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F. Hale

THE GOSPEL *CONTRA* NIETZSCHE: A SOUTH AFRICAN LITERARY CRITIQUE OF WILLE ZUR MACHT

ABSTRACT

A century of scholarship has shed countless photons of light on the reception of Friedrich Nietzsche's ideas in numerous countries. Still largely unilluminated, however, are South African reactions to his scepticism and moral pessimism. The present article explores how Joseph Doke, a scholarly, transplanted Englishman who served as a Baptist pastor in Johannesburg and elsewhere and wrote the first biography of Gandhi, used fiction to criticise Nietzsche early in the twentieth century. His novel *The queen of the secret city* (1916) embodies an explicit rejection of this German philosopher's pivotal notion of Wille zur Macht (will to power). It is further suggested that Doke was probably indebted to G.K. Chesterton's confrontation with that idea in *Orthodoxy* (1908). In Doke's critique of Nietzsche, he also described ethnic and religious clashes and implicitly argued for the moral superiority of Christianity and the ethical need for missionary endeavours.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the annals of South African Protestantism, Joseph J. Doke is undoubtedly best remembered as the Baptist minister in Johannesburg who came to the aid of Mohandas K. Gandhi after initially meeting him in 1907. He subsequently wrote the first, and variously published, biography of the Mahatma (Doke 1909). In the history of missions, this transplanted Englishman is known for his groundbreaking work in extending his denomination's outreach to the Lamba people of the Copperbelt in what is now northern Zambia and the Katanga province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, an endeavour which has also been described in the

Prof. Frederick Hale, Research fellow: North-West University, South Africa. E-mail: fh243@hermes.cam.ac.uk

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semi-popular literature of African Christianity.[1] Much less appreciated, however, and given very scant attention in Cursons' serviceable if too brief biography is Doke's brief career as a novelist. Accordingly, his literary hostility to the philosophy of the German sceptic Friedrich Nietzsche, in which he correctly perceived a major threat to the Christian faith, has been overlooked. In the present article I shall take steps towards redressing that scholarly neglect. After describing foundational aspects of Nietzsche's thought, which Doke found particularly objectionable, the focus will be on how Doke constructed the impact of Nietzschean "will to power" (*Wille zur Macht*) and its incompatibility with both Christian spirituality and Christian ethics in his posthumously published novel *The queen of the secret city* (1916). This is a topic almost completely ignored in the extensive scholarly literature about Nietzsche, which has rarely touched on the reception of his provocative ideas in South Africa.

2. LIFE AS COMPETITIVE STRUGGLE AND WILL TO POWER

Underlying much of Nietzsche's thought, including that which Doke would criticise in his novel, was the conviction that all life is in a never-ending competition, not merely to survive, but also, of necessity, to extend its power over other living forms. The will to power, in brief, is inescapably the will of life. This, Nietzsche believed, was the only real drive in mankind; all behaviour is derived from it. Failure to extend one's power is thus contrary to the law of nature; weakness is ultimately unacceptable, if humanity is to be elevated to greater heights. Competition has nourished human progress, even though it is ruthless. In his categorisation of "good" and "bad", he assigned the former label to all that heightens feelings of power and the will to power, while the latter is that which proceeds from weakness. Societies' axiological hierarchies and mores are ultimately attributable to how they interpret different behaviours according to these two norms, regardless of how euphemistic the language applied to them may be. The greatest people, Nietzsche theorised, are those who not only control others, but also succeed in gaining power over themselves and engaging in creativity. This is the basis of the "overman" or *Übermensch* concept.

1 The standard and very sympathetic biography is Cursons (1929).

3. NIETZSCHE ON WAR AND PEACE

Both Nietzsche's acolytes and less enthusiastic commentators have repeatedly argued that his remarks, which appear to laud the martial life, have been misunderstood and irresponsibly appropriated for purposes, which he would not have supported. This, too, is highly relevant to an understanding of Doke's critique.

> I greet all the signs that a more manly, warlike age is coming, which will, above all, bring valor again into honour (Nietzsche 1882).

"Live in conflict with your equals and with yourselves!" Nietzsche urged readers:

> Be robbers and ravagers as long as you cannot be rulers and owners, you men of knowledge! The time will soon be past when you could be content to live in the woods like timid dear! (Hollingdale 1965:174).

As Hollingdale observed in the 1960s, this kind of passages had "done more harm to his reputation and led to more misunderstanding than all of his other writings put together".

He found it regrettable that they had often been read out of context to sound like "incitement to armed conflict" (Hollingdale 1965:174).

Hollingdale offered a far more benign interpretation: such texts must be read metaphorically. Moreover, he suggested that Nietzsche, in what he generously called "perhaps unwisely-chosen words", was appealing primarily to other philosophers to take up the verbal cudgels and become warriors and ravagers of knowledge to challenge the established order of society, particularly in Wilhelmine Germany (Hollingdale 1965:175). On similar grounds, Hollingdale also challenged what he believed was an unfair reading of the locus classicus of Nietzsche's attitude towards war:

> Ye shall love peace as a means to new wars – a short peace better than long … Do ye say that a good cause halloweth even war? I say to you: a good war halloweth every cause. War and courage have done greater things than charity (Nietzsche 1933:39).

The intended meaning, according to Hollingdale, is more lucidly expressed in the same brief section of that treatise and again seems to be directed at intellectuals:

> And if ye cannot be saints of knowledge, at least be her warriors. They are the companions and forerunners of such holiness … Ye shall seek your enemy, ye shall wage your war, and for your own

> ideas. And if your ideas be vanquished, your honesty shall yet cry triumph! (Nietzsche 1933:39).

4. EXPLICITLY ANTI-CHRISTIAN DIMENSIONS OF NIETZSCHEAN THOUGHT

One need not read far in Nietzsche's publications from the 1870s and 1880s to find much that challenged Christian presuppositions and directly attacked the church as both a religious and social institution. A detailed synopsis of these elements lies outside the scope of the present article, but the main lightning rods, which drew Christian counterattacks, can be conveniently summarised. One underlying premise governing the thought of this German Lutheran pastor's son was atheism. Nietzsche was among the most prominent popularisers of Hegel's phrase "death of God". He believed that there was no transcendent directing force of the universe. Nor is there any metaphysical reality; the idea of that is merely a mental product of the phenomenal world, which is the only one. Only what we experience is real, and it is a reality of endless chaos or kaleidoscopic change without beginning, end, or divinely inspired purpose.

One corollary of this Godless existence is the assumption that people are biological entities without a connection to any divine or supernatural force. Like other forms of life, that in human form has an innate drive to enhance its status relative to its environment. To a noteworthy extent, this meshed with Darwinian evolutionary thought, which well before the end of the nineteenth century had gained a position of dominance in a great deal of British and continental European philosophy and obviously posed a major challenge to conventional Christian conceptions of the relationship of humanity to God as creator. Furthermore, Nietzsche held no brief for belief in an elevated spiritual state beyond the grave. Rather than striving after that illusion, he argued, people should concentrate on rising above their current, mediocre state. Those people who made significant efforts in this regard, and used their "passion" creatively instead of suppressing them, Nietzsche believed, earned the widely misunderstood "Superman" or "overman" (*Übermensch*) appellation.

Turning to his ideas about ethics, in the absence of God-given ethical precepts, Nietzsche found the genesis of morality largely in social relationships. Far from denying that people were incapable of behaving in ways that benefitted others, he associated nobility and generosity with the "master morality" of ancient Greece. By contrast, "slave morality" in his scheme was the reversal (or "revaluation") by lower class people, including those in servitude, who he believed comprised the main

body of early Christians. They, Nietzsche, with the assistance of the Pauline epistles, had transformed the "good news" of the Gospel into its polar opposite to justify any theoretically submissiveness and other downtrodden statuses. Moreover, without an overarching, divinely given moral code, Nietzsche contended that no unitary ethical system should or could be appropriate for all people. Instead, different individuals and especially different societies needed different moral laws. Again, the distance between what Nietzsche provocatively styled his "immoralist" concepts and Christianity could hardly have been greater or more obvious.

Despite his respect for Jesus (qualified by his rejection of the Nazarene's ideal of pacifism, which he perceived as an expression of weakness), Nietzsche regarded the institutional church as essentially fraudulent and accused the clergy of having created a "holy lie" to maintain their authority:

> The holy lie therefore invented (1) a God who punishes and rewards, who strictly observes the law-book of the priest and is strict about sending them into the world as his mouthpieces and plenipotentiaries; (2) an afterlife in which the great punishment machine is first thought to become effective – to this end the immortality of the soul; (3) conscience in man as the consciousness that good and evil are permanent – that God himself speaks through it when it advises conformity with priestly precepts; (4) morality as denial of all natural processes, as reduction of all events to a morally conditioned event, moral effects (i.e., the idea of punishment and reward) as effects permeating all things, as the sole power, as the creator of all transformation; (5) truth as given as revealed, as identical with the teaching of the priests: as the condition for all salvation and happiness in this life and the next (Nietzsche 1967:90-91).

Nietzsche excoriated what he believed were the baneful social consequences of Christianity as a dominant religion in society, beginning with its ascent in the Roman Empire, which he lauded as "the most admirable of all works of art". Asserting that nothing comparable "sub specie aeterni has been brought into being", he ascribed its decline to Christianity. That religion, Nietzsche professed in some of his most intemperate, venomous language, was "incapable of any act that is not disintegrating, poisonous, deprecating, [or] blood-sucking". Christians, guilty of the "corruptest" form of corruption, had used "duplicity" to creep "into every individual" and drain the populace of "all earnest interest in real things, of all instinct for reality". The followers of Jesus in the Roman Empire were a "cowardly, effeminate and sugar-coated gang" who alienated all "souls" from

> all the meritorious, manly and noble natures that had found in the cause of Rome their own cause, their own serious purpose, their own price (Nietzsche 1920:169-170).

This criticism of effeminacy would echo in *The queen of the secret city*.

5. NIETZSCHE'S VULNERABLE COMMENTS ABOUT SLAVERY

Nietzsche also made himself vulnerable to severe criticism in Doke's novel through his comments which appeared to defend the institution of slavery in human societies past and present. As will be noted below, Doke was among those who took him to task over this point. In *Beyond good and evil*, Nietzsche asserted,

> Every elevation of the type "man" has hitherto been the work of an aristocratic society – and so will it always be – a society believing in a long scale of gradations of rank and differences of worth among human beings, and requiring slavery in some form or another (Nietzsche 1907:223).

In the same section of that work, he added that the

> essential thing [in a] good and healthy aristocracy [is that it] accept with a good conscience the sacrifice of a legion of individuals, who, for its sake, must be suppressed and reduced to imperfect men, to slaves and instruments (Nietzsche 1907:225).

Huddleston recently argued that, when taken out of context and considered in isolation from Nietzsche's other statements about human dignity and worth, these remarks in *Beyond good and evil* create the misleading impression that Nietzsche was "a defender, indeed a champion, of exploitation of the worst sort" (Huddleston 2014:135). The extent to which his comments in this work represent his attitude towards slavery might be debatable, but it will be noted that, to Doke, at least as expressed by characters in *The queen of the secret city*, they left little room for interpretation.

6. THE INEVITABILITY OF CHRISTIAN OPPOSITION

That Doke would take a determined stance in the Transvaal and through the medium of fiction against the proliferation of Nietzsche's thought is not surprising when one considers the course of this sensitive minister's life. Born in Devon in 1861, he proclaimed the Gospel in the Cape Colony

during the early 1880s, chiefly in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and Graaff-Reinet; he then returned to serve pastorates in his home village and Bristol before proceeding to Christchurch, New Zealand, where he preached for approximately seven years in the late 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century. Doke was called to Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape in 1903, but four years later he accepted the pastorate of Central Baptist Church in Johannesburg. Always concerned about missionary outreach, this peripatetic clergyman devoted much of the last stage of his life to the evangelisation of the Lamba and other peoples in central Africa. He died in what is now Zambia in 1913 (Parnell 1968).

Precisely how and when Doke became aware of Nietzsche's philosophy may be impossible to ascertain. Among his key works, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* was published in London as *Beyond good and evil* in 1907. Also *Sprach Zarathustra*, with its extensive criticism of Christianity, was first published in Alexander Tille's English as *Thus spake Zarathustra* in London in 1896, and Thomas Common's revised translation appeared there under the same title thirteen years later. Nietzsche's Der Wille zur Macht, cobbled together from his disjointed *Nachlaß*, was rendered into English by Anthony Ludovici, whose books about this philosopher gained a readership in the United Kingdom before the First World War, as *The will to power* and issued in Edinburgh in 1910. Whether Doke actually read these works is unknown. It is quite conceivable that he gained his knowledge of Nietzsche largely or exclusively by reading criticisms written by Christian detractors. At any rate, even after returning to South Africa, Doke sought vigorously to remain au fait with intellectual currents in the United Kingdom, and it seems highly plausible that, by the turn of the century or shortly thereafter, he began to read at least second-hand accounts of certain aspects of Nietzschean thought. As Thatcher has credibly demonstrated, between approximately 1890 and the outbreak of the war in 1914, the sceptical German's verbal assaults on foundational aspects of Christianity were gaining footholds among the British intelligentsia (Thatcher 1972). He caught the attention and, to varying degrees, aroused the resistance of such littérateurs as George Bernard Shaw (the title of whose satirical of *Man and Superman*, which was first staged in 1905, was inspired by the Nietzschean notion of the Übermensch), G.K. Chesterton, D.H. Lawrence, John Davidson, and Joseph Conrad.

In English Christian circles, one of the most frequently cited counters to Nietzsche was Chesterton's *Orthodoxy* (1908), which was almost immediately hailed as a masterpiece of Christian apologetics. Soon circulated internationally, including in South Africa, it may well have come into Doke's hands. Briefly stated, Chesterton's dismantling of a simplistic

caricature of the Nietzschean emphasis on the human will focused on the will's self-destruction. He declared that

> the most characteristic current philosophies [had] a touch of suicidal mania [about them and, far from being the blooming of free thought, were] the old age and ultimate dissolution of free thought.

Chesterton flatly rejected the assertions that "reason destroys" and that the "ultimate authority" lies "in will, not in reason". He argued that, far from being the path to freedom, the mere assertion of one's will was actually a matter of "self-limitation". The act of choosing something implied the rejection of "everything else", because selection meant exclusion of that which is not selected. "If you become King of England," he stated by way of illustration, "you give up the post of Beadle in Brompton." In an ad hominem adjunct to his argument, Chesterton alluded to Nietzsche's total incapacitation during the last decade of his life and pronounced that "he is himself more preposterous than anything he denounces". This apologist deftly averred, "If Nietzsche had not ended in imbecility, Nietzscheism would end in imbecility". He compared observing the path of Nietzsche's and other contemporary secularist philosophies to watching from a balloon as trains race towards each other on the same track:

> They are all on the road to the emptiness of the asylum. For madness may be defined as using mental activity so as to reach mental helplessness; and they have nearly reached it (Chesterton 1908:63-78).

7. A SYNOPSIS OF *THE QUEEN OF THE SECRET CITY*

Much of Doke's literaryresponse to Nietzsche dovetails neatly with Chesterton's critique. Because Doke's final novel is apparently almost completely unknown in the twenty-first century, a synopsis of its plot and principal themes is in order. Briefly, *The queen of the secret city* is a frame narrative, a story within a story. The text spans slightly over 300 pages divided into forty-six chapters. It is a romance of the kind that became popular in Victorian Britain, relating a tale rich in cross-cultural collisions in southern Africa, but quite impoverished in plausibility. One must suspend one's disbelief in the viability of sensationalised characters and events to accept its underlying premises and make the story readable. In brief, as a sequel to Doke's *The secret city. A romance of the Karroo* (1913), the central character, Justin Retief, receives from a murky young English academic who is dying in Graaff-Reinet a translated account of Nefert, a mysterious lost

city-state in the Kalahari Desert. Precisely when the events depicted therein took place is impossible to discern, although a chronological framework in approximately the seventeenth century seems possible.

Reading this saga, which has fallen into their hands, Retief and his Scottish wife Jeanie learn that, in the wake of Islamic proliferation across North Africa, devotees of the pre-Islamic religion of Egypt gradually migrated up the Nile and across central Africa to the region of Nefert, hoping to restore the faith of their ancestors and make the cult of Osiris and Isis thrive again. But this city in the desert is actually an oasis of multiculturalism in which several religions live in a state of general toleration, though hardly mutual respect. Moreover, none of them has significant vigour. The classic Egyptian faith grew weak as the exiles from Egypt wended their way to the interior of southern Africa; the narrator describes the self-styled priests who wish to restore it to its erstwhile glory as having sunk to "lower depths of degeneracy" and "depraved in morals, tinkering with useless symbols and magic charms" (Doke 1916:42). The nemesis of Islam is far more strongly represented in Nefert, but – as limned by the severely critical and prejudiced narrator – has hardly uplifted the spiritual and ethical standards of its local adherents. In unadulterated stereotypical fashion, they are religious fanatics under the influence of itinerant Arabic slave traders who pray towards Mecca before cheating their customers. A small number of local residents are Christians, but there does not appear to be any church in Nefert. However, a few years before the plot begins to unfold, an evangelising hermit monk, previously called "Gerald", but now bearing the religious name "Brother Francis", arrived and began to proclaim the Gospel on an open terrain near the city on a more or less weekly basis. He also launched a school and regales the children with stories from the Bible. This missionary's background is only partially disclosed. He has lived in Rome and Alexandria; by his own testimony, as he seeks spiritual purity through monastic discipline, including self-flagellation, his younger days were marked by unidentified immoral acts.

With a past no less illuminated, a stunningly beautiful young lady, bearing the nearly Wagnerian name "Reinhild", which belies her Egyptian origins, and having incredible power over other people and animals, makes her advent in Nefert, accompanied by a troupe of servants. Aware of her national background, the conniving Egyptian priests in the city devise schemes for exploiting her as an instrument for restoring their faith to a position of religious primacy. Reinhild has little interest in either their ancient rituals or their designs, however, and, after assuming political leadership in the city, is initially preoccupied with consolidating her administrative heft in all spheres of life. In imposing this political *Gleichschaltung* as the backbone of her will to power, the despotic new monarch is ruthless. Her

total lack of restraint and moral standards come to the fore when she autocratically reacts to the assassination of her predecessor, Abu Mutlib. "Dogs! Ye deserve a long, a lingering death," she tells them. Turning to her guards, she orders them to

> remove the eyes of the murderers, and at nightfall ye shall tear their bodies limb from limb, until their last lingering breath be gone.

The *de facto* queen of Nefert rejoices in her dominance and ability to take revenge. To the narrator, it seems at that stage that Reinhild is an animal, and that

> her passions aroused, and some savage instinct awakened in her, the idea of such brutal justice was exhilarating, and she lusted for the sight of blood, as a tiger might lust (Doke 1916:134).

Notwithstanding this unrestrained, sanguinary discourse, one finds an underlying current of hope in this Christian novel. In the meantime, Reinhild met Brother Francis and discovered, mirabile dictu, that he is her former paramour in both Alexandria and Rome. In their conversations, she immediately understands that he (whom she invariably addresses by his secular name, "Gerald") is no longer the testosterone-driven young rake whom she knew many years earlier, but a pious man of God. For his part, it is obvious that his love for Reinhild has never completely expired; he remains fascinated by her beauty and temporarily believes that beneath the surface she is actually a decent if misled person. Only after gaining greater insight into her abuse of her position does he realise that he has deceived himself and that a "devil" dwells in her personality. On her side, only gradually does she gain respect for his metanoia, the Christianity he represents, and its beneficial impact on increasing numbers of people in Nefert. Eventually, and due in no small measure to the softening effect which raising an orphaned baby whom she adopts has, Reinhild's own heart becomes softened. She is transformed from a ruler of unrestrained power and occasional ruthlessness to a spirit-filled woman on the verge of accepting the Christian faith as her own.

Of course, this all contrasts strongly with the ongoing machinations of the Egyptian priests in Nefert and the numerous Muslims of the city. The ever-scheming priestly coterie are forever devising plots to thwart the waxing influence of the Christians and target Brother Francis as their key foe whom they must eliminate if their plan of restoring the faith of their ancestors is to have any chance of success. They enter into a temporary alliance of expediency with the Muslims to advance their own cause. Their conspiracy centres on desecrating Nefert's only copy of the Koran and

planting it as fabricated evidence on the monk, then informing some of the Muslims that he is guilty of this sacrilege. In a protracted section of the narrative, the latter (who are invariably caricatured in stereotypical terms as irrational religious fanatics) vengefully massacre the city's Christians, including Brother Francis, who dies as a pious martyr. In his death, as in his life, he influences the previously power-hungry and bloodthirsty Reinhild.

8. POPULARISED NIETZSCHE IN THE BACKGROUND

Doke introduced readers to his grossly simplified understanding of Nietzsche's thought in the second chapter, virtually all of which is given to this purpose. The introduction hardly adds seamless continuity in the narrative. After taking the translated manuscript and its now deceased translator's notes back to their home, Justin and Jeanie Retief examine the contents of the box they have been given. She deciphers the translator's handwritten comments about a man whose German surname she cannot pronounce but must spell out, "N-i-e-t-z-s-c-h-e", and who she believes "must have been a very wicked man". His quoted remarks alarm her. "Slavery is necessary to culture," she reads.

> It may be that this knowledge fills us with terror – such terror is the almost necessary effect of all the most profound knowledge; for nature is still a frightful thing, even when intent on creating the most beautiful forms.

The observation initially puzzles Jeanie, who dismisses it as "rubbish" before continuing to read:

> It is arranged that culture, in its triumphant march, benefits only a trivial minority of privileged mortals, and it is necessary that the slave service of the great masses be maintained if one wish to attain to a full joy in becoming.

Upon reading further, however, she begins to comprehend why this mysterious Nietzsche could propound such a belief:

> The misery, then, of those men who live by labour must be made yet more rigorous, in order that a very few Olympian men may create a world of art. At their expense, by the artifice of unpaid labour, the privileged classes should be relieved from the struggle for life, and given such conditions that they can create and satisfy a new order of needs.

But understanding does not mean assent. Jeanie dismisses Nietzsche's historical judgment as "rubbish" and speculates that "this Nietzsche was

one of the Olympian men, the privileged class" and suggests that he would have "written differently if he had been one of the slaves" (Doke 1916:20-21).

Almost immediately, however, Jeanie's puzzlement abates when she encounters an accompanying paragraph by the translator, who thought that the conduct of Reinhild and other figures in Nefert illustrated Nietzschean notions of the will to power and other matters. The annals of the city, he had opined, exemplified "principles which have been propounded recently by German philosophers as something new", but which he had come to believe were recurrent historical phenomena.

> In fact, if Reinhild ... had not been born more than two hundred years ago, it would have been impossible not to conclude that Friedrich Nietzsche had greatly influenced her, at least in two directions – her opinions of slavery and of war; for touching the latter, his dictum that "war and courage" have done more great things than charity would have won her hearty consent (Doke 1916:22).

Reinhild is presented as a popularised incarnation of the will to power. This quintessentially Nietzschean characteristic is something which she at least partly understands about herself, although in *The queen of the secret city* it is presented as an individual attribute within her as one person, making her a kind of vulgarised *Übermensch*. In an early conversation with Brother Francis, she replies to his query about the source of her power by admitting that she did not fully understand it, however: "It is my will, that is all. It rises with my passions, and I know that nothing can resist it" (Doke 1916:129).

At any rate, before Reinhild undergoes her profound personal transformation, her love of power prevents her from accepting Christianity or having more than very circumscribed respect for it. She informs Brother Francis that she will tolerate his evangelism and Christian life generally in her city-state, but that if Christianity becomes a "menace to the peace of Nefert" she will have to oppress it. At that stage, Reinhild declares, probably echoing Nietzsche, that his intrusive religion is "too effeminate" (Doke 1916:140). In a subsequent conversation with him, she contrasts the ancient Egyptian religion and its latter-day priest in Nefert with Christianity. The former faith "may be right", Reinhild allows without enthusiasm, "but its priests are dogs of the lowest breed." That inner contradiction is the "antithesis" of Christianity, whose "tenets" she rejects as "too generous and gentle" and whose emphasis on the cross she despises. However, in contrast to the Egyptian divines, she makes clear her attraction to the Christian clergy, the only one of whom she perhaps knows is Brother Francis (Doke 1916:173). All of these opinions would change drastically, chiefly because of what she witnesses in the faith of her former

lover and the dastardly conduct of the Egyptians, but also because of her experience with parenthood.

9. ATTACKING AN ACHILLES' HEEL IN NIETZSCHE'S PERCEPTION OF HISTORY: SLAVERY

Another area in which Doke most lucidly raised his verbal lance against Nietzsche concerned the German's defence of slavery as a historical and continuing cultural necessity. It will be recalled that the transplanted English Baptist stood in the long tradition of the so-called "Nonconformist conscience", which early in the nineteenth century had contributed to Parliament's abolition of involuntary servitude in the British Empire in 1833. In *The queen of the secret city*, the slave market is one of his principal targets. It is described in horrific terms and gives Doke a further opportunity to put Muslims (in this case Arab slave traders) into a negative light as heartless hypocrites.

The crux of this component of *The queen of the secret city* lies in the twenty-fourth chapter, "The slave market". In this instance, we note what the narrator bluntly calls "the black spot in Nefert", namely its slave quarter. The adjective derives not merely from the ethnicity of the men, women, and children who are traded, for many of them are described as "white or tawny of skin" and from Egypt and other remote lands. Those of lighter complexion enjoy some measure of acceptance in the social life of the city; some of them eventually gain their freedom. By partial contrast, "the slaves proper were poor, degraded creatures, mere chattels, in worse case than the cattle". The Arab traders lash those who are "refractory", while family members who are separated from each other weep pathetically as "children of tender years [are] torn from their parents". The plight of those slaves who belong to the state is "pitiable", and they are "often treated with extreme cruelty" by Muslim soldiers who show no mercy to people who do not share their faith. Within each compound of the slave quarter, living conditions are summarily described as "an inferno" and a "devilish horror" (Doke 1916:156-157).

To what end is this demonic exploitation? Is it really necessary, and does this demonic exploitation harmonise with the general prosperity of Nefert? The narrator asserts that the slave traffic is "essential to the progress of the State", but does not elaborate on why that is the case. He further declares that it "formed also its peril", and in fact near the end of *The queen of the secret city* the slaves finally revolt violently against their maltreatment. Furthermore, Doke suggests that the existence of slavery has not significantly elevated the cultural niveau of the multicultural

microcosm of Nefert. It is a city-state with, for example, a certain amount of music and dance, but little else that would support the Nietzschean argument for slavery quoted in the second chapter. Precious little in the description of Nefert undergirds Nietzsche's justification thereof. Nor, for that matter, does one find evidence of lofty ethical standards there. To the extent that the city and its small Hinterland are prosperous, this seems to be attributed to the favourable natural environment, not the exploitation of grossly mistreated cheap labour.

Once firmly in power, Reinhild seeks to ameliorate the slaves' conditions without abolishing slavery. Viewing the squalor and learning that illness constantly results from it, she turns angrily on the guards and calls them "worse than savages". The pragmatic, self-serving queen adds that the slaves "would be worth double their value either for sale or work if they were treated well". Moreover, Reinhild reasons aloud: "These lashes, these chains, this evident starvation is robbing the State of her treasure, and destroying her heritage" (Doke 1916:159). Yet the institution remains intact under her increasingly generally benevolent rule.

10. CONCLUSION

There can be hardly any doubt that Doke's perception of Nietzsche's philosophy was limited to a simplified caricature. At any rate, in this Baptist minister's published works, one finds no evidence of detailed analysis of any of the pivotal notions for which Nietzsche had gained international attention by the early years of the twentieth century. Instead, Doke, as both a pastor and a missionary, was apparently content to reject what he regarded as spiritually and ethically dangerous advocacy of egotism, especially as embodied in the notion of the "will to power". At the same time, this keen observer of cultural disharmonies and religious clashes in southern and central Africa used his final novel to alert readers to the fact that the bane of slavery, despite its official abolition in the British Empire nearly a century earlier, still besmirched parts of that continent. *The queen of the secret city* can hardly be called great literature. However, both as a testimonial to an African Christian reaction to the proliferating influence of Nietzsche and as evidence of missionary perceptions of multicultural and religious strife in an African context, it merits significantly closer attention than it has received.

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