



## RELIGIOUS PRACTISING IN AFRICAN SOCIETIES EXPERIENCING PARTICULAR CONTEXTS: THE CASE OF PETER ABRAHAM'S AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

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### ABSTRACT

This article intends to demonstrate that religion has not allowed oppressed individuals to overcome trauma caused by racism and drive their society towards multiculturalism. Religious practice proves to be central in African societies and has allowed individuals to learn to live in community. In *Tell Freedom* and *The Black Experience in The Twentieth Century*, Peter Abrahams underlines his people's devotion to religion on account of the hard living conditions they experience. Marginalized individuals grant religion a preeminent place in the context of racial discrimination. Unfortunately, religion has not enabled them to achieve goal in a society marked by social injustice. In that context, the postcolonial approach fits in the analysis and permits to conduct the reflection upon the contradictions observed in religion and its hidden objectives.

**Key-words:** religion practice; autobiography; multiracial; contradiction; multiculturalism

### RESUME

Cet article entend démontrer que la religion n'a pas permis aux opprimés de surmonter le traumatisme causé par le racisme et conduit leur société vers le multiculturalisme. La pratique religieuse s'avère être au centre des sociétés africaines et a permis aux hommes d'apprendre à vivre en communauté. Dans *Tell Freedom* et *The Black Experience in the Twentieth Century* Peter Abrahams met l'accent sur la dévotion de son peuple pour la religion à cause des conditions de vie très difficiles qu'ils endurent. Les personnes marginalisées accordent une place prépondérante à la religion dans le contexte de la discrimination raciale. Malheureusement, la religion ne leur a pas permis d'atteindre les objectifs dans une société marquée par l'injustice sociale. Dans ce contexte, l'approche postcoloniale sied à l'analyse et permet de mener la réflexion sur les contradictions observées dans la religion et ses objectifs cachés.

**Mots clés :** pratique religieuse ; autobiographie ; contexte multiracial ; contradictions ; multiculturalisme

### INTRODUCTION

Religion, which intends to regulate behaviours in society through worshipping a divinity or divinities, has always been at the heart of African people's concern. African societies have shifted from a polytheist practice (they have worshipped many gods) to a monotheist one. This change of religious practice is indisputably the fact of Western imperialism which results in colonialism. Westerners have imposed upon

Africans their civilisation that encompasses religion. One has to acknowledge that the imposition has not been done with coercion. It has been possible thanks to what Gramsci (Webster, 1990) calls the civil society<sup>1</sup>. The African subject has to make do with one faith known as Christianity. The Westerner substantiates that imposition upon the African on the ground that the latter does not have any religion that can save his soul. As a consequence, the new order has deeply disrupted African ways of living. The Western mode of life pervades all the strata of society. The South African context which is predicated upon racial discrimination gives more reasons to oppressed people to get committed in the practice of the new religion. They strongly believe that the Christian faith can help them overcome the system which oppresses them. If the discriminated individuals lack means in order to operate significant changes in their favour, they have to rely on a supreme being to fight for their rehabilitation and freedom.

Many critics have underlined in their literary works the commitment of religion in their societies. They have given an insight into the capacity of the new faith to bring significant changes at the social level. It has enabled some individuals who have been excluded from community life because of their social origins to integrate society. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is a case in point with the outcasts who can have their saying in society after the settling of Christianity in Umuofia. Beside, one can quote Ngugy WaThiongo's works that shed light on the new faith which contributes to put an end to some traditional practices that endanger the life of individuals. In this connection, *Tell Freedom* and *The Black Experience in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, which are Peter Abrahams' autobiographies, mention the contribution of religion to shape positively the state of mind of oppressed people, despite the paradoxical behaviour of the Westerner vis-à-vis his own discourse embedded in the Holy Book. The autobiographies shed light on the role played by the new faith in the South African context of racial discrimination.

This article intends to demonstrate that the Western faith has been a serious hindrance to the birth of a fair society in the conflicting context of South Africa. In the period marked by discrimination, black and coloured South Africans have resorted to Christianity to resist pressure and expect from God better days. But the Westerner having imposed it upon natives refuses its practice. The postcolonial approach fits in with the investigation in that it "to radically questions the aggressively expansionist

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<sup>1</sup> For Gramsci, the civil society is composed of 'non-coercive' units such as family, school. As he argued, culture operates largely in the civil domain, and by consent rather than domination. For further information, consult Webster Roger (199: 120)

imperialism of the colonizing powers and in particular the system of values that supported imperialism and that it sees as still dominant within the Western world" (Bertens, 2001: 200). As discriminated people are accused of being uncivilized, and thus cruel, religion may come and operate thorough changes in terms of social values acquisition. Faith is expected to turn blacks and coloureds into good-natured individuals. This negative perception is unveiled by Edward Said when he asserts: "This means, in effect, that the East becomes the repository or projection of those aspects of themselves which Westerners do not choose to acknowledge (cruelty, sensuality, decadence, laziness, and so on)" (qted by Peter Barry, 2002: 193). Religion emerges as a means for socializing people living in the margin of society. Through a postcolonial perspective of Bhabha, this work examines, in the corpus cited, the social impact of European colonial rules on African cultures and society. The investigation is a two-part plan development. The first part brings up the contradictions embedded in the religious practices and the second part expounds the hidden objectives of the new faith.

## **1. Revealing Contradictions in the Practice of Christianity**

In *Tell Freedom* and *The Black Experience in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*; Abrahams portrays the cultural interaction between the colonizer and the colonized. For Bhabha (Bertens, 2001: 206-207), the encounter of the colonizer and colonized always affects both. The interaction sheds light on the contradictions that lie in the Westerner's behaviour who has brought his religion. The new faith imposed upon blacks and coloureds in South Africa seems not to reflect reality. There exists a deep gap between Christianity teaching that black people receive from Western priests. The lack of the faith observance noticed in the oppressor proves to be due to the social and political context.

### **1.1. Segregation in the Religious Venues.**

Segregation which stands as the separate development of blacks and white is clearly perceptible in many aspects of life in *Tell Freedom*. It clearly means that black people and Westerners cannot live in the same districts. Beside that ban, the most striking aspect revealing the separation between both communities is remarkable in venues. Paradoxically, church seems not to be an exception in the racial context. The banning is also extended to churches, violating one of the most significant precepts of the Christian faith. As in all racial contexts, black and white people cannot pray in the same venue, though they practise the same religion. Despite a great number of converted Africans to Christianity, they cannot pretend to worship God with the

Christian Westerner in the same church. Each antagonistic community members have to go to their own in spite of the fact that religion forbids all kinds of discrimination, be it racial or gendered-based. In *Tell Freedom*, there is a wide variety of significant places which remain forbidden to the alleged subordinate individuals. Certain work places constitute an exception to the rule of divide. In fact, Westerners need black and coloureds to work and produce for them so that the former can continue enjoying life and articulate hegemony. With regard to forbidden places, they are numerous. Peter Abrahams shares his own experience when he unfolds venues forbidden to him. He states: "I had been on the outside of things. The things I had wanted to do had been 'Reserved for Europeans Only'. There had been the concerts and theatres, the libraries and the parks, the bookshops and the clean, fresh-looking tea-rooms. All these I had wanted and found out of bounds" (*TF*, 179). African people in South Africa are not entitled to visit several places on account of their particular shades. There is a contradiction between the religious teaching received from Westerner and what goes on in real life. The ban of the above-mentioned places unveil the violation of the biblical words.

In addition to the aforementioned places embodying segregation, Abrahams highlights all sorts of schools as places that embody the divide between Westerners and Black people. Given that church brought Western education, one hardly accounts for the discrimination in schools. As a matter of fact, both black and white children cannot go to the same schools to receive the same education that prepares for employment. Legitimately, the White child is better educated than his black counterpart as the former learns in very appropriate conditions for thriving intellectually. Worse, segregation is noticeable in vocational schools in relation to religion in the South African. As in real life situations, the religious system of school distinguishes a Westerner from a non-European. That is to say a black man of God cannot pretend to equate with his white counterpart. The fact that both men of God remain different in front of the same God is illustrated in Alan Paton's fiction. He points it out this difference when he says: "John Kumalo looked at him. 'The Bishop says it is wrong,' he said, 'but, he lives in a big house, and the white priests get four, five, six times what you get, my brother' (Paton, 1953: 24). This idea of unequal treatment regarding people from different colours doing the work is highlighted by Abrahams as well. The writer underlines that fact in his autobiography when he argues: "I never found out where the handful of black teachers lived" (*TF*, 169). It is conspicuous that a black teacher and his white colleague do not live together though they do the same job which aims at training children for becoming good teachers imbued with a strong religious background. The efforts made by the Western

teachers to give a good impression of their relationship with black colleagues do not happen unnoticed among students. In one word, discrimination in the worshipping places is very remarkable in the context of racism. One can state that Bertens (2001: 204) is right when he says: "Orientalists who are clearly in sympathy with Oriental peoples and their cultures – and Said finds a substantial number of them – cannot overcome their Eurocentric perspective and have unintentionally contributed to Western domination." The general context impacts upon religious laws and reveals to what extent racial discrimination is embedded in Westerner's mode of life. Thus, with regard to Edward Said's Orientalism, one can contend that religion is perceived "as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient." (1990: 119) The quotation better accounts for the Westerner's lack of implementation of the biblical teaching.

From Abrahams' autobiography, Westerners have always refrained from praying the same God as discriminated individuals in the same venue. Yet, the antagonistic communities cannot take all steps to avoid getting together in religious premises. In *Tell Freedom*, as they share the same spatial indication, there may happen some rare occasions on which they can meet in order to worship. In this regard, Abrahams gives an insight into a particular gathering during a mass. He underlines: "Sometimes both white and black people came in from the surrounding country for Mass or the afternoon service. The white visitors sat in the front row. Males on one side of the aisle, females on the other." (TF, 172) Even inside the church, Westerners do not care about the biblical teaching that demands equal treatment among human beings, irrespective of their race, class and gender. Indeed, the holy book teaches that all people are equal in front of God.

In sum, racial discrimination pervades all aspects of social life in South Africa. The house of God does not remain unaffected by the Western ideology, unfolding Eurocentric trend and hypocrisy. The Westerner's violation of his own Christian faith demonstrates a lack of sincerity given their atypical behaviour.

### *1.2. The incongruity of the religious discourse*

Abrahams' autobiographies unfold many abnormal behaviours noticed in the Westerner. Daily life reveals a lot of absurdity that one clearly perceives in the Westerner's behaviour. The instigator of Christianity standing as the Westerner sometimes unfolds attitudes that contradict the Bible teaching. In *Tell Freedom* and *The Black Experience in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, one can perceive the contrast between real life behaviours and the biblical teaching in the racial context. Most Westerners refuse to

enforce their own rules stemming from the Bible that they have brought to natives. The oppressor who has brought the words of God with him sometimes unveils queer behaviour so that the native remain speechless. In this connection, Peter Abrahams gives an insight into his black friend's first experience of racism. Like the narrator, he also attended classes in a Christian training school. The protagonist puts it in the following conversation:

'I don't know. But it is better to know...Did a white person ever spit in your face?'

He turned his face to me again. I looked into his eyes.

'Yes.'

'In mine too.' (TF, 181)

As learners of the new faith, it turns out to be difficult to come to term with the fact that Westerners do not care about the teaching of the Bible in society. Thus, the biblical teaching seems not to be worthy implementing in the context of racial discrimination. The racial discourse is permeated with several arguments which remains difficult to substantiate scientifically speaking. Though some individuals strive to make it meaningful, religion should help them relinquish these ideas that tend to antagonize people. In fact, there is no biological difference among people. It is only the skin shade that differ from one community to another on account of migration and circumstances. So, the whole discourse held around the concept of race should not take place to polarize people. It is predicated upon fallacious reasons and hypocrisy.

In a nutshell, the incongruity of the religious discourse takes root in the Westerner's pretension to exert hegemony. Hence, his refusal to enforce the laws that originate from his own holy book actually lies in what Peter Abrahams alludes to as the equation. He gives an insight into it when he states:

In the month after his visit to the city, Jonathan and I had again and again brooded over the way the white man treated the black. We had worked it down to Christianity. The white man believed in God. He had brought God to us. God taught: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' Christ came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. The Church taught that we were all brothers in Christ, one with another...And the whites, those who had spat on us and on others, were all Christians. The equation did not worked out. (TF, 183)

The equation clearly bespeaks the many discrepancies observed in white people's relationship with blacks as far as the biblical teaching is concerned. Obviously, the Westerner's behaviour is beyond understanding.

The whole social functioning brings about a bewildered black man – an alienated individual - who has cut links with his religion to embrace another one which does not meet his expectation. The observed gap between the westerner's practice of religion and the faith laws have turned converted Africans into reluctant, cautious beings vis-à-vis Christianity. They no longer believe in the new faith that has been brought to them. This lack of confidence in Christianity is noticeable in Alan Paton's fiction. He reports: "'Yes, he is a great man in politics.' Msimangu paused: 'I hope I shall not hurt you further. Your brother has no use for the church any more. He says that what God has not done for South Africa, man must do. That is what he says'" (1953: 15). The contradictory behaviour of the Westerner towards Christianity turns nearly all blacks into atheism. The discouragement is higher among intellectuals and politicians who believe more in confrontation. Students intending to major in religious teaching are also concerned with the negative feeling for the Western religion. The racial experience of students in that domain of learning proves to be more traumatizing. Indeed, black students may grow up with such abnormalities which are embedded in the Westerner's behaviour, shaping them into fierce opponents to Eurocentrism. In addition to disappointment, black people feel frustrated by the Westerner's double standard treatment.

The racial discourse contradicts the teaching of the Bible as *Tell Freedom* reveals it. The instigator, that is say the Westerner, refuses to enforce the principles which originate from his own findings. This legitimately entails frustration and deep disappointment in the converted black person. The Westerner's refusal to implement their religious precepts unquestionably hides a secret agenda.

## **2. The Westerner's Expectation through Religious Practising**

*Tell Freedom* and *The Black Experience in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* portray the expectation that the Westerner puts in religion. The Westerner has made great efforts to drive the discriminated people to put much faith in his religion. That endeavour starts with Abrahams' people acceptance to relinquish their own traditional beliefs. Some discriminated communities have laid much emphasis on the religion coming from the West. If their practice of the new faith has an impact upon behaviours, the Westerner purports to exert hegemony. The devotion has caused a sort of brainwashing noticed at the individual and collective level.

### ***2.1. The Westerner's intent to operate change in discriminated people***

The examination of Peter Abrahams' *Tell Freedom* and *The Black Experience in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* underlines the hegemonic project of the Westerner through religion. The new faith has been brought to significantly change the native's behaviour so as to exert hegemony. The Western religion implicitly intends to turn the subjects into good-natured individuals in the South African racial context with the objective to better control them. That change happens through the scrupulous respect of religious precepts by the believer who attests faith at the same time. It is the case of the narrator who has been transformed into a very respectful individual of his fellow men, whether they are men or women, white or black. That is why he contends: "There is no virtue, no goodness in hurting, abusing, degrading someone white because you have been abused, degraded and hurt by someone white" (*TBETC*, 33-34). It is conspicuous that the narrator has actually changed despite the hostile environment. In the racial context, the teaching and respect of religious principles prove to be very significant to the Westerner. He obviously draws profit from the native's apparent acceptance of the racial discrimination that prevails.

Abrahams seems not to feel bad feelings which can be harmful to his personal and societal development. He merely practises the religion as he has received teaching from family grown-ups and religious leaders. From that change, the 'self' may be certain to keep on exploiting the 'other' in silence. Indeed, the observance of religious precepts is not new in the African context. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a case in point. The Igbo community has its own beliefs that regulate social life. Therefore, if Western faith invites people to respect and love one's fellow men whether they are poor or rich, African mode of life calls for these values as well. In one word, African religions characterized by their polytheistic nature intend to reach the same objective as the Westerner's. For instance, human beings should be tolerant to one another so as to favour social integration. In Sum, through religion, the oppressor works to achieve goal in South Africa which appears to be the subordination of black and coloured individuals. He purports to implement his hegemonic project without using violence. This method recalls Gramsci's civil society.

Accordingly, Abrahams sheds light on the inactive behaviour of his people in his autobiographies. Despite the tense atmosphere, he does not mention any protest initiated by the discriminated communities. As a matter of fact and at first sight, it is not obvious for these marginalized individuals to embrace the new faith given the ostensible contradictions in the oppressors' behaviours. Thanks to Western priests who have made use of an apparent kindness, they have succeeded in leading natives to internalize the religious teachings so well that one may think of the latter's own subordination. From that strategy intending to better control, discriminated people

have to believe in Christianity's capacity to cultivate human values and gainsay their traditional way of living. Among the social values embodied by the discriminated people, *Tell Freedom* and *The Black Experience in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* underscore tolerance.

With regard to the social value and despite the conflicting context, some black people have striven to cleanse their hearts from hatred. They have pointed out love toward their oppressors as it is mentioned in the Holy Book. It is remarkable in the narrator when he argues: "I was a full member of the fellowship of the Christ who offered life and offered it more abundantly, who taught: Love thy neighbour as thyself" (*TF*, 172). Religion has taught Abrahams to be tolerant and thus love other human beings regardless of their cultural and racial differences. Furthermore, this acceptance of the other has certainly driven the narrator to get married to a Westerner as he underlines it in his second autobiography. The religious teachings seem to be so well internalized that some of Abrahams' people cannot feel hatred for the Westerner who carries on inflicting humiliating treatment on them. This is exemplified in Alan Paton's fiction when he puts it: "They must go on," said Msimangu seriously. 'You cannot stop the world from going on. My friend, I am a Christian. It is not in my heart to hate the white man. It was a white man who brought my father out of darkness...'" (Paton, 1953: 15) The tolerant attitude cultivated by the biblical teachings also entails the oppressed individual to easily team up with his oppressor. Accordingly, it enables him to get integrated in the Western community.

Tolerance proves to be very important in time of crisis as it allows to avoid physical confrontation between antagonistic forces. Although some mistakenly perceive the value as an attitude proper to weak individuals, it remains helpful in solving conflict. The virtue serves as a means to decrease tension between antagonistic parties and inevitably compels to meetings which may drive to settle the matter. In this perspective, Mandela's tolerant attitude which derives from his traditional education has permitted White South Africans to be confident in order to start the reconciliation process. It has contributed to set up a multicultural society in that all communities can live together while being respectful of their cultural differences.

Moreover, *Tell Freedom* and *The Black Experience in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* enlighten on religion teaching other values and among which one can quote humility, kindness, respect. These social values have participated in softening black people and contributed to strengthen the White individual's hegemony. Thus, people receiving religious education should embody these values so that they live in peace and thus ease their integration in society. In South Africa, church and family education has succeeded in instilling them in discriminated people. The narrator can be taken as an

instance, for he is pervaded with the above-mentioned moral values. This is justified by the fact that Abrahams is quite well integrated during his exile. In his autobiographies, he never makes a fuss with people of his host countries as he is respectful of social codes and institutions. On the contrary, some of his fellow men have been into trouble for having been intolerant toward Westerners. In this regard, the protagonist reports: "Any way you look at it, racial exploitation is ugly, whether coming from white or black. I have wondered, over the years, what triggered Mr Bah's particular form of black racism." (*TBETC*, 33) Therefore, the internalization of moral values is very significant in the racial times as they help to prevent a rise in an already tense environment. They are also significant to the oppressed communities in that they allow to withstand the pangs of racism. Faced with changes, the oppressor can continue to take advantage of his dominant position in the context. One can contend that these above-mentioned values have also existed in African traditional societies before the Westerner's arrival and ensure a peaceful environment.

If religion encompasses a lot of advantages as the autobiographies underline, it can sometimes drive to extreme tension between people. In fact, the strict respect of religious principles has turned some believers into zealous individuals. These individuals purport to scrupulously implement the content of the holy book. Worse, others may become extremists which stands as the highest degree of zeal. They want to fully implement principles, refusing contradictions that they perceive as desecrating attempts. Extremists, thus, resort to all sorts of persecution to tame people and impose hegemony. Achebe has underlined extremism in some of his literary works. It is the case of Islamic extremists in *There Was a Country* who actually cause a lot of troubles to people living in the North of Nigeria. In this connection, the writer upholds in his memoir: "Over eight hundred deaths, mainly in North Nigeria, have been attributed to the militant Islamic sect Boko Haram since its formation in 2002. The group's ultimate goal, we are told, is to "overthrow the Nigerian government and create an Islamic state" (*TWC*, 250-251). Paradoxically and unconsciously, these extremists eventually go against the religious precepts they pretend to defend, given their contradictory behaviour. Indeed, all religions proscribe the killing of a human being by another, whatever the ground.

In a nutshell, religious education has operated great changes in individuals in order to enable the Westerner to better control and exploit the discriminated people. It has taught discriminated people how to behave in favour of the racial system and implicitly resist the racial context. Beyond the moral values the discriminated people have internalized and which facilitate their integration in society, religion is viewed as a cause of their alienation.

## *2.2. Religion viewed as a factor of brainwashing*

In Abrahams' literary works, religion is viewed as a source of great hope for indigenous people. But the Westerner purports to use the faith to alienate the discriminate individuals. Religion is presented as encompassing some alleged benefits natives may draw from it. Among these benefits, one can quote Western education brought by Christianity. Thanks to education which is, in fact, the tool for alienation, Africans are supposed to acquire western knowledge which may offer them opportunities in modern society. To substantiate the importance of the new finding, Abrahams underlines: "And then the white man comes into his contentment. The white man shows him new things and new ways. And he is no longer content with the old ways. The white man says the key to this world is to become a Christian and to have knowledge and education. The boy looks at the things of this new world. He finds them good' (TF, 180). There seems to be a strong link between religion and education in that the first schools have been built by missionaries to teach Western values. Obviously, embracing the new faith becomes compulsory if one intends to get educated and take advantage of Western mode of life which seems less constraining and archaic. On the contrary, education is unable to open doors to the discriminated individuals as indigenous people are poorly educated. The setting up of schools by the colonizer has clear-cut objectives. It intends to create a fragmented and hybrid black individual. This is exemplified by the narrator who has been victim of unemployment in South Africa despite his education. As a matter of fact, education has not been helpful to natives in the sense that they cannot equate with their white counterparts. That is why one can contend that it has created a lot of concerns to them in the quest for social integration. In fact, the Westerner has brought his education with the aim to alienate natives. It has been initiated by the colonizer to operate a brainwashing of the discriminated communities' people. School has been created to implement what Bhabha calls mimicry<sup>2</sup>. It indisputably contributes to the collapse of African culture to the profit of the Westerner's.

Though Africans have been reluctant at the advent of Western religion in Africa, its establishment has created infatuation later on. It is in that perspective Ezeulu<sup>3</sup> has sent his son to the Westerner's school, although he knows nothing about the new

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<sup>2</sup>Bhabha calls mimicry the always slightly alien and distorted way in which the colonized, either out of choice or under duress, will repeat the colonizer's way and discourse. Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory : The Basics*, London, Routledge, 2001, p. 208

<sup>3</sup>In *Arrow of God* by Chinua Achebe (1954), Ezeulu who is the priest of Umuofia has made up his mind to send his son to the Westerner's school. His son is like a pathfinder to him and his community.

form of education. As time flies, Africans have shown enthusiasm when it comes to send children to receive Western education. The view that religion can solve many problems is substantiated by Karl Marx when he asserts: "Religion...is the opium of the people" (Fasensfest, 2006). The metaphor intends to show that religion may cure believers like the use of opium as a medicine in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

To some extent, education has been helpful to the oppressed individuals, though it has contributed to disrupting African societies. That is why Achebe asserts: "I am not one of those who would say that Africa has gained nothing at all during the colonial period..." (1969: 4) Not only does it help them meet their oppressor, but it also allows them to address issues related to their communities. Thus, education brought by religion remains a powerful means to fight against stereotypes and prejudices. Thanks to it, blacks and whites can sometimes get together so as to live in a peaceful environment with their differences and thus build a multicultural society.

Beyond the ostensible and alleged benefits of religion perceived through education, it is the native's alienation which is at stake. In *Tell Freedom*, hopeless discriminated individuals resort to the divine as the Bible teaches them. From that, the Western practices of religion seem to resemble the African's in many ways. They seem not different at all, demonstrating the Westerner's ambition to alienate the 'Other'. In fact, believers search for comfort in praying God when issues are out of human control and comprehension. All believers expect him to come to their rescue in these hard days. This is illustrated by Achebe (1958: 70) in *Things Fall Apart* when Okonkwo pays a visit to a medicine-man or diviner to account for the deaths of his babies. Accordingly, believers ask for either material assistance or health recovery. With regard to material help, the writer's people turn towards religion so as to secure a job which may help them meet both ends. In actual facts, these individuals lacking good education obviously cannot be employed. They resort to God for achieving goal. This confidence in God to provide them with employment is mentioned in the conversation:

"I'm out of work," Aunt Betty hissed.

'Ah, yes, Oh Jehovah. Your daughter needs work. Help her to get it. She will not forget you when pay day comes around. Look down Our Father, and give her her daily bread less she walks in the ways of sin.' (TF, 67)

It is conspicuous that oppressed people put much faith in God in that the Supreme Being can solve their problems for good. If one does not believe in him, they cannot expect anything from him. That is why Stewart in his critical work states: "The belief

is that by acting in accordance with the divine commands and laws, one will find favour with God, and He will see to it that all goes well for the righteous person." (2018: 210). The fact of believing in his omnipotent nature compels Abrahams' community members to keep on abiding by religious precepts. Religion becomes the last resort for the discriminated individuals. In fact, it becomes harder for uneducated non-white individuals to have an employment in the Westernized South African. If they have any, they have to make do with petty and dangerous ones as Abrahams underlines it in *MineBoy*. Xuma, the illiterate protagonist, can only work in mine that jeopardizes black lives. From all these, the role assigned to religion proves to be clear for understanding. It intends to discard the natives from their traditional beliefs so that they embrace the new faith. Thus, religion fosters the discriminated individual's alienation.

## CONCLUSION

Practising religion has got an influence on the discriminated South Africans in the racial context. Western religion has revealed a lot of contradictions in its practice. The racial discrimination has driven him to ignore the principles of their own creation. This is perceptible in the discrimination taking place in prayer places in which the 'Other' and the Westerner are not entitled to mix up. Outside churches, things seem to be worsened on account of the Westerner's hatred for the marginalized individuals. His behaviour totally contradicts the biblical teachings which drives the oppressed individual to doubt about the Westerner's sincerity.

In this hostile environment, religion has allowed the Westerner to exert hegemony through the establishment of churches and the teachings of values that already exist in the discriminated individual's traditional life. The teaching of the new faith has turned natives into passive individuals, allowing the expansion of the discriminated system. Moreover, the Western faith has strongly contributed to the oppressed people's alienation and thus their marginalization. The most significant institution used to alienate natives remains school. Though education is assumed to offer employment opportunities to natives, they cannot compete with the Westerner on account of a dire shortage of facilities and, thus a poor education. Their alienation is noticeable in their ways of worshipping and participates in worsening predicament. The devotion to religion has not been helpful to Abrahams' people. Thus, the new faith has prevented oppressed individuals from airing their main concern in the racial context.

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