, Zwinglio, Anabatistas (especialmente M. Simons) e Calvino que falam sobre a África, o povo africano de sua época e a instituição da escravidão.

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Reformadores. África. Escravidão.

In one sense the question posed by the title has received a resounding answer. Scholars have long been aware since the 16th century of the Reformers' indebtedness to African theology (esp. to Augustine, but also to the pre-Augustinian African Fathers). However, with regard to the Reformers' attitudes toward African culture and their African contemporaries the scholarly community has remained silent². The neglect of this issue raises the possibility for some that Reformation Studies are irrelevant for the African-American Christian community or that the Reformers articulated a theology which is in principle unhelpful for the development of a Black Theology. By contrast, Wesley, after all, is well known to have condemned slavery³. What were the Reformers' positions on these issues? This paper endeavors to make some first tentative steps in addressing this range of issues. Its primary agenda is to provide a text study of the writings of Luther, Zwingli, select Anabaptists (esp. Simons), and Calvin regarding what they wrote about Africa, the African people of their day, and the institution of slavery. (Although what references the Reformers do make to slavery are often concerned with Medieval forms of feudal enslavement of Europeans, the fact that the modern institution of enslavement of Africans was developing in their lifetimes entails that the Reformer who uttered comments about Medieval slavery would have recognized the relevance of his comments for the enslavement of African people. For this reason, consideration of the Reformers' views on slavery seems unequivocally germane for understanding their attitudes towards contemporary Africans. In some sense, the pickings are slim. The silence of Zwingli and Simons on these topics is deafening. Nevertheless, the paper will at

² Martin Luther, Letter To John Lang (1517). WABR 1:99; CLW48:42; Ulrich Zwingli, A Friendly Request and Exhortation of Some Priests of the Confederates That the Preaching of the Holy Gospel Be Not Hindered, and Also That No Offence Be Taken If To Avoid Scandal the Preachers Were Given Permission To Marry (1522); John Calvin, *Institutio Christianae religionis* (1559), IV.XIV.26.

³ John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (1774), IVff.

least provide opportunity for the scholarly community to reflect on the meaning of this silence.

Zwingli and the Anabaptists on Africa

The Swiss Reformer's one excursion into reflections on things/persons African emerged later in his career in the context of a discussion of his preference for Christian rulers. The baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch is cited as an example of how this sort of ruler builds up the Kingdom⁴. Simons is equally silent on the topic of Africa, save one pejorative reference to Egypt in the lyrics of a 1540 hymn. He equated Egypt with a state of sin, as he wrote:

When I in Egypt still stuck fast,
And traveled calm broad paths of ease,
Then was I famed, a much-sought guest,
The world with me was quite at peace;
Enmeshed was I in Satan's gauze...⁵

Perhaps the reference to Egypt was a purely literary device, in no sense intended to be pejorative. Nevertheless, the relative inattention to Africa and things African by these Reformers inevitably poses the question of why. Within their lifetimes much of Africa had begun to endure colonization. By contrast, with regard to Calvin and Luther, there are some fascinating references. This makes the relative silence of Zwingli and his Anabaptist heirs all the more puzzling.

⁴ Ulrich Zwingli, In catabaptistarum strophes elenchus (1527), in *Corpus Reformatorum*, Vol. XCIII (101 vols.; Brunsvigae: C.A. Schwetschke et. Filium, 1834-1959), 137-138: "Erant ergo fideles domini. Cornelium item centurionem baptizavit idem Petrus [cf. Act. 10:1-48]. Dynasta Candaces Aethyopum a Philippa baptizatus est [cf. Act. 8:26-40]. Quodsi iuxtra veetram eententiam Christianus magistratum gerere non poteet, et poenitentia cum fidei confessione requiruntur, antequam quis baptizetur, inique fecerunt Petrus et Philippus, quod eos baptizerunt, ante quam sesse abdicarent magistratu atque officio, aut in gentili magistratu constitutus baptizari etiam potest ac intra ecclesias recipi".

⁵ SIMONS, Menno. The Hymn of Discipleship (1540), in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*. Ed. John Christian Wenger. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956, 1065.

Calvin on Africa and the evils of slavery

The Genevan Reformer actually spoke of Africa quite glowingly in one respect during the course of his career. In the context of his 1547 critique of the Council of Trent and of papal authority, he praised the historic African Orthodox Churches (the Coptic Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church) as true churches which have preserved their ecclesiastical character intact without submitting to papal authority.

Presumably, then, Reformed churches, like these African bodies, could likewise preserve their character as true churches without the papacy. Calvin wrote:

At the period when there was still a Church and a bishopric at Rome, there was no mention of any such primacy as the Romanists now arrogate to themselves... What! Were the Africans cut off from the body of Christ when they would not even concede the title of the first or highest bishop to the bishop of Rome⁶.

In addition to his praise of African Christian spirituality, Calvin also expressed concern about the horrors of slavery. He celebrated the demise of the institution in Europe (save in Spain) during his lifetime. He wrote:

Our servitudes have been abolished, that is, that miserable condition when one had no right of his own, but when the master had power over life and death; that custom has ceased and the abolition cannot be blamed... It is, however, by no means to be wished that

⁶ John Calvin, *Acta Synodi Tridentinae cum Antidote* (1547), in *Corpus Reformatorum*, XXXV: 395: "Fieri, inquit, aliter non potest, quin Christi sit vicarius qui romanam sedem occupat. Nondeum pudet istos nugarotes) tam futilibus naehiis ledere, quae suant ad taeduim usque fuieeee millies refutatae. Quo tempore adhuc Romae erat ecclesia et episcopatus, mentio primatus, qulaem nucn sibi arrogant Romanenses, nulla fuit. Uniuue enim Christi est universalis episcopatus, cuius partem in solidum *singuli sibi pastores vindicant; ut est apud* Cyprianum. Haec vera appellatio si in hominem conferatur, Gregorius sacrilegam, et scelestam, praenunciamque Antichrist! fore, passim testatur. Quid? An a corpore resecti erant African!, quum ne primi quidem aut summi episcopi titulum romano concederent?"

there should be slaves among us, as there were formerly among all nations, and are now among barbarians⁷.

On the other hand, Calvin refused outrightly to condemn the institution, presumably because of its ancient Biblical roots. On that matter he wrote:

But whether they who were first slaves had been subjugated by the laws of war. Or had been reduced to this state by want, it is indeed certain, that the order of nature was violently infringed; because men were created for the purpose of cultivating mutual society between each other... However! Although slavery is contrary to that right government which is most desirable, and in its commencement without fault; it does not, on this account. Follow that the use of it, which was afterwards received by custom and excused by necessity, is unlawful. Abram therefore might possess both servants bought with money, and slaves born in his house⁸.

In fact, he even blamed the continuing existence of slavery in Spain (the modern institution of slavery had already been initiated by the late Medieval colonization process) on Africans (and the Turks). With whom the Spaniards had been forced to engage in warfare:

⁷ John Calvin, *Unius enim Praelectiones in Ieremiam 34:1-17* (n.d.), in *Corpus Reformatorum*, LXVII:87: “Quod apud nos abolitae aut servitutes, hoc est misers illis conditio, ut quis non sit iuris, sed dominus in ipsum habeat vitae et necis potestatem: quod ergo cessavit ille usus, non debet vituperari, potuit initio aliqua superstitione fuisse, et certe ita conicio, principium mutandi illius moris fuisse natum a superstitione: sed tamen minime optandum est ut sint mancipia inter nos, sicuti olim fuerent inter omnes gentes, et aut etiam hodie apud barbeiros”.

⁸ John Calvin, *Commentarius in Genesis 12:5* (n.d.), in *Corpus Reformatorum*, LI:179: “Sive autem belli iuri oppressi fuerint, sive inopia coacti qui primi servitutem evenierunt: hoc quidem cerum eat, violenter fuiaae corruptum naturae ordinem: quia ide creati erant homines ut mutuum inter ee societatem colerent. Etsi autem alia alios praesae utile est, aervanda erat tamen, ut inter fratres aequabilitas. Caeterum, quavis recto temperamento (quale optandum esset) contraria sit servitus, et eius initium vitio non carnerit: non tamen propterea sequitur, usum qui deinde moribus receptus est, quem excusat necessitas, esse illicitum. Potuit igitur Abram servos tam pecunia emptos quam sibidomi nates vernas possidere”.

The Spaniards know what servitude is, for they are near neighbours to the Africans and the Turks; and then those they take in war they sell; and as one evil proceeds from another, so they retain miserable men as slaves throughout life⁹.

There are elements to the preceding remark which have the ring of the oppressor blaming the victim for his/her troubles. Calvin's only explicit reference to African/Egyptian culture is to lament its characteristic pride and cruelty¹⁰. However, the praise Calvin seems to have heaped on indigenous African Christianity and his general disgust of slavery seem to belie any charges of racism which might be directed to him. Regardless of how one reacts to this assessment, Calvin's corpus does indicate that in 16th century European intellectual life ancient African culture as well as the indigenous African Orthodox churches were known and at least to some extent appreciated.

Luther on Africa and slavery: afro-centrism before its time?

The Wittenberg Reformer had first-hand experience with something like slavery in its modern form insofar as he directly encountered the Medieval institution of serfdom. In his 1531 sermon, which displays the kind of political passivity often associated with his *Zwei-Reich Lehre*, he wrote:

These words promise to be a text and sermon on the essence of true Christian freedom. Christ does not plan to alter secular kingdoms or to abolish serfdom. What does He care how princes and lords rule?... Here [in Jn. 8:38] Christ is not speaking about these external matters; rather He is speaking of a freedom which lies outside and above this outward existence and life... A bondsman can

⁹ Calvin, *Unue enim Praelectiones in Teremiam 34:8-17, LXVII:87*: "Hispani norunt quid sit servitus quia scilicet vicini aunt Afris et Turcis: deinde quos accipiunt in bello vendunt, et sicuti malum ex malo nascitur, ita etiam habent ibi miseros homines mancipatos in totam vitam".

¹⁰ Calvin, *Commentarius in Genesin 12:20, LI: 187*: "Scimus enim quam superbi fuerint Aegypti et crudeles".

redeem himself from service to his master by paying a ransom. This Christian freedom may be enjoyed both by one who is free and by one who is a bondsman, by one who is captive and by one who takes other captives...¹¹.

Luther's failure to condemn the Medieval institution of serfdom did include certain liberation themes. At least in a 1523 Commentary he expressed an openness to the fleeing if the master compelled the slave to renounce the faith or to do evil:

Now just as a marriage partner is to conduct himself toward his mate to whom he is bound in body, so a slave should conduct himself toward his master, whose bodily possession he is. That is to say, his being a serf does not hinder him in his Christian belief, and he dare not run away from his master for that reason but should remain with regardless of whether the master is a believer or an unbeliever, righteous or evil; unless, of course, his master were to hold or force him away from his faith or compel him to associate himself with his evil life. In that case it is time to leave him and run away¹².

¹¹ Martin Luther, Sermons on the Gospel of John (1531), WA 33:659, 13.ff. (LY.1 23:404): "Dae wirdt ein Text und predigt werdenn von der wahrhaftigen Chritlichen Freyheit, was deselbiger sei, Christus will die weltlichen Reich nicht verndern auch die leiblichen nicht hinweg nemen, was fraget et darnach, wie Fureten unnd Herrn Regirenn? Aber hie redet Christus nichts von diesem Euaelichen wesen, sondern er handelt von einer freiheit, die auaer unnd uber diesem Euserlichenn wesen und leben iet... Ein leibeigen knecht kan frey werdenn, das er dem Herren nicht diene, wen Ehr inen loss zelet. Diese Christliche freiheit kan jedermenigklichen widerfharen, Dem so wol, der frei ist, alls der leibeigen ist, Dem der do gefangen iet, und der do andere gefangen nimpt ..." cf. Martin Luther, Ermahrung zum Frieden auf die zwolf Artikel der Bauerechafft in Schwaben (1525), WA 18:326f., 14ff. (LW 46:39).

¹² Martin Luther, Commentary on I Corinthians 7 (1523), WA 12:129,2 (LW 28:42): "Nu wie sich eyn ehlich gemlh gegen feynem gemalj soll hallten, des auch leyb eygen iet, also soll sich eyn knecht gegen seyrem hern hallten des leybeygen ist. Das ist, es hyndert yhm nicht, des er leyb eygen ist, an aeynem Christlichen glauben, und darff darum nicht von seyнем herrn lauffen, sondern sol! bey yhm bleiben, der herr sei gläubig odder ungläubig, frum odder bosee, es were denn, das yhn eeyn herr vom glauben hallten und zwingen, odder seyнем bossen eben nach zu folgen gielte, denn do iste zeytt lauffen und lassen".

Two years later, he was even firmer in his insistence that slaves should be permitted to flee, going so far as to maintain that a good commonwealth will grant slaves their life and livelihood. He wrote:

Seventhly (v.15), they shall not give up a fugitive slave to his master, but should allow him to live with them, where it pleases him; nor shall he flay him. This, too, is obscure. For it is not permissible to keep the property of another, but a slave is property of the neighbor, just as an ox or an ass, which also should be restored when found.

Therefore it must be understood of a cruel master who seeks his slave to kill him; when He forbids surrendering the slave, this suggests cruelty. Being given up into the hands of someone suggests being given up to death. He wishes, therefore, that the life of the slave be preserved and that subsistence be granted them, lest in a well-ordered commonwealth the masters have free license. To save their lives, slaves are permitted to flee and become free, since liberty is to be given for an eye that was knocked out (Ex. 21:26). It is fitting that a good commonwealth grant to slaves their life and livelihood¹³.

To what should we attribute this more radical “liberation” stance of Luther at this point regarding his argument for the validity of assisting slaves in escaping? It may be that the German Reformer was merely being faithful to the Biblical text (Deut. 23:15) at this point. However, nothing in that text mandates his conclusion that it is the state’s responsibility to provide for the slaves’ life and livelihood a kind of government welfare system for the poor and oppressed which he advocated elsewhere¹⁴. What is it about Luther’s life and thought that led him to

¹³ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Deuteronomy* (1525), WA 14:70’3,23 (LW 9:232-233): “Septima ne eervum tradant fugitivum domino suo, sed secum habitare sinant, ubi illi placur rit, neque de glubant. Obscure et haec est. Neque enim licet rem alterius retinere, Servus vero rest est proximi eicut boa et assinus, quae etiam inventa restitui debet. Intelligi ergo oportet de domini feroci, qui ad mortem quaerit servum. Nam atrociter sonat, quod tradi eum prohibet. Tradi autem in manus alicius fere ad mortem tradi eonat. Vult ergo servis vitam servari et alimoniam permitti, ne dominie omnia liceant in republica bene instituta. Et pro vita servanda licuit fugere et liberum fieri, cum etiam pro oculo excusso libertas dononda sit, Ex. 22. Sic enim decet bonam republicam servia vitam et victum permittere”.

¹⁴ See for example, Martin Luther, *Ordnung eines gemeynen kastens. Radschlag wie de geistlichen gutter zu handeln sind* (1523), WA 12:11-30 (LW 45:169-194).

go beyond the other Reformers at this point in seeking government protection for the enslaved? Could it be related to his more humble family origins than they (save Simons) had?

It needs to be reiterated that Luther remained a man of his time in failing unequivocally to condemn institution of feudal servitude. A dynamic which may transpire at that time was his critical perspective on the emergence of capitalism, which made feudalism look good in comparison¹⁵.

Nevertheless, it is also important to note the tangible differences between late Medieval servitude and the institution of slavery in its modern forms. Consequently, no direct relationship between Luther's views of slavery¹⁶ and the critique of oppression by much modern Liberation Theology can be posited. It is perhaps fair, though, to speak of "liberation" tendencies in his thought on this matter. One may perhaps observe more direct affinities between the Reformer and contemporary trends in African-American Christian thought with regard to his reflections on African culture and his African contemporaries.

It is true that Luther did regard ancient Egyptian religion as idolatry. However, unlike Calvin, he was inclined to praise Egyptian culture for both its wisdom and its morality. He wrote:

The morals of the Egyptians were more virtuous, and their decency greater than among the other nations; for although polygamy was permitted among them, they appear to have lived more chastely than those who observed monogamy whether Abraham instructed the Egyptians concerning these sciences [astronomy and mathematics],

¹⁵ For a detailed discussion of and documentation for Luther's anti-capitalist, Feudalist orientation, request a copy of my "Luther on Usury and the Use of Money: A Product of Feudalism or the Christian economic Theory of America's Founders?" (Paper presented in American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, 1995). Cf. Hermann Barge, *Luther und der Frühkapitalismus* (Gutersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1951), esp. 45-51.

¹⁶ Martin Luther, Sermons on the Gospel of John (1538-1539), WA 46: 22f., 42ff. (LW 24:323): "Haben sie es doch zu der zeit gethan, da die Heiden so grebe abgotterey trieben, die da gar keinen schein hatte, als das sie stein und holtz anbetten, ja die Egypter zwibbel und knoblauch katzen und bese wurme, welches auch Vernunft leret, das es nicht Getter sind..." Cf. Martin Luther, Genesis vorleungen (1535-1536), WA 42:185,7 (LW 1:249).

or whether, like Moses, of whom Stephen declares (Acts 7:22) that he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, he himself learned these matters from the Egyptians is of no importance¹⁷.

Like Calvin, the German Reformer seems to have known of the Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches. In 1545, in the context of a bitter polemic against the Pope, he noted that the papacy has no Jurisdiction over the Bishops of these churches¹⁸. This was a theme which dated back to the period of his defense of the Ninety-Five Theses when he also insisted that these ancient African churches were truly the Church, contrary to what the Pope maintained:

And who dare deny that one can be a Christian who does not submit to the pope and his decretals. Thus for more than eight hundred years they have thrown out of the Church of Christ Christians in all the Orient and Africa who never were under the pope or even understood the Gospel in that sense¹⁹.

Luther's concern with African culture and its people appears to surface in his refutation of certain myths about African origins which seem to have been circulating in Western Europe in the late Middle Ages. He seems to have embraced the idea that African people are descended from

¹⁷ Luther, *Genesis vorlesungen* (1536-1538), WA 42:480,7ff. (LW 2: 305): "Itaque apud Aegyptios eantior disciplina et honestas maius fuit, quam apud alios gentes: quantum enim Polygamie licentiam usurparent, tamen caetius vixisse apparet, quam qui Monoga iam retinuerent... Sive igitur Abraham Aegyptios docuit de his artibus, seu ipse, sicut Moses, de quo Stephanus testatur, eruditum eum fuisse in omni sapientia Aegyptica, ab Aegyptiacis haec didicerit, nihil refert".

¹⁸ Martin Luther, *Wider das Popstum zu Rom vom Teuffel gestift* (1545), WA 54:229,24 (LW 41:291): "So ist das werck auch am hellen tage, Denn er noch nie ist uber die Bischove in Afffrica, Graecia, Asia, Egypten, Syria, Persia etc. gewest, wirds auch nimmermehr werden, Ja er hat auch des Welschenlands Bisschove zu der Zeit nicht unter sich gehabt, sonderlich Meilan und Ravenna".

¹⁹ Martin Luther, *Acta Augustana* (1518), WAS 2:20,4 (LW 31:281): "Non veniet regnum die observatione, et Christianum esse posse audente negare, qui non sub Romano Pontifice decretisque eius oppressus fuerit. Ac sic plusquam octingentorum annorum Christianos totus orinetie et Affricae nobis ex Ecclesia Christi unquam sic intellexerunt". Cf. Martin Luther, *Grund und ursach aller Artikel D. Martin Luther* (1521), WA 7:41,29 (LW 32:69).

the offspring of Noah's ungodly son Ham (Gen. 10:6-9)²⁰. However, he firmly rejected the idea that in ancient times African peoples engaged in adultery which produced the Philistine people²¹. Likewise he addressed the allegation that African people are children of the devil:

His [Nimrod, the son of the Ethiopian Cush] hand was against all the churches as well as the estates, while he used tyranny to gain for himself a sovereignty that did not belong to him but to Shem who also had the priesthood. A son of the devil must be like his father, for Satan is a murderer (John 8:44). Furthermore, to be a mighty man on earth is not in itself evil...²²

The German Reformer further put this myth to rest by noting how various Ethiopians have been saved. (They could not have been children of the devil if they can be saved.) He writes:

Many Ethiopians, Ammonites and Edomites attached themselves to the confession and worship of the God of Israel in accordance with God's call²³.

Again there was the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:27ff. But in this way the prophet shows that a remnant of this people is to be saved that from the worst will come the holiest, but on the contrary, the holiest in Jerusalem will be the most depraved. Thus God will perplex the devil²⁴.

²⁰ Luther, Genesis vorlesungen (1536-1538), WA 42:398ff., 30ff. (LW 2:19:3ff.).

²¹ Luther, Genesis vorlesungen (1536-1538), WA 42:405,26ff. (LW 2:203).

²² Luther, Genesis vorlesungen (1536-1538), WA 42:401,7ff. (LW 2:197): "Fuit enim eius manus contra omnes Ecclesias, tum Politias, donec per tyrannidem sibi paravit Imperium, quod tamen non ad ipsum sed ad Sem pertinebat, sicut etiam sacerdotium. Sed filium Diaboli oportuit partie similem esse, Satan enim homicida est. Porro potentem in terra esse, non est per se malum..." Ibid., WA 42:288, (LW 2:37).

²³ Luther, Genesis vorlesungen (1536-1538), (1542-1544), WA 44:211,1 (LW 6:283-284): "Multi Aethiopes, Ammonitae, Edomitae adiunxerunt se confessioni et culti Dei Israel, secundum vocationem Dei".

²⁴ Martin Luther, Vorlesung über Jesaias (1527-1530), WA 31II:112, 15 (LW 16:159): "Item Eunichus. Atqua ita significat prophets reliquias populi istius servandas et ex pessimis futuros sanctissimos, Contra sanctissimo in Hierusalem futuros depravatisimos, sic deus confundet diabolum".

Why only Luther of the Reformers addressed this calumny against African people is an interesting question. Could it have to do with his peasant roots, which may have given him more knowledge of such unsavory accounts of African origins? If not, what do we make of his contemporaries' silence on the matter?

The immediately preceding quotation is most suggestive of a new trend in contemporary theology, the attempt of Black Liberation theologians to identify a Black/African presence in the Biblical witness. The Reformer's citation of the story of the Ethiopian eunuch is not an isolated incident. Years before the outset of the Reformation, he identified an Ethiopian as one of the Wise Men²⁵.

Another exciting insight from the Reformer's writings is his reflections on the impact of Africa on Plato, suggesting in a manner very typical of much modern Afro-centric thinking that the Greek philosophers got their ideas from Africa. Of course this was not a new idea in the late Middle Ages. It had been a theme which a number of the early Church Fathers, notably Clement of Alexandria had affirmed. On this matter, Luther wrote in his Lectures on Genesis:

It seems that perhaps in Egypt Plato picked up a few sparks of thought, seemingly from the discourses of the patriarchs and the prophets, and for this reason came closer to the truth²⁶.

In view of the historical-critical interpretive controversies over the degree to which the Lectures on Genesis is in fact Luther's work, some healthy skepticism about whether the preceding commitment really represents the Reformer's views is in order. However, given the general appreciation of African culture, he expressed elsewhere it seems in order

²⁵ Martin Luther, *First Lectures on the Psalms* (1513-1515), WA 3:470,5 (LW 10:412-413): "Hebr. Schaba id est Arabiae felicitas. Et inde fuit Regina Schaba, que ad Salomonem venit 3 Reg. 10. Saba autem secundum est civitas regalis Aethiopiae. Et dicitur a Saba filio ipsius Chus. Unde Chus Aethiops Hebr. dicitur: quia pater Aethiopiae est: Et ex istis diebus locus fuisse Magis putatur qui ad Christum natum venerunt".

²⁶ Luther, *Genesis vorlesungen* (1535-1536), WA 42:4,16 (LW 1:4): "Plato fortasse, ut videtur, collegit in Aegypto scintillas, quasi ex Patrum ac Prophetarum sermonibus Ideoque accessit propius". Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation To the Heathen*, VI; Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, I.XV; VI.IV.

to conclude that the above quotation is at least in the spirit of Luther's thought²⁷.

Concluding reflections

The preceding analysis demonstrates that there is something in the historic Christian tradition which appreciates African culture and takes revulsion in human servitude. Why, though, do these themes reflect more in the thought of Luther and Calvin, than Zwingli and the Anabaptists? What is transpiring in their lives and thought with regard to this issue? Can we be sure that their relative neglect of these issues is not related to racism? In any case, the preceding analysis has made evident that the African heritage and a concern for the liberation/welfare of the enslaved is more visible in the Reformation, as a result of the movement's embodiment of the catholic tradition, than is characteristic of much post-Enlightenment Western thought. The fact that these themes have been so little noticed in Reformation scholarship may say more of post-Enlightenment scholarly biases than about the Reformers themselves. Perhaps the Reformers (esp. Luther and Calvin) have a contribution to make to our contemporary multi-cultural context.

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²⁷ For skepticism concerning the authenticity of the Lectures on Genesis, see Peter Meinhold, *Die Genesisvorlesung Luthera und ihre Herausgeber* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1936); Erich Seeberg, *Studien zu Luthers Genesis vorlesung Guterloh*, 1932). For arguments on behalf of the continuity of the lectures and Luther's own writings, see Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., Introduction to Volume 1, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 1 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House): xii; my "Luther in Context" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1980), p. 302-303.

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