

*Children of the Waters of Meribah: Black Liberation Theology, the Miriamic Tradition, and the Challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Empire*, by Allan Aubrey Boesak

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**Christina Landman**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8905-0738>

University of South Africa

[christina.landman2@gmail.com](mailto:christina.landman2@gmail.com)

This is a fascinating book which I carefully read. The first chapter summarises the gains of Black Theology as a contra-culture to the empires of the world, especially that of the United States of America and pre-1994 South Africa. However, most importantly, this chapter acknowledges that Black Theology has not taken the merits of women's theologies seriously, especially those of African Women Theologians. The aim of the book, then, is to do exactly that: to expose Black Theology to women's theologies and invite women as front fighters in this contra-culture. What happens next in Boesak's book kept me nailed to my chair.

In Chapters Two to Four, Boesak reveals, with the help of women theologians, the much-neglected Miriamic tradition in the Bible and its consequences for Black Theology as a contra-culture to empire.

In Chapter Two, the Miriamic tradition is taken back to the two Hebrew midwives Sifrah and Puah as symbols of resistance against the Pharaoh's empire. Actually, Sifrah and Puah, as well as Jochebed, the mother of Moses, and Miriam, standing on the shore of the river, are depicted at the centre of fearless resistance prior to the exodus. Boesak, quite brilliantly, effects this with Calvin's idea of empire and interweaves their cry of freedom with stories from women in South Africa and the United States of America.

Chapter Two finds Miriam on the seashore (Exodus 15) singing a song of freedom. This song differs from Moses' earlier song in that it is inclusive and not the ego-centric song



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of Moses. This is where Miriam starts to replace Moses as the prophet of the Exodus. Moses's song is a song of war, depicting God as a god of war, while Miriam's song is a freedom song, thanking God for His liberating intervention.

In Chapter Four, Miriam asks serious questions about the nature of God in the wilderness. She remembers God, in contrast to Moses, as the one who does not need violence or armies, but who liberates the downtrodden and the oppressed. When she died, the waters of Meribah dried up and would have remained dry for all women if we were not to revive the Miriamic tradition of women as prophets and, today, as theologians.

Chapter Five mainly deals with Musa Dube's interpretations of Jesus as contra-empire. Chapters Six and Seven dissect the stories of Jesus and the Canaanite and Samaritan women, and their gains for Black Theology.

It is, however, in the description of the Miriamic tradition, easily forgotten today, that the charm and contribution of the book lie.

The book does not make easy reading but should be read not only by academics but by curious laypeople, who should be everybody.