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TEOLOGIA CRISTÃ AFRICANA
AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

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ACTEA

NAIROBI | KINSHASA

Théologie Chrétienne Africaine

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(Mars 2025)

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African Christian Theology is the academic journal of the Association for Christian Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA). The mission of ACTEA is to strengthen theological education through accreditation, scholarship, and support services to serve the church and transform society. The journal is one way in which ACTEA engages theological educators and church leaders in addressing relevant issues facing the church and society in Africa. *African Christian Theology* serves the whole of Africa and provides a venue for conversations between different regions of Africa, as well as an organ through which African voices can address World Christianity at large. Following in the footsteps of Kwame Bediako, Byang Kato, Kä Mana, Lamin Sanneh, Andrew F. Walls, and Isaac Zokoué, the journal promotes World Christianity perspectives through deep engagement with African contextual realities. Articles are published in English, French, and Portuguese; each article has a trilingual abstract in those languages.

ACTEA was founded in 1976 by the Theological and Christian Education Commission of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA). Under its continued sponsorship, ACTEA operates with internal autonomy in the accreditation of programmes of theological education throughout Africa, in order to stimulate the improvement and standardization of such programmes, and in order to secure academic recognition for such programmes wherever possible, especially among the constituencies of these institutions in Africa and among similar institutions and their constituencies overseas. ACTEA is a founding and constituent member of the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE). ACTEA maintains offices in Nairobi and Kinshasa and can be found online at acteaweb.org. For further information on any aspect of ACTEA, please email the Executive Administrator at admin@acteaweb.org and copy the Executive Director at director@acteaweb.org.

The colours of ACTEA's logo are blue, red, and gold. Blue signifies royalty and speaks to ACTEA's efforts in raising a royal priesthood of God's servants throughout Africa. Red is the colour of blood and symbolises the redemptive act of Christ on the cross. Gold represents the preciousness of God's Word and the work which God's people do. Gold also reflects ACTEA's mission of prophetic proclamation of glorious hope in Christ, to African peoples first and then to the world, through theological education.

https://africanchristiantheology.org/

Théologie Chrétienne Africaine est la revue scientifique de l'Association Chrétienne de Théologie et d'Éducation en Afrique (ACTEA). La mission d'ACTEA est de renforcer l'éducation théologique par l'accréditation, la recherche et les services de soutien afin de servir l'église et de transformer la société. La revue est l'un des moyens par lesquels ACTEA stimule et implique les enseignants en théologie et les responsables d'église à aborder les questions pertinentes auxquelles sont confrontées l'église et la société en Afrique. *Théologie Chrétienne Africaine* est au service de l'ensemble de l'Afrique et constitue un lieu de dialogue entre les différentes régions d'Afrique. Elle sert ainsi d'organe par lequel les voix africaines peuvent s'adresser au christianisme mondial (« World Christianity ») dans son ensemble. Suivant les traces de Kwame Bediako, Byang Kato, Kä Mana, Lamin Sanneh, Andrew F. Walls, et Isaac Zokoué, la revue promeut les perspectives du christianisme mondial à travers un engagement profond avec les réalités contextuelles africaines. Les articles sont publiés en anglais, en français, et en portugais ; chaque article est accompagné d'un résumé trilingue dans ces langues.

ACTEA a été fondée en 1976 par la Commission d'Éducation Théologique et Chrétienne de l'Association des Évangéliques en Afrique (AEA). Sous le parrainage continu de l'AEA, ACTEA opère avec une autonomie interne dans l'accréditation des programmes d'éducation théologique à travers l'Afrique, afin de stimuler l'amélioration et la normalisation de ces programmes, et d'assurer la reconnaissance académique de ces programmes partout où cela est possible, notamment parmi les circonscriptions de ces institutions en Afrique et parmi les institutions similaires et leurs circonscriptions à l'étranger. ACTEA est un membre fondateur et constitutif du Conseil International pour l'Éducation Théologique Évangélique (en anglais, International Council for Evangelical Theological Education ou ICETE). ACTEA a des bureaux à Nairobi et à Kinshasa et peut être contactée en ligne à l'adresse suivante : acteaweb.org. Pour plus d'informations sur n'importe quel aspect d'ACTEA, veuillez envoyer un courriel au Directeur Francophone à directeur.francophone@acteaweb.org et une copie au Directeur Exécutif à director@acteaweb.org.

Les couleurs du logo d'ACTEA sont le bleu, le rouge, et l'or. Le bleu signifie la royauté et évoque les efforts d'ACTEA pour élever un sacerdoce royal de serviteurs de Dieu à travers l'Afrique. Le rouge est la couleur du sang et symbolise l'acte rédempteur du Christ sur la croix. L'or représente la valeur de la Parole de Dieu et le travail accompli par le peuple de Dieu. L'or reflète également la mission d'ACTEA, celle de la proclamation prophétique de l'espérance glorieuse en Christ, aux peuples africains d'abord et au monde ensuite, par le biais de l'éducation théologique.

https://africanchristiantheology.org/

Teologia Cristã Africana é a revista académica da Associação Cristã de Teologia e Educação em África (ACTEA). A missão da ACTEA é reforçar a educação teológica através de acreditação, pesquisa e serviços de apoio para servir a igreja e transformar a sociedade. A revista é uma das formas através das quais a ACTEA envolve educadores teológicos e líderes da igreja na abordagem de questões relevantes que a igreja e a sociedade em África enfrentam. A *Teologia Cristã Africana* serve toda a África e proporciona um local para conversas entre diferentes regiões de África, bem como um órgão através do qual as vozes africanas podem participar no diálogo de assuntos do cristianismo mundial ("World Christianity"). Seguindo os passos de Kwame Bediako, Byang Kato, Kä Mana, Lamin Sanneh, Andrew F. Walls, e Isaac Zokoué, a revista promove as perspectivas do cristianismo mundial através de um profundo envolvimento com as realidades contextuais africanas. Os artigos são publicados em inglês, francês e português; cada artigo tem um resumo trilingue nessas línguas.

A ACTEA foi estabelecida em 1976 pela Comissão de Educação Teológica e Cristã da Associação de Evangélicos em África (AEA). Sob o seu patrocínio contínuo, a ACTEA opera com autonomia interna na acreditação de programas de educação teológica em toda a África, a fim de estimular a melhoria e a padronização de tais programas, e a fim de assegurar o reconhecimento académico de tais programas sempre que possível, especialmente entre os stakeholders destas instituições em África e entre instituições semelhantes e os seus stakeholders no estrangeiro. A ACTEA é um membro fundador e constituinte do Conselho Internacional para a Educação Teológica Evangélica (ICETE). A ACTEA tem escritórios em Nairobi e Kinshasa e pode ser encontrada online em acteaweb.org. Para mais informações sobre qualquer aspeto da ACTEA, envie um e-mail para o Administrador Executivo em admin@acteaweb.org com cópia para o Diretor Executivo em director@acteaweb.org.

As cores do logótipo da ACTEA são o azul, o vermelho e o dourado. O azul significa realeza e fala dos esforços da ACTEA para erguer um sacerdócio real dos servos de Deus em toda a África. O vermelho é a cor do sangue e simboliza o ato redentor de Cristo na cruz. O ouro representa a preciosidade da Palavra de Deus e o trabalho que o povo de Deus realiza. O ouro também reflete a missão da ACTEA de proclamação profética da gloriosa esperança em Cristo, primeiro aos povos africanos e depois ao mundo, através da educação teológica.

https://africanchristiantheology.org/

Cover art created by Wexer Creative, Nairobi and Mombasa, Kenya and © 2024–2025 by ACTEA. The building silhouettes are of the Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, the largest church building in the world, the Kenyatta International Convention Centre in Nairobi, Kenya, and Nigeria's National Theatre in Lagos. The symbols, including the acacia tree and the Ethiopian cross, represent the journal's commitment to all regions of Africa, urban and rural, anglophone, francophone, and lusophone (as well as arabophone), and to all African Christian traditions — Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, and AICs. The cross in the center of Africa, designed from a photograph of an Ethiopian cross displayed in the home of one of our managing editors, conveys both the journal's central evangelical commitment and its commitment to Africanity.

(AICs refers to African Indigenous Churches, African Initiated Churches, and/or African Independent Churches.)

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(EICs est un anacronyme anglais qui désigne Églises indépendantes africaines, églises indigènes africaines, églises initiées africaines, et/ou églises indépendantes africaines.)

Arte da capa criada por Wexer Creative, Nairobi e Mombasa, Quénia e © 2024–2025 pela ACTEA. As silhuetas dos edifícios são da Basílica de Nossa Senhora da Paz em Yamoussoukro, na Côte d'Ivoire, a maior edifício da igreja do mundo, e o Centro Internacional de Convenções Kenyatta em Nairobi, Quénia, e do Teatro Nacional da Nigéria, em Lagos. Os símbolos, incluindo a acácia e a cruz etíope, representam o compromisso da revista para com todas as regiões de África, urbanas e rurais, anglófonas, francófonas e lusófonas (bem como arabófonas), e para com todas as tradições cristãs africanas, protestantes, católicas romanas, ortodoxas, pentecostais e IIAs. A cruz no centro de África, concebida a partir de uma fotografia de uma cruz etíope exposta na casa de um dos nossos redactores-gerais, transmite tanto o compromisso evangélico central da revista como o seu compromisso com a africanidade.

(IIAs é um anacrónimo que se refere a igrejas indígenas africanas, igrejas iniciadas em África e/ou igrejas independentes africanas.)

The specialist review journal, *BookNotes for Africa*, published from 1996–2019, offered short academic reviews of recent Africa-related publications relevant for informed Christian reflection in Africa. Because of its importance, ACTEA was happy to promote *BookNotes for Africa* to its constituent schools. In 2018, the over 1,200 reviews published in issues 1–30 were published by Langham Global Library in a permanent reference collection, *Christian Reflection in Africa: Review and Engagement*, edited by Paul Bowers. A second enlarged edition including reviews from issues 31–40 together with a number of more recent reviews is forthcoming.

Inspired by the legacy of *BookNotes for Africa*, the editors hope that the book review section of *African Christian Theology* will be as robust and as helpful. This section of the journal includes both critical review essays and short book note style reviews. While the majority of books reviewed have been published recently, as is customary, we will sometimes publish retrospective reviews of older texts.

La revue spécialisée, *BookNotes for Africa*, ('Notes de Livres pour l'Afrique'), publiée de 1996 à 2019, proposait courtes critiques académiques de publications récentes liées à l'Afrique et pertinentes pour une réflexion chrétienne éclairée en Afrique. En raison de son importance, ACTEA a été heureux de promouvoir *BookNotes for Africa* auprès de ses écoles constitutives. En 2018, les plus de 1 200 comptes rendus publiés dans les numéros 1 à 30 ont été publiés par Langham Global Library dans une collection de référence permanente, *Christian Reflection in Africa : Review and Engagement*, sous la direction de Paul Bowers. Une deuxième édition révisée comprenant les comptes rendus des numéros 31 à 40 ainsi qu'un certain nombre de comptes rendus plus récents est à venir.

Inspirés par l'héritage de *BookNotes for Africa*, les éditeurs espèrent que la section des critiques de livres de *Théologie Chrétienne Africaine* sera aussi solide et utile. Cette section de la revue comprend à la fois des essais critiques et de courts comptes-rendus sous forme de notes de lecture. Bien que la majorité des livres analysés aient été publiés récemment, nous publierons parfois des analyses rétrospectives de textes plus anciens.

A revista especializada, *BookNotes for Africa* ('Notas de Livro para África'), publicada de 1996 a 2019, oferecia pequenas recensões académicas de publicações recentes relacionadas com África, relevantes para uma reflexão cristã informada em África. Devido à sua importância, a ACTEA teve o prazer de promover a BookNotes for Africa junto das escolas que a constituem. Em 2018, as mais de 1.200 recensões publicadas nos números 1–30 foram publicadas pela Langham Global Library numa coleção de referência permanente, *Christian Reflection in Africa: Review and Engagement* ('Reflexão Cristã em África: Recensão e Engajamento'), editada por Paul Bowers. Está a ser preparada uma segunda edição alargada que inclui as recensões dos números 31–40, bem como algumas recensões mais recentes.

Inspirados pelo legado da *BookNotes for Africa*, os editores esperam que a secção de recensões de livros da *Teologia Cristã Africana* seja tão robusta e útil. Esta secção da revista inclui ensaios de recensão crítica e pequenas recensões de livros. Embora a maioria dos livros recenseados tenha sido publicada recentemente, como é habitual, publicaremos por vezes recensões retrospectivas de textos mais antigos.

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EDITORIAL

Applying Ubuntu

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"To have Ubuntu is to be one who recognizes the humanity of others, for it is inextricably linked to my own."[1]

This issue of *African Christian Theology* was not designed to be a themed issue, but the articles are linked by the quintessential African concerns of *ubuntu*. Perhaps the best-known proponent of ubuntu is Desmond Tutu (1931–2021; Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg, 1985–1986, and Archbishop of Cape Town, 1986–1996), who drew on "the proverbial Xhosa expression '*ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu*,' which, translated roughly, means 'each individual's humanity is ideally expressed in relationship with others' or 'a person depends on other people to be a person'."[2] Yet often mission practitioners fail to embody humility and ubuntu in their interactions with those among whom they serve. In the second article, "Ubuntu as a Corrective in Mission," Stephanie A. Lowery explores how a robust application of Tutu's ubuntu theology can provide a needed realignment to the practice of Christian mission. While it is necessary to address the 'lostness' of those who are outside of Christ, mission practitioners must also recognize their shared humanity with the lost, who nonetheless were created as the image and according to the likeness of God, and they must embody a willingness to learn from those with whom they are sharing the good news.

"Adam and Eve *together* reflect God," as Lowery notes in her article. However, many Christians still effectually deny that women are equally image-

[1] Miki Kasongo, *Trois Philosophies pour un Monde Non-Violent: François d'Assisse, René Girard et Ubuntu*, Ouverture Philosophique (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 2023), 97; my translation.

[2] Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland, Ohio, USA: Pilgrim Press, 1997), 9; citing Augustine Shuute, *Philosophy for Africa*, unpublished manuscript, n.d. (University of Cape Town, South Africa), 5.

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bearers of God, no less than men. For that reason, the journal is happy to republish an important paper from John Samuel Pobee (1937–2020), "In His Own Image . . . Male and Female He Created Them." Pobee explores the complementarity and mutual reciprocity of male and female, stressing "the community dimension of the *imago Dei*" and insisting that "women and men are partners whose nature is the same essentially: they are fellow creatures, body, soul and spirit and equally in the image and likeness of God." Consequently, men and women alike "are created for love, dignity, rationality, and community" and any and all "marginalization of woman by man, which our cultures are full of," are to be lamented and corrected.

These two articles lay a suitable foundation for the contribution of Alfred Sebahene and Ruth Barron, "Without Exceptions: Envisioning Ubuntu Churches Confronting Abuse in Africa." It is widely recognized that "ubuntu conveys the idea of putting one's strength at the service of one's neighbor, especially the weak, the poor and the sick, without taking advantage of anyone, and of treating others as one would like to be treated oneself."[3] Christians, then, should recognize that when we obey the two greatest commandments, we are in fact practicing a Christward ubuntu. Human flourishing is fostered by ubuntu, but humans cannot flourish in the context of abuse. We must recognize that abuse is always an attack on human flourishing and marks a gap in our practice of ubuntu. Abuse is the antithesis of love. Just as Lowery challenges the Church to apply ubuntu to its theology and practice of mission, Sebahene and Barron challenge the Church to apply ubuntu *without exceptions* to victims of abuse.

African Christian Theology is passionate about theological education and formation. The journal and its publisher, ACTEA, are committed to academic scholarship and research. But we editors recognize that many of the theological institutions on the continent lack sufficient access to resources. Students, and sometimes even teaching faculty, struggle to know works are available on a given topic. Therefore, ACTEA is happy to collaborate with projects such as African Theology Worldwide,[4] which directs researchers to the best available scholarship. In addition, this journal will occasionally publish bibliographies for this purpose. This issue features a bibliography on "The Prosperity Gospel in African Christianity." Just as it is increasingly necessary "to know something about Africa" in order to successfully "undertake serious study of Christianity,"[5] it is also necessary to understand the impact of the prosperity gospel to fully understand contemporary expressions of Christian faith on the continent.

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[3] Kasongo, *Trois Philosophies pour un Monde Non-Violent*, 97; my translation.

[4] Available online at https://african.theologyworldwide.com/

[5] Andrew F. Walls, "Eusebius Tries Again: Reconceiving the Study of Christian History," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24, no. 3 (2000): 105–111, p. 106.

Four books are evaluated with full-length review essays. Stephanie A. Lowery and Beatrice Mutua examine the first volume published by the Theological Society of Malawi, *Decolonizing the Theological Curricula in an Online Age*. This edited volume addresses many issues pertinent to theological institutions here in Africa. Okuchukwu Venatus Akpe reviews *Can a Christian Be Cursed? An Evangelical Response to the Problem of Curses*, a book that address a set of concerns keenly felt by many Christians in Africa. The next two books reviewed represent some of the best new scholarship in New Testament studies. *Reading 1 Peter Missiologically*, an edited volume which includes contributors who are from or who have lived in four different African nations, is reviewed by Benjamin Marx. This is followed by Nebeyou A. Terefe's review of *Intercession of Jesus in Hebrews*.

Finally, we have four 'Book Note' short reviews. Writing from Zambia, Willem-Henri den Hartog reviews the edited volume, *Evangelism: Perspectives from an African Context*, and Ryan L. Faber reviews *Beyond Profession: The Next Future of Theological Education*. Next, Emmanuel A. S. Egbunu provides a Nigerian perspective of the edited volume, *Africans in Diaspora and Diasporas in Africa*. Finally, Leita Ngoy provides an emic review of a book studying her home region in DR Congo, *Religious Entanglements: Central African Pentecostalism, the Creation of Cultural Knowledge, and the Making of the Luba Katanga*.

This issue offers voices representing fourteen countries in Africa — Cameroon, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia (this includes authors of reviewed books). If your country is not represented, then we encourage you to consider submitting something for a future issue. But for now — *tolle lege*, 'take and read.'

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EDITORIAL

Aplicando o *Ubuntu*

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"Ter Ubuntu significa reconhecer a humanidade dos outros, porque ela está indissociavelmente ligada à minha."[1]

Este número da *Teologia Christã Africana* não pretendia ser um número temático, mas os artigos estão ligados pela quintessência das preocupações africanas do *ubuntu*. Talvez o mais conhecido defensor do ubuntu seja Desmond Tutu (1931–2021; bispo anglicano de Joanesburgo, 1985–1986, e arcebispo da Cidade do Cabo, 1986–1996), que se inspirou na "expressão proverbial Xhosa '*ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu*,' que, traduzida grosseiramente, significa 'a humanidade de cada indivíduo é idealmente expressa na relação com os outros' ou 'uma pessoa depende de outras pessoas para ser uma pessoa'. "[2] No entanto, os profissionais da missão não conseguem incorporar a humildade e o *ubuntu* nas suas interações com as pessoas que servem. No segundo artigo, "Ubuntu as a Corrective in Mission [inglesa: 'O Ubunto como um Corretivo para a Missãoe']," Stephanie A. Lowery explora como uma aplicação robusta da teologia do *ubuntu* pode ser aplicada à missão. Lowery explora como uma aplicação robusta da teologia *ubuntu* de Tutu pode trazer um realinhamento muito necessário para a prática da missão cristã. Embora seja necessário abordar a "perda" daqueles que estão fora de Cristo, os

[1] Miki Kasongo, *Trois Philosophies pour un Monde Non-Violent: François d'Assisse, René Girard et Ubuntu* [francês: 'Três filosofias para um mundo não violento: François d'Assisse, René Girard e Ubuntu'], Ouverture Philosophique (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 2023), 97; minha tradução.

[2] Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* [inglesa: 'Reconciliação: A Teologia Ubuntu de Desmond Tutu'] (Cleveland, Ohio, UEA: Pilgrim Press, 1997), 9; citando Augustine Shuute, *Philosophy for Africa* ['Filosofia para África'], manuscrito não publicado, n.d. (Universidade de Cape Town, África do Sul), 5; minha tradução.

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praticantes da missão devem também reconhecer a sua humanidade partilhada com os perdidos, que, no entanto, foram criados como imagem de Deus e conforme a semelhança de Deus, e devem incorporar uma vontade de aprender com aqueles com quem estão a partilhar as boas novas.

"Adão e Eva *juntos* reflectem Deus," como Lowery refere no seu artigo. No entanto, muitos cristãos ainda negam efetivamente que as mulheres são igualmente portadoras da imagem de Deus, não menos do que os homens. Por essa razão, a revista tem o prazer de republicar um importante capítulo de John Samuel Pobee (1937–2020), "In His Own Image . . . Male and Female He Created Them [inglês: 'À Sua Própria Imagem . . . homem e mulher os criou.']." Pobee explora a complementaridade e a reciprocidade mútua do homem e da mulher, sublinhando "a dimensão comunitária da imago Dei" e insistindo que "as mulheres e os homens são parceiros cuja natureza é essencialmente a mesma: são criaturas semelhantes, corpo, alma e espírito e igualmente à imagem e semelhança de Deus." Por conseguinte, homens e mulheres "são criados para o amor, a dignidade, a racionalidade e a comunidade" e toda e qualquer "marginalização da mulher pelo homem, de que as nossas culturas estão cheias," deve ser lamentada e corrigida.

Estes dois artigos constituem uma base adequada para a contribuição de Alfred Sebahene e Ruth Barron, "Without Exceptions: Envisioning *Ubuntu* Churches Confronting Abuse in Africa' ['Sem Excepções: Imaginar Igrejas de Ubuntu que Enfrentam o Abuso em África']." É amplamente reconhecido que "o ubuntu transmite a ideia de colocar a nossa força ao serviço do próximo, especialmente dos fracos, dos pobres e dos doentes, sem tirar partido de ninguém, e de tratar os outros como gostaríamos de ser tratados."[3] Os cristãos devem, portanto, reconhecer que, quando obedecemos aos dois maiores mandamentos, estamos, de facto, a praticar um *ubuntu* semelhante ao de Cristo, um *ubuntu* que se dirige a Cristo. O florescimento humano é promovido pelo ubuntu, mas os seres humanos não podem florescer num contexto de abuso. Precisamos de reconhecer que o abuso é sempre um ataque ao florescimento humano e marca uma lacuna na nossa prática do ubuntu. O abuso é a antítese do amor. Tal como Lowery desafia a Igreja a aplicar o *ubuntu* à sua teologia e prática da missão, Sebahene e Barron desafiam a Igreja a aplicar o ubuntu sem excepções às vítimas de abuso.

Teologia Christã Africana é apaixonada pela educação e formação teológicas. A revista e a sua editora, a ACTEA, estão empenhadas em estudos académicos e investigação. Mas reconhecemos que muitas instituições

[3] Kasongo, *Trois Philosophies pour un Monde Non-Violent*, 97; minha tradução.

teológicas no continente não têm acesso suficiente a recursos. Os estudantes, e por vezes até os professores, têm dificuldade em saber o que está disponível sobre um determinado assunto. Por isso, a ACTEA tem o prazer de colaborar com projectos como o Teologia Africana no Mundo ('African Theology Worldwide' em inglês' o 'Théologie Africaine à Travers le Monde'),[4] que orienta os investigadores para as melhores bolsas de estudo disponíveis. Para além disso, esta revista publicará ocasionalmente bibliografias para este fim. Este número inclui uma bibliografia sobre "The Prosperity Gospel in African Christianity ['O Evangelho da Prosperidade no Cristianismo Africano']." Tal como é cada vez mais necessário "saber alguma coisa sobre África" para se conseguir "fazer um estudo sério sobre o cristianismo,"[5] também é necessário compreender o impacto do evangelho da prosperidade para entender plenamente as expressões contemporâneas da fé cristã no continente.

Quatro livros são avaliados com ensaios de recensão completos. Stephanie A. Lowery e Beatrice Mutua analisam o primeiro volume publicado pela Sociedade Teológica do Malawi, *Decolonizing the Theological Curricula in an Online Age* ['Descolonizando os Currículos Teológicos Numa Era Online']. Este volume editado aborda muitas questões pertinentes para as instituições teológicas aqui em África. Okuchukwu Venatus Akpe avalia *Can a Christian Be Cursed? An Evangelical Response to the Problem of Curses* ['Pode um Cristão ser Amaldiçoado? Uma Resposta Evangélica ao Problema das Maldições'], um livro que aborda um conjunto de preocupações profundamente sentidas por muitos cristãos em África. Os dois livros seguintes representam alguns dos melhores trabalhos académicos novos em estudos do Novo Testamento. *Reading 1 Peter Missiologically* ['*Ler 1 Pedro Missiologicamente*'], um volume editado, por autores oriundos ou que viveram em quatro países africanos diferentes, é comentado por Benjamin Marx. Segue-se uma análise de Nebeyou A. Terefe sobre a libra *Intercession of Jesus in Hebrews* ['A Intercessão de Jesus na Epístola aos Hebreus'].

Por fim, apresentamos quatro breves recensões do livro. Escrevendo a partir da Zâmbia, Willem-Henri den Hartog analisa o volume editado, *Evangelism: Perspectives from an African Context* ['Evangelismo: Perspectivas de um Contexto Africano'], e Ryan L. Faber analisa o livro *Beyond Profession:*

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[4] Atualmente, a maior parte dos recursos aqui listados estão em inglês, ver https://african.theologyworldwide.com/, ou em francês, ver https://african.theologyworldwide.com/fr/; no entanto, a organização planeia eventualmente servir também a África lusófona.

[5] Andrew F. Walls, "Eusebius Tries Again: Reconceiving the Study of Christian History ['Eusébio Tenta de Novo: Reconceber o Estudo da História Cristã']," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24, no. 3 (2000): 105–111, p. 106.

The Next Future of Theological Education [‘Para além da Profissão: O futuro da educação teológica’]. Por fim, Leita Ngoy faz uma análise emotiva de um livro que estuda a sua região natal na República Democrática do Congo, *Religious Entanglements: Central African Pentecostalism, the Creation of Cultural Knowledge, and the Making of the Luba Katanga* [‘Emaranhados religiosos O pentecostalismo centro-africano, a criação de conhecimento cultural e a construção dos Luba Katanga’].

Este número oferece vozes que representam catorze países de África — África do Sul, Camarões, República Democrática do Congo, Egito, Etiópia, Gana, Malawi, Moçambique, Nigéria, Quénia, Ruanda, Serra Leoa, Tanzânia, e Zâmbia (incluindo os autores dos livros analisados). Se o seu país não estiver representado, encorajamo-lo a considerar escrever para nós numa edição futura. Mas por agora — *tolle lege*, “pegue e leia.”

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ÉDITORIAL

Mettre en Practique l'*Ubuntu*

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« Avoir l'Ubuntu c'est être celui qui reconnaît l'humanité d'autrni car elle est inextricablement liée à la mienne. »[1]

Ce numéro de *Théologie Chrétienne Africaine* n'a pas été conçu pour être un numéro thématique, mais les articles sont liés par la quintessence des préoccupations africaines de l'ubuntu. Le défenseur le plus connu de l'ubuntu est peut-être Desmond Tutu (1931–2021 ; évêque anglican de Johannesburg, 1985–1986, et archevêque du Cap, 1986-1996), qui s'est inspiré de « l'expression proverbiale xhosa "*ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu*", qui, traduite approximativement, signifie "*l'humanité de chaque individu s'exprime idéalement dans la relation avec les autres*" ou "une personne dépend d'autres personnes pour être une personne". »[2] Pourtant, les praticiens de la mission ne parviennent pas à incarner l'humilité et l'ubuntu dans leurs interactions avec les personnes qu'ils servent. Dans le deuxième article, « Ubuntu as a Corrective in Mission [anglais : 'L'*Ubuntu* comme un correctif pour la mission'], » Stephanie A. Lowery explore comment une application solide de la théologie *ubuntu* de Tutu peut apporter un réalignement nécessaire à la pratique de la mission chrétienne. S'il est nécessaire d'aborder la question de la « perte » de ceux qui sont en dehors du Christ, les praticiens de la mission doivent également reconnaître leur humanité partagée avec les perdus, qui ont néanmoins été créés

[1] Miki KASONGO, *Trois Philosophies pour un Monde Non-Violent : François d'Assisse, René Girard et Ubuntu*, Ouverture Philosophique (Paris : Éditions L'Harmattan, 2023), 97.

[2] Michael BATTLE, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* [anglaise : 'Réconciliation : La théologie de l'*ubuntu* de Desmond Tutu'] (Cleveland, Ohio, États-Unis: Pilgrim Press, 1997), 9; citant Augustine Shuute, *Philosophy for Africa* ['Philosophie pour l'Afrique'], manuscript non publié, n.d. (Université du Cap, Afrique du Sud), 5.

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à l'image et selon la ressemblance de Dieu, et ils doivent incarner une volonté d'apprendre de ceux avec qui ils partagent la bonne nouvelle.

« Adam et Ève reflètent *ensemble* Dieu », comme le note Lowery dans son article. Cedependant, de nombreux chrétiens continuent de nier que les femmes sont également porteuses de l'image de Dieu, au même titre que les hommes. C'est pourquoi la revue est heureuse de republier un ouvrage important de John Samuel Pobee (1937–2020), « In His Own Image . . . Male and Female He Created Them ['Sa propre image . . . mâle et femelle, il les créa'] ». Pobee explore la complémentarité et la réciprocité mutuelle des personnes masculines et féminines, en soulignant « la dimension communautaire de l'*imago Dei* » et en insistant sur le faiq que « les femmes et les hommes sont des partenaires dont la nature est essentiellement la même : ils sont des créatures semblables, corps, âme et esprit, et également à l'image et à la ressemblance de Dieu ». Par conséquent, les hommes et les femmes « sont créés pour l'amour, la dignité, la rationalité et la communaut » et taoute « marginalisation de la femme par l'homme, dont nos cultures sont remplies » doit être déplorée et corrigée.

Ces deux articles constituent une base appropriée pour la contribution d'Alfred Sebahene et de Ruth Barron, « Without Exceptions: Envisioning Ubuntu Churches Confronting Abuse in Africa ['Sans exceptions : Envisager de églises d'*ubuntu* pour lutter contre les abus en Afrique'] ». Il est largement reconnu que « ubuntu véhicule l'idée de mettre sa force au service de son prochain surtout du faible, du miséreux, du malade sans profiter de personne, de traiter l'autre comme on voudrait être traité soi-même ».[3] Les chrétiens devraient donc reconnaître que lorsque nous obéissons aux deux plus grands commandements, nous pratiquons en fait un *ubuntu* christique, un *ubuntu* qui est vers le Christ. L'épanouissement humain est favorisé par l'*ubuntu*, mais les humains ne peuvent pas s'épanouir dans un contexte d'abus. Nous devons reconnaître que l'abus, c'est-à-dire la maltraitance, est toujours une attaque contre l'épanouissement humain et qu'elle marque une lacune dans notre pratique de l'*ubuntu*. L'abus est l'antithèse de l'amour. Tout comme Lowery défie l'Église d'appliquer l'*ubuntu* à sa théologie et à sa pratique de la mission, Sebahene et Barron défient l'Église d'appliquer l'*ubuntu sans exception* aux victimes d'abus.

Théologie Chrétienne Africaine est passionnée par un enseignement et une formation théologiques. La revue et sa maison d'édition, ACTEA, sont engagés dans l'érudition et la recherche scientifiques. Mais nous reconnaissons que de nombreuses institutions théologiques sur le continent n'ont pas un accès suffisant aux ressources. Les étudiants, et parfois même les enseignants, ont du mal à connaître les ouvrages disponibles sur un sujet donné. C'est pourquoi ACTEA est heureux de collaborer avec des projets tels que Théologie Africaine

[3] KASONGO, *Trois Philosophies pour un Monde Non-Violent*, 97.

à Travers le Monde, qui oriente les chercheurs vers les meilleurs travaux disponibles,[4] qui oriente les chercheurs vers les meilleurs travaux disponibles. En outre, ce journal publiera occasionnellement des bibliographies à cette fin. Ce numéro présente une bibliographie sur « The Prosperity Gospel in African Christianity ['L'évanglie de la prospérité dans le christianisme africain] ». Tout comme il est de plus en plus nécessaire de « connaître l'Afrique » pour « entreprendre une étude sérieuse du christianisme »,[5] il est également nécessaire de comprendre l'impact de l'Évangile de la prospérité pour comprendre pleinement les expressions contemporaines de la foi chrétienne sur le continent.

Quatre livres sont évalués à l'aide d'essais complets. Stephanie A. Lowery et Beatrice Mutua examinent le premier volume publié par la Société Théologique du Malawi, *Decolonizing the Theological Curricula in an Online Age* ['Décoloniser les Programmes d'Études Théologiques à l'ère de l'Internet']. Ce volume édité aborde de nombreuses questions pertinentes pour les institutions théologiques en Afrique. Okuchukwu Venatus Akpe critique *Can a Christian Be Cursed? An Evangelical Response to the Problem of Curses* ['Un chrétien peut-il être maudit ? Une Réponse Évangelique au Problème des Malédictions'], un livre qui aborde un ensemble de préoccupations vivement ressenties par de nombreux chrétiens en Afrique. Les deux livres suivants représentent quelques-unes des meilleures nouvelles recherches dans le domaine du Nouveau Testament. *Reading 1 Peter Missiologically* ['Lire 1 Pierre dans une perspective missiologique'], un volume édité par des auteurs originaires ou ayant vécu dans quatre nations africaines différentes, est commenté par Benjamin Marx. Il est suivi par l'analyse de Nebeyou A. Terefe sur *Intercession of Jesus in Hebrews* ['l'Intercession de Jésus dans l'épître aux Hébreux'].

Enfin, nous présentons quatre brèves critiques du livre. Écrivant de Zambie, Willem-Henri den Hartog critique le volume édité, *Evangelism : Perspectives from an African Context* ['Evangelism : perspectives issues d'un contexte africain'], et Ryan L. Faber critique *Beyond Profession : The Next Future of Theological Education* ['Au-delà de la profession : L'avenir de la formation théologique']. Ensuite, Emmanuel A. S. Egbunu présente une perspective nigériane du volume édité, *Africans in Diaspora and Diasporas in Africa* ['Africains de la diaspora et diasporas en Afrique']. Enfin, Leita Ngoy propose une critique émique d'un livre qui étudie sa région d'origine en République Démocratique du Congo, *Religious Entanglements : Central African*

[4] Disponible en ligne à https://african.theologyworldwide.com/fr/

[5] Andrew F. Walls, « Eusebius Tries Again: Reconceiving the Study of Christian History, ['Eusèbe s'essaye à nouveau : reconcevoir l'étude de l'histoire chrétienne'] », *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24, no. 3 (2000): 105–111, p. 106; ma traduction.

Pentecostalism, the Creation of Cultural Knowledge, and the Making of the Luba Katanga ['Les Enchevêtrements Religieux : Le pentecôtisme centrafricain, la création de savoirs culturels et la fabrication des Luba Katanga'].

Ce numéro présente des voix représentant quatorze pays d'Afrique — Afrique du Sud, Cameroun, Égypte, Éthiopie, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzanie, et Zambie (y compris les auteurs des livres évalués). Si votre pays n'est pas représenté, nous vous encourageons à envisager d'écrire pour nous dans un prochain numéro. Mais pour l'instant — *tolle lege*, « prenez et lisez ».

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In His Own Image . . .
Male and Female He Created Them

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Keywords

John S. Pobee, male and female, image of God, *imago Dei*, egalitarianism, complementarianism

Mots-clés

John S. Pobee, mâle et femelle, image de Dieu, *imago Dei*, égalitarisme, complémentarisme

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Palavras-chave

John S. Pobee, homem e mulher, imagem de Deus, imago Dei, igualitarismo, complementarismo

In this article I seek to re-read the creation story in the light of the totality of revelation (Old and New), what we have learnt today from other sciences and every day common sense. I return to Scripture if for no reason than that it is the common ground for our faith and has been used and misused in the course of history. The reformation slogan, *sola scriptura* — i.e., the scriptures alone — reminds us of the primacy of place scripture has in Judaeo-Christian circles. Article VI of Ecclesia Anglicana's Articles of Religion reads: "Holy Scripture contained all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." This, however, is not an argument for biblicism or fundamentalism. For we know that God's self-disclosure is always to human beings as they are and therefore, necessarily has cultural additives. The word of God is in Scripture but is not equal to Scripture. We are now more acutely aware that we read the Bible through each one's particular spectacles of race,[1] culture, circumstances. The fact that feminist theologians have come up with new insights on specific biblical texts on which men have for centuries worked from their men's cultural perspective, is evidence that we read the word of God through the spectacles of culture and experience. In any case, it is not the claim that God's self-disclosure stopped with the last book of Scripture. God does continue to reveal Himself in the universe, in science and technology, in psychology, in biology, etc. A return to the Bible which is part of the tradition of the church and its identity is to seek to return to the institutions and customs for the forbearers to seek nourishing spirituality.

Let me return to the point made earlier that our circumstances and who we are influence our perception of the Word of God. Ever since the Fall, anthropomorphic language (i.e., as a human being) of the Bible has been revised as andromorphic language (i.e., as male) and with that the domination of the

[1] Editors' note: Professor Pobee was a man of his time, using the language of his time. This journal, however, recognizes that the idea of *race* is a myth, both unscientific and unbiblical, as well as anti-Christian. Ethnocultural distinctions exist and matter, and generally should be celebrated, but they do not exist at an ontological level. *Race* only exists as a sociological construct. As a sociological construct, it has real effects on real people in real communities, as it provides the theoretical framework which justifies racism, including systemic racism. But both scientifically, as demonstrated by modern genetics, and biblically, there is only one single human race. — *JRB, editor*

woman by the man has unfortunately become the norm. Thus sometimes if not often and always, in the name of the Bible women have been marginalized and oppressed. That is concrete reality and background for the discussion here.

The title of this chapter is an illustration of the point being made. All too often those who wish to uphold the domination of woman by the man hear all too well the first part: "God created man in his own image." But they often conveniently forget the last part of it: "male and female he created them." In the Hebrew text five words are to be distinguished: *ʾadam*, *ʾish*, *ʾishah*, *zakhar*, and *neqebhah*. *ʾAdam* is a generic word for humankind or in older British English 'man': "Let us make man in our own image" (Genesis 1:26). *Adam*, as the very next verse demonstrates, is male and female. It is only after the fall that *Adam* becomes a proper name and man gives the name Eve to the woman. But the fact of the generic use of Adam is evidence of ancient Israelite universalism.[2]

Zakhar ('male') and *neqebhah* ('female') (Gen 1:27) denote a person's sex, albeit within the one humanity. Male and female bear the same *imago Dei*, whatever that means. Woman decidedly is affirmed as bearing that image of God which the male also has. Both are creatures of flesh, soul and spirit, pointing to their total dependence on God the Creator and to be distinguished both from God and from other creation like the animals. To that sexual distinction we shall return in a little while.

The other words, *ʾish* and *ʾishah*, are used of man and woman and at other times of husband and wife who are in a covenant relationship. In this context we need to address the "myth" of the creation of women. It is said that God created man *min-hadamah*, i.e., from the ground or soil and created women *meʾish* from Adam's side (Gen 2:23b). Here a distinction is intended to be made. "By using the expression *'ishshah me'ish* which calls attention to the striking similarity between the Hebrew words for 'man' and 'woman,' the narrator seems to want to emphasize the identity of the nature of, and the 'equality' of man and woman."[3] The fact of the woman being created from Adam's side need not imply and any ideas of inferiority of the former to the latter. Rather it asserts that the woman is of the same order of being as the man and also that she is equal to the man. As scripture puts it in the mouth of Adam, "this (i.e., woman) is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh"(Gen 2:23). *ʾIsh* and *ʾIshah*, point to differentiation within humanity (Gen 2:23). Each one needs the other to have a proper sense of their peculiarity and positions in creation but in mutual relationship. Scripture also gives a reason for the differentiation in humanity: "It is not good for man to be alone." The distinction between man and woman has the aim of overcoming human loneliness and to make for completeness for life-together, for love, for companionship, for enjoyment together as well as for

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[2] Fritz Maass, "אָדָם *ʾādhām*," 83.

[3] N. P. Bratsiotis, "אִישׁ *ʾish*; אִשָּׁה *ʾishshah*," 226–227.

laughter together. A psychologist comes at this point in the following way: "repressing sexual polarity amounts to denying the evidence of our senses, of body differences, and of the reception of the psychological significance of those differences. To repress this knowledge requires huge expenditures of energy that builds up enormous tension in the unconscious."[4]

The Biblical differentiation in humanity excludes androgyny, i.e., the attempt to obliterate the different existence of the woman and to ignore or not to take seriously the symbols of the feminine. The '*ish-'ishshah* language should also warn us against the tendency to reduce women to stereotypes of wife, mother or their surrogates; for that amounts to a denial that there is anything special or particular about woman's existence. Man and woman are expressions of the modalities of the human. The distinction should, however, always be put in the context of complementarity and of dynamic, reciprocal relationship.

Here let me draw attention to two dangers that may be misread as throwing bricks around. To affirm differentiation in humanity is not the same thing as being sexist. Language is an index to the attitudes of people to themselves and to the world and I see the point of the stress on gender in God-talk. However, I still wish to argue that perhaps grammar change is not always an adequate response to the exclusion of women and men and the feminine consciousness as a new unfolding reality.[5] On the other hand, we must be conscious of the danger of being caught in the undertow towards repression, regression and group identification; for there goes with it the danger that one may be left helpless in the grip of anger. Sometimes the condemnation of the system of patriarchal culture as the cause of injustice lures people away from the concrete earth of their actual psychic life and from persons and issues which constitute their actual situations.

To speak of a human being as bearing the *imago Dei* is to affirm his/her unique position. This point is made in different ways.

a) It is only at the creation of Adam that God breathes in him/her to make him/her a living being (Gen 2: 7). In other words, there is something of the transcendent in Adam, which demands the respect accordable to God.
b) It is only Adam who has authority to name animals.
c) It is to Adam alone that prohibition regarding the eating of the fruit of a particular tree is given (Gen 2:17). This distinguishes Adam from the rest of creation and makes Adam more accountable to God.
d) The earth is subjected to Adam (Gen 1:26–28; Psa 8).

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[4] Ann Belford Ulanov, *Receiving Women: Studies in the Psychology and Theory of the Feminine*, 40.

[5] Ulanov, *Receiving Women*, 15.

Thus in different ways we are told that humanity is unique of all God's creation and may this be deemed to bear the *imago Dei*.

The Greek word *eikon* in its classical use means a work of art, a picture, a figure, a pattern. But in the LXX it came to mean a statue, image. As used in the Bible it speaks of the connection between two things in terms of essences. "The constitutive element is not the form (that is, the similarity), but the substantiality."[6] The face like the head constitutes in a special way the archetype or image.

One of the frustrations with the Bible is that it does not in so many words define what the image and likeness of God consists of. So we have to read back into the text what we know of God. It cannot mean that god is like a male because the woman is also said to bear the *imago Dei*. To pursue its meaning through physical qualities is to hand a notion of God who is too small. But the first inference to be made is that if woman and man alike bear the image of God, then they must be reverenced, given the respect that is accorded God, though not worshipped. For worship properly is due to God alone. Woman like man is to be accorded the dignity that is consistent with the bearer of God's image.

Second, according to the Biblical text, God is love. Already in the prophet Hosea's writings this love is neither passion nor romanticism; rather it is sacrificial, the selfless and self-giving devotion to others. The climatic example of that love of God is the death of Jesus Christ. Julian of Norwich who wrote in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries captures this idea of love as follows:

> I saw the red blood trickle down from under the garland, hot and fresh and plentiful, as it did at the time of his Passion when the crown of thorns was pressed into his blessed head — who was both God and man and who suffered for me . . . In all this I was greatly stirred in love for all my fellow-Christians, for I wanted them to know and see what I saw so that it would comfort them. For this sight was shown for all the world. As I see it, God is all that is good, has made all that is made, and loves all he has made. So he who loves all his fellow-Christians for God's sake, loves all that is made.[7]

To affirm that woman like man is in God's image is to call on her, just as on him, to love their neighbour as themselves and to call others to love her. One more point — justice, to give all their dues, is a fruit of love. Basic rights like adequate food, housing, education, training, health care, and provision for work are her

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[6] Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 183; Jacob Jervall, *Imago Dei: Genesis 1:26f, im Spätjudentum in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen* [German: '*Imago Dei:* Genesis 1:26ff in late Judaism in Gnosticism and in the Pauline Letters'], 303.

[7] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, chapter 4. Editors' note: The original publication did not provide a citation; we are not sure which edition of Julian that Professor Pobee used.

rights as well as her protection against discrimination for reasons of sex. Because love and justice are instruments for community building, it is fair to argue that bearing the image and likeness of God is a call to live in community.

Third, since God is revealed as Creator, humanity — i.e., man and woman — are called to be creators with God. Both man and woman co-operate to make babies; she is no incubator — she contributes to the making of children and shares in the raising of the children. To affirm the *imago Dei* in woman also is to give substance to the co-responsibility of woman to create families, to bring them up in godly fear and nurture. And the attainments of women in the arts as in the sciences are evidence that women like men are co-creators with God.

Fourth, in dealing with the quality of love, reference was made to community. As a christian re-reading the Genesis creation myth, one is struck by the fact that with the exception of Adam's creation, each one begins with a fiat: "Let there be . . . ." But it is only in the case of Adam that God says "Let us make Adam in our image . . . ." Of course, it is possible to read 'we' as the royal we. But when one in Genesis reads it with New Testament spectacles, we may argue it to be a reference to the triune God: God the Father the Logos who is the agent of creation and who becomes incarnate in Jesus Christ the Lord and the Spirit which at the beginning of creation "was brooding over the face of the waters" (Gen 1:2). The deduction can be made that for humanity to bear that *imago Dei* of the triune God is to be created for community and unity. But community by its very nature implies differentiation, multiplicity and variety. Uniformity is not a necessary part of living in community. A woman then may not be able to go into the image of the man, for there is room in the community that bears that *imago Dei* is made up by the richness, abundance and variety of humanness. Let me put it in another way: in the *imago Die* there is place for feminine and masculine images because images are means by which we think about fundamental matters of sexuality, gender, and role formation and every relationship between the sexes. To affirm the community dimension of the *imago Dei* is to affirm mutual dependence and unity of the genders and a rejection of patronage of man over woman. It means a search for a community-forming structures and rejection of false models of assistance.

Let me recall another dimension of this variety on community. Feminine image is not all Caucasian image; alongside it stands African, Asian, etc., images. There is diversity in the one genre of male or female image that must be recognized in the community of human beings in the image of God.

Be that as it may, sexual differentiation has social character: God said, "it is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Gen 2:18).[8]

[8] Editors' note: In ordinary English, a 'helper' is typically subordinate to the one who is being helped. But the Hebrew word here — עֵזֶר (*ʿēzer* or *ezer*) — lacks that connotation. Indeed, God is referred to as the *Ezer* ('Helper') of Israel. Is God

Partnership is the language of the biblical faith. Women and men are partners whose nature is the same essentially: they are fellow creatures, body, soul and spirit and equally in the image and likeness of God. Humanity in the *imago Dei* is *homo socialis* — i.e., a social being. She has integrity of her own in the community; she has rights to be protected by just laws of the land, she has freedom of legitimate and authentic self-expression and space.

To read that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created Him; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27) is to bear witness that woman like man is, of all creation, in special relation to God, with some transcendent responses and orientation and therefore, created for love, dignity, rationality, and community. As the Lima Liturgy puts it, "You made human beings in your image to share life and reflect your glory."[9] But how have you come to this sorrowful situation of the marginalization of woman by man, which our cultures are full of?

The most simple answer is human sinfulness. This is not the place for an exposition of sin. For our purposes it should suffice to draw attention to the link between partnership and primacy. We have said enough about partnership that is part of being community of women and men. Inside that is to be set the story of the creation of Eve out of the side (Hebrew: *tsela* ʿ; Gen 2:25) of Adam. That myth speaks of the kinship between men and woman, but also in the process speaks of the primacy of men over women. The primacy, however, is one of age and says nothing about a natural or ethical superiority of men over women. Primacy by itself is not bad or sinful; for it is a necessary tool of some sort of order in society. But it becomes sinful if foreign qualitative notions are imported into it. This is where cultures have not helped or have helped to interpret primacy as superiority.

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subordinate to Israel? Or does God help Israel because God has strength and ability that Israel lacks? So it is in calling Woman the *ezer* of Man: The woman is not subordinate to the man. See, e.g., Michael L. Rosenzweig, "A Helper Equal to Him;" and Mimi Haddad, "Women's Calling as Ezer." — *JRB, editor*

[9] "The eucharistic liturgy of Lima." Editors' note: The WCC page for this liturgy notes that "The Lima Liturgy is a Eucharistic (Holy Communion) service expressing, in one possible liturgical form, the ecclesiological convergence on the eucharist reached in the Faith and Order text Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM). It is so named because it was first used at the Faith and Order Plenary Commission meeting in Lima, Peru in 1982 — the meeting which approved BEM for transmission to the churches for official response."

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[10] Editors' note: In the revised second edition of TDOT (1977 and 1997 reprint), this article appears on pp. 222–235.

[11] Editors' note: An HTML version is available at https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/presidents-message-womens-calling-ezer/

[12] Editors' note: This title is available on the Internet Archive at https://archive.org/details/imagodeigen126fi0000jerv/

[13] Editors' note: In the revised second edition of TDOT (1977 and 1997 reprint), this article appears on pp. 75–87; the original version of this article did not provide the pagination for this article in the first edition of TDOT.

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Ubuntu as a Corrective in Mission[1]

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Abstract

The modern mission movement had a heavy emphasis on the 'lostness' of the unreached. However, this emphasis goes astray when it produces pride, as if the missionary comes with the gospel and has nothing to learn from the people they live among. One way to correct this error is to integrate insights from Desmond Tutu's ubuntu theology, which emphasizes that the individual grows in humanity through relationships. In biblical terms, each person is made in God's image, and only together does each person or community become who God intends them to be. Thus, this article proposes that mission needs to consider ubuntu alongside the emphasis on 'lostness'. Such an approach requires humility and vulnerability on the missionary's part.

Résumé

Le mouvement missionnaire moderne avait fortement mis l'accent sur le caractère « perdu » des laissés-pour-compte. Cependant, cette insistance s'égare lorsqu'elle engendre l'orgueil, comme si le missionnaire arrivait avec l'évangile et n'avait rien à apprendre des gens parmi lesquels il vit. Une façon de corriger cette erreur est d'intégrer les idées de la théologie *ubuntu* de Desmond Tutu, qui met l'accent sur le fait que l'individu grandit en humanité à travers les relations. En termes bibliques, chaque personne est faite à l'image de Dieu, et ce n'est qu'ensemble que chaque personne ou communauté devient ce que Dieu veut qu'elle soit. Cet article propose donc que la mission prenne en compte l'*ubuntu* en même

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the inaugural IAMS Africa conference at Stellenbosch, South Africa, in August 2024. The theme of the conference was "Mission as Vulnerablity in the African Context." IAMS (International Association for Mission Studies; https://www.missionstudies.org/) was founded in 1972. IAMS Africa (https://iamsafrica.co.za/) was launched in 2024.

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temps que l'accent mis sur la « perte ». Une telle approche exige humilité et vulnérabilité de la part du missionnaire.

Resumo

O movimento missionário moderno enfatizou muito a "perda" dos não alcançados. No entanto, esta ênfase desvia-se quando produz orgulho, como se o missionário viesse com o evangelho e não tivesse nada a aprender com as pessoas entre as quais vive. Uma forma de corrigir este erro é integrar as ideias da teologia ubuntu de Desmond Tutu, que sublinha que o indivíduo cresce em humanidade através das relações. Em termos bíblicos, cada pessoa é feita à imagem de Deus, e só em conjunto é que cada pessoa ou comunidade se torna aquilo que Deus pretende que seja. Assim, este artigo propõe que a missão precisa de considerar o ubuntu juntamente com a ênfase na "perda". Tal abordagem requer humildade e vulnerabilidade da parte do missionário.

Keywords

ubuntu, Desmond Tutu, mission, *imago Dei*, humility, interdependence

Mots-clés

ubuntu, Desmond Tutu, mission, *imago Dei*, humilité, interdépendance

Palavras-chave

ubuntu, Desmond Tutu, missão, *imago Dei*, humildade, interdependência

Introduction

The history of cross-cultural missions is a mixed one. Frequently when a missionary serves cross-culturally, the missionary — consciously or unconsciously — attempts to impose their own culture in the process of sharing the gospel with their hearers.[2] This mixing of the gospel message and the missionary's culture has far-reaching consequences. At times the gospel has

[2] For instance, from a Kenyan perspective (specifically Kikuyu) prior to Kenya's independence, Mary Nyambura Muchiri describes her own experience: "the missionaries insisted that one chose a Western name for baptism, 'in order to radically cut oneself from traditional values and identify oneself with the new community of Christians'." Muchiri, "The Significance of Names to Christians in Africa: A Preliminary Investigation," 2. In Kenya the names taken at baptism are often referred to as 'Christian names,' even if they are Western names like 'Susan' or 'Fredrick.' Muchiri likewise clarifies, "I have used the term 'Western' deliberately because I do not think there is anything inherently Christian in a Western name;" p. 7.

positive, transformative effects on the receiving culture, and other times the missionary's culture is arrogantly, destructively imposed upon the hearers. The ubuntu theology of Desmond Tutu (1931–2021) offers a much-needed corrective for missions.[3]

The Problem of Condescension in Missionaries

The modern evangelical mission movement has heavily emphasized the 'lostness' of the unreached. The passion to share the gospel with those who are lost in sin compelled many missionaries to travel far from their cultures, sacrificing the comforts of home for the sake of the opportunity to tell others about Christ. The Bible does indeed teach that the state of humanity after the Fall in Genesis 3 is one of slavery to sin, and that the effects of sin are far-reaching and deadly.

However, the Bible also demonstrates that humans were originally created good, bearing God's image, and this image, though damaged, endures even after the Fall (see Gen 5:1–3 and 9:5–6). An over-emphasis on the destructive power of sin and its effect on humanity goes astray if isolated from other biblical teachings about humanity and their cultures: if the *imago Dei* is forgotten or treated as secondary, a dangerous imbalance arises. Or, one group of people might deny that another group also bears the *imago Dei*. One danger of this overemphasis is pride. It can seem as if the missionary teaches others the truth of the gospel and yet believes they do not need the other, having nothing to learn from them.

Such a perspective produces condescension, as seen when missionaries refer to non-Christians in derogatory terms. Unfortunately, John S. Mbiti's 1972 article, "African Indigenous Culture in Relation to Evangelism and Church Development," published fifty-three years ago, still resonates today. Mbiti's piece catalogues some of the derogatory terms used: "'heathen,' 'pagans,' 'primitives,' 'wretched,' 'savages,' 'children of Ham,' 'the lost souls,' etc. were household words in the lips and pens of western missionaries and some of the African converts, describing African societies and their ways of life."[4] Unsurprisingly, in light of such views, the converts were taught to step away from their indigenous culture and embrace the missionaries' western cultures[5] — they were pushed to become proselytes. Mbiti condemns such whole-sale rejection of indigenous cultures.

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[3] *Ubuntu* is a view that continues to be much discussed and applies to various issues, such as recently by Harvey Kwiyani on the topic of nationalism in his "Christian nationalism, tribalism, and ubuntu in African Christianity."

[4] John Mbiti, "African Indigenous Culture in Relation to Evangelism and Church Development," 80.

[5] Mbiti, "African Indigenous Culture," 82, 83.

> Missionary culture told Africa in effect that 'unless you are (culturally) circumcised, you cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.' So, unless they mutilated a large portion of their cultural foreskins, unless they became culturally westernized, and then Lutheranized, Methodistized, Anglicanized, Roman Catholicized, Presbyterianized, Africans could not inherit one centimetre of the Christian Faith. We were told that if we wanted Christianity (and this we had been persuaded passionately to want), we had to pay the price: we had to lay down our cultures, despise them as the missionaries did, condemn them as the missionaries did, and run away from them since missionaries had declared them to be dangerously demonic.[6]

To speak of culture is to speak of a complex relationship of beliefs, values, and practices that provide unity and commonality to a group of people. Culture is not static but changes with time, and therefore Christians in any culture need to constantly assess what is happening in their context and how to respond.

From Mbiti's perspective, western missionaries saw nothing of value in indigenous culture and sought to replace it with their own. Mbiti repeatedly insists that not everything in indigenous culture is good or worthy of bringing into the church; however, his point is that the missionary rejection of indigenous culture as a whole was wrong and seriously damaged the church's foundation.[7] Regarding the relationship of culture to Christianity, he concludes,

> Christianity seems to lose in the long run whenever it becomes too intimately linked with any given culture. Its very universality forbids it to become too strongly allied to any local culture. We may legitimately Christianize culture — and that is what one hopes may be done in Africa — but we are moving in the wrong direction once we reverse the order and begin to culturalize Christianity.[8]

To Mbiti, what Christianity needs is a thoughtful, careful analysis of culture, in order to know what aspects of culture the church can embrace and which it should reject, because "no community of people can exist without a culture."[9] At this juncture, it also helps to note that Jesus enters into the Jewish culture to reveal himself, and indeed redeems aspects of culture to communicate God's nature and plan. The Incarnation makes it clear that God takes on flesh — which includes culture.

Mbiti appeals to biblical anthropology, noting it "would seem to be against a total rejection of one's culture since God loves man within the cultural context. Therefore the Christian Faith cannot redeem indigenous peoples minus their cultures — a meaningful redemption of man presupposes the

[6] Mbiti, "African Indigenous Culture," 82.
[7] Mbiti, "African Indigenous Culture;" e.g., 79, 81, 82, and 83.
[8] Mbiti, "African Indigenous Culture," 84; see also 88.
[9] Mbiti, "African Indigenous Culture," 89.

redemption of his culture as well."[10] In short, theological examples can be multiplied to show that God works within and through culture, sometimes rejecting elements and other times redeeming elements of cultures. Therefore, to have a reductionist or simplistic approach to culture simply will not do.

In Ogbu Kalu's view, "a crucial aspect of missionary attitude to traditional culture was that in spite of the biblical doctrine of creation, 'the missionaries' image of the non-Europeans blended with the existing cultural arrogance and with the pseudo-scientific argument for racial superiority' which characterized the 19th Century."[11] Writing from a Kenyan perspective, Mbiti contends that, "Almost everything in African culture was tabooed in the course of evangelism. Sin, rather than grace, became the central pass-word in evangelism and Church development."[12] What Kalu describes of that era in Igboland fits well with Mbiti's statement that western missionaries tended to look down upon their host cultures.[13]

Mbiti and Kalu raise the issue of the relationship between Christianity and culture, which relationship has not always been carefully conceived in mission efforts. Kwame Bediako's magisterial *Theology and Identity* demonstrates that Christianity and culture are in a constant interplay; this is a vital, continuous aspect of a culture coming to terms with Christianity and making Christianity properly 'at home' in that culture without domesticating it.[14] The Christian response to any culture should not be total embrace or total rejection, but thoughtful analysis and response. As Andrew F. Walls highlighted, "It is the basic missionary experience to live on terms set by someone else,"[15] and yet this foundational truth is where many missionaries failed. They were often

[10] Mbiti, "African Indigenous Culture," 89.

[11] Ogbu U. Kalu, "Missionaries, Colonial Government and Secret Societies in South-Eastern Igboland, 1920-1950," 79–80; citing P. D. Curtin, "Scientific Racism and the British Theory of Empire," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 2, no. 1 (December 1960): 40–51, p. 48.

[12] Mbiti, "African Indigenous Culture," 82.

[13] Kalu, "Missionaries, Colonial Government and Secret Societies," 80.

[14] Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa*, Regnum Studies in Mission, Oxford, UK: Regnum, 1992. I am indebted to Joshua Barron for informing me that the 'at home' phrase originated with Frederick Burkewood Welbourn and Bethwell A. Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home: A Study of Two Independent Churches in Western Kenya* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966). Andrew F. Walls argued for the necessity of "making Christianity at home in the life of a people: rooting the gospel in its culture, its language, its habits of thought — indigenizing it in fact, making the church 'a place to feel at home';" Walls, "Towards Understanding Africa's Place in Christian History," 188.

[15] Andrew F. Walls, "Africa in Christian History: Retrospect and Prospect," 96–97.

unwilling to live on their hosts' terms and failed to treat their host cultures with respect and humility.

Roland Allen's *Missionary Methods: God's Plan for Missions According to Paul* assesses modern missions and concludes that much of it does not adopt Paul's method, in part because

> We modern teachers from the West are by nature and by training persons of restless activity and boundless self-confidence. We tend to assume an attitude of superiority towards all Eastern peoples and point to our material progress as the justification of our attitude. . . . We are accustomed to an elaborate system of church organization and a peculiar code of morality. We cannot imagine any Christianity worthy of the name existing without the elaborate machinery we have invented. We naturally expect our converts to adopt from us not only essentials but also accidentals. We desire to impart not only the gospel, but also the law and the customs.[16]

In other words, there is a form of self-deceit which can lead missionaries to assume their own culture is superior to others. This yields a variety of problems. One of those problems is a failure of ubuntu: a failure to appreciate the other for who they are, for their own culture, and a realization of human interdependence. It is the suggestion of this article that there is therefore a theological reason for this distorted attitude: an over-emphasis on the doctrine of sin to the virtual exclusion of the doctrine of the *imago Dei* and its impact on cultures.

The *Imago Dei*

A strong emphasis on sin in individuals and in culture, while true, is not the entire or even the first truth the Bible teaches about human beings. The creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 start by describing humanity as part of God's good creation, bearing a special dignity by virtue of God's gift of the *imago Dei*. This image is both a divinely-bestowed gift and a responsibility or calling. Furthermore, the *imago Dei* has a relational aspect to it: Adam and Eve *together* reflect God.[17] As mentioned, this image is damaged but not destroyed by sin, as Genesis 5 and 9 demonstrate: even after sin has entered the scene, wreaking havoc, Adam still passes on the image to his son Seth, and murder is expressly prohibited because it is an offense to the God whose image humanity bears.

The *imago Dei* is a foundational doctrine. It portrays humanity as unique, the crown of creation. This means that humans have an inherent dignity conferred upon them by God. Genesis 1 establishes that God's design is for male

[16] Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: God's Plan for Missions According to Paul*, xviii.

[17] For more on this topic, see Joshua Robert Barron, "Mutual Submission, Mutual Respect: Reciprocal *enkanyit* in Ephesians 5 in the Maasai context," 7–8.

and female together to reflect the triune (relational) God; therefore, the image contains a relational aspect. David Kirwa Tarus emphasizes the force of the Old Testament teaching, noting, "There is a radical difference between the Genesis account and the ancient Near East account of the image. While the ANE limits imaging to kings, Genesis opens up the image to all humanity. Men and women, kings, priests, and ordinary people, are all image bearers of God."[18] The fact that in the Bible *all* people are image bearers is particularly significant for the discussion that follows.

The presence of the image is one reason that human cultures cannot be discounted as entirely evil or beyond divine redemption. By an act of divine grace, the image remains and God's common grace restrains the full effects of sin. Further, general revelation bears witness to God, so human cultures retain traces of goodness and aspects that point to God. The New Testament testifies to redemption and the restoration of the warped image for those who are in Christ. Revelation in particular highlights that God will not destroy cultures at the end of time, but instead bring into the new Jerusalem the redeemed people along with worthy cultural aspects. This clarifies God's plan includes the redemption of cultures, bringing their 'treasures' into eternity.

Imago Dei and *Ubuntu*

Sin, which entered the biblical narrative after creation, has at times dominated missiological praxis to such an extent that the image of God has been neglected, leading to detrimental misunderstandings of individuals and cultures. The doctrine of the *imago Dei*, clarified by ubuntu theology, provides an enriching perspective that can mitigate against this particular flaw, for the sake of the present and future practice of missions.[19]

Tutu's ubuntu theology teaches that humans develop in relationships, not in isolation.[20] A person is not a person alone; rather, the individual grows

[18] David Kirwa Tarus, "*Mtu ni Watu* ('A Person is Persons'): The Contribution of an African Traditional Anthropology to an Understanding of the Christian Doctrine of the Imago Dei," 5.

[19] C. Banda is concerned about the looseness with which *ubuntu* is used, so here I have focused on Desmond Tutu's definition specifically. Banda provides a helpful overview of ubuntu's usage and argues that ubuntu must not be limited to "virtuous-communitarian terms for promoting social cohesion as is the current trend" but also address "an existential perspective of human flourishing or human wellbeing;" Banda, "*Ubuntu* as human flourishing? An African traditional religious analysis of *ubuntu* and its challenge to Christian anthropology," 205. I suggest that Tutu's actions show his commitment to human wellbeing as part of his belief in *ubuntu*.

[20] Tutu is one of the most well-known proponents of *ubuntu*, but he is certainly not the only Christian theologian in Africa to build upon the African view of humanity as relational.

in humanity through relationships with others. Similarly, Malawian theologian Augustine Chingwala Musopole describes the chiChewa term *uMunthu* as "authentic human character." Musopole argues that what makes *uMunthu* "critical to African philosophy (ways of wisdom) and religion (ways of relating with reverence) is the fact that for both to be credible, they need to be embodied. In other words, both must be lived, made incarnate in one's life for a community-in-communion."[21] What is clear from Musopole is that *uMunthu* grows and reveals itself in relationships. It cannot remain purely interior or individualistic.

Ubuntu involves flourishing and wholeness in the context of interdependence.[22] In Tutu's terms, "Our humanity . . . is caught up in one another's."[23] However, it is obvious that interdependence and valuing differences among humans is not always the reality. There is an important critique to note: sometimes the concept of ubuntu is misused to privilege some persons over others. For instance, Musa Dube et al. examine how ubuntu and patriarchy interact in Botswana.[24] They ask, "How do we explain the beautiful ideal of *botho/ubuntu* and its co-existence with patriarchy?"[25] After examining some specific rituals — marriage preparations and preparing for a new baby, for instance — they conclude that "*botho/ubuntu* activities and spirituality, therefore, have the potential for providing a feminist space of affirming and caring for human life. . . . The examined cases, however, indicate that *botho/ubuntu* co-exists with patriarchy, which creates and maintains gender inequalities."[26] The authors believe that women can use the *botho/ubuntu* ethic to empower themselves within this context, and that they could attempt to re-write patriarchal norms, but the conclusion seems to be that patriarchy indicates a failure of ubuntu.

Ideally, in ubuntu, characteristics like compassion, hospitality, and warmth towards fellow humans are prized.[27] This view of humans focuses on the relational aspect of human life.[28] Because it is relational and values differences

[21] Augustine Chingwala Musopole, *uMunthu Theology: An Introduction*, 30.
[22] Tutu and Tutu, *Made for Goodness*, 47.
[23] Tutu with Abrams, *God has a Dream*, 25.
[24] Musa W. Dube et al., "*Botho/Ubuntu:* Community Building and Gender Constructions in Botswana," 5, 6, and 7.
[25] Dube et al., "*Botho/Ubuntu*," 7; emphasis original.
[26] Dube et al., "*Botho/Ubuntu*," 19; emphasis original.
[27] Tutu, *God has a Dream*, Kindle locations 314, 316, and 321; Tutu, *In God's Hands: The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2015*, Kindle location 257.
[28] A practical, accessible introduction to *ubuntu* can be found in Mungi Ngomane's *Everyday Ubuntu: Living Better Together, The African Way*.

among individuals, ubuntu "does not denigrate individuality," but places it within the context of community.[29] Indeed, Battle argues,

> To become a healthy person we must be fully human both as a person in community and as a self-differentiated person. My argument, however, is that the very act of self-differentiation is itself the beauty of Ubuntu. You cannot know you are unique or beautiful or intelligent without the reference point of a community in which such attributes become intelligible.[30]

Therefore, ubuntu prizes both individuality and community.

While ubuntu is focused on the inherently relational nature of humans, it also teaches that an individual's own level of ubuntu can change, in the sense that the individual can increase or decrease in those qualities which mark humanness — they have the potential to become more or less humble and caring, for instance. A person may not recognize their interdependence and treat other humans poorly, and therefore they lack ubuntu. Referring to God's declaration in Genesis 2 that it is not good for man to be alone, Tutu declares, "that is the point of the story. It is that none of us could ever be human in isolation, in stark solitude. I need other human beings to *help me to become human* in my turn."[31]

In biblical terms, each person is made in God's image, and only in relationship with God and one another can each person or community become who God intends them to be. Therefore, rightly understood, an ubuntu perspective inculcates humility, because in this perspective, humans need one other to help each other become more fully human.[32] Tutu contends,

> None of us can be totally self-sufficient; the totally self-sufficient one is in fact sub-human, so we are meant to celebrate the fact that we don't have everything. I don't have all the attributes: I lack in many areas, so that I can know my utter need of you and all that you bring.[33]

To put it starkly, "We are made with inbuilt insufficiency so that we can know our desperate need of the other, of the one who makes up what is lacking in

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[29] Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu*, 42. He elsewhere clarifies that *ubuntu* is about "symbiotic and cooperative relationships — neither the parasitic and destructive relationships of codependence nor the draining and alienating relationships of competition." Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*, 2.

[30] Battle, *Ubuntu*, 8.

[31] Tutu, *In God's Hands*, 33; emphasis added.

[32] For more on intellectual humility, see David Tarus, "The Significance of Intellectual Humility for Theologians Today;" Stephen T. Pardue, *The Mind of Christ: Humility and the Intellect in Early Christian Theology*.

[33] Tutu, *In God's Hands*, 34–35.

me."[34] It could be said that the goodness humans were created with includes this 'inbuilt insufficiency,' as paradoxical as that might sound.

In Tutu's writings and his legacy, he showed not just his commitment to a relational view of humanity, but his outworking of that relational view

> A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.[35]

He immediately reaffirms, "What dehumanizes you inexorably dehumanizes me."[36] In the face of the horrors of apartheid and those who perpetuated it, the Archbishop still clung to the belief that "In the process of dehumanizing another, in inflicting untold harm and suffering, inexorably the perpetrator was being dehumanized as well. I used to say that the oppressor was dehumanized as much as, if not more than, the oppressed . . .."[37] Tutu's commitment to justice, specifically restorative justice, comes through clearly here. In his view, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) requirement that a person who pled guilty would receive amnesty meant the person must take responsibility for their wrongdoing: it was an act of taking accountability for an offense.[38] It also affirmed the belief that the "perpetrator can act differently," that they can change and do what is right.[39]

This is not to suggest that the TRC was perfect, but it was nevertheless vital and significant. However, neither in Tutu's view nor others' views was the TRC without its flaws and significant failures regarding ubuntu. For instance, Jaco Barnard-Naudé argues that the TRC did not provide sufficient reparation to victims. He argues that even when apologies were offered within the TRC context, what was communicated was that the apology was always going to be accepted and acceptable. This would therefore indicate that the apology was superfluous, and that shame (linked to the apology) was not addressed. Barnard-Naudé asks, "What sort of instance of the Law *constrains*, instead of promotes, the experience of shame for wrongs done?"[40] In his view, the failures of the TRC continue to haunt South Africans.

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[34] Tutu, *In God's Hands*, 38; see also Kindle location 323.
[35] Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 31; emphasis original.
[36] Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 31; see also 54–55.
[37] Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 103.
[38] Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 54–55.
[39] Tutu and Tutu, *Made for Goodness*, 103.
[40] Jaco Barnard-Naudé, *Spectres of Reparation in South Africa: Re-Encountering the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 64; emphasis original.

Others have criticized or rejected ubuntu on the basis that it is sometimes appealed to by those who reinforce patriarchy. On this issue, Lillykutty Abraham and Krishna V. P. Prabha conclude that

> we can be assured that *ubuntu* is not an impractical philosophy of life. It is possible that adherence to *ubuntu* can transform a male-dominated society into an egalitarian one, recognizing the space of every individual. This would probably be a possible solution to the increasing violence against women and girls. If *ubuntu* begins to be practiced, the hegemonic masculinity that considers it normal for women to be treated as objects will be broken.[41]

In other words, their conclusion is that when properly applied, ubuntu would not support patriarchy: "an *ubuntu*-filled mind is the seat of solidarity and care. This, in turn, would aid in the establishment of an egalitarian society in which dehumanized girls and women have a place and their angst is transformed into contentment and pride in being women."[42]

Acknowledging failures of the TRC and misuses of ubuntu, it is still argued that Tutu's ubuntu theology offers transformative power. One implication of it is that the individual need not be fearful of or threatened by the differences in others, but rather can choose with humility to celebrate and be enriched by them. Tutu describes this as an 'exhilarating' discovery that the other person is differently gifted by God.[43] Indeed, the many differences among humans "make for a rich diversity to be celebrated for the sake of the unity that underlies them. We are different so that we can know our need of one another, for no one is ultimately self-sufficient. The completely self-sufficient person would be subhuman."[44] Since ubuntu assumes interdependence, it therefore presupposes a willingness to acknowledge one's need for others and — particularly pertinent in conversations about missions — to learn from others with humility and the understanding that I need that person just as much as they need me, so that together we may grow in imaging God, in the ubuntu for which God designed people.

Along with humility, vulnerability is necessary for ubuntu. Battle emphasizes, "ubuntu, for Tutu, is the environment of vulnerability that builds true community."[45] Vulnerability is not peripheral to but is necessary for the practice of ubuntu, because "'the scripture says, people are made for togetherness, people are made for fellowship.' And we are made for fellowship

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[41] Lillykutty Abraham and Krishna V. P. Prabha, "The Angst of the Dehumanized: *Ubuntu* for Solidarity," *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 9; emphasis original.

[42] Abraham and Prabha, "The Angst of the Dehumanized," 10; emphasis original.

[43] Tutu, *In God's Hands*, 39. Tutu was aware of the danger of prioritizing harmony without consensus, which could bring about abuses; Battle, *Reconciliation*, 51–52.

[44] Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 265.

[45] Battle, *Reconciliation*, 40.

because only in a vulnerable set of relationships are we able to recognize that our humanity is bound up in the humanity of others."[46] To cooperate with others, instead of competing, requires openness and a willingness to think of others. As Battle puts it, "ubuntu reorients our vision. In our individual consciousness, we must learn to see self in the other — the greatest other being God."[47] So ubuntu requires a humble, vulnerable mindset.

Tutu provides a biblical example of one whose view of the 'other' was transformed. He recounts Paul's encounter with Christ on the Damascus road, followed by God commanding Ananias to assist the former persecutor.

> Ananias remonstrated with the Lord, quite aghast that he should do anything to help that so-and-so who had come from Jerusalem to wreak havoc with the Lord's followers. The reluctant Ananias was persuaded to go, however, and what I have always found intriguing is the greeting with which Ananias saluted the formerly predatory Saul. Quite amazingly, really staggeringly, Ananias addresses him as 'Brother Saul' (Acts 9:1–19).[48]

In this account, Ananias recognizes that Saul is now a follower of Jesus and a 'brother' in Christ; this realization requires vulnerability and humility on Ananias's part to change his view of the former persecutor.

However, does this apply to non-Christians? After all, Ananias is addressing a fellow Christ-follower, and thus the label 'brother' applies, as hard as it must have been for Ananias to adjust his thinking about Saul. In other words, does *ubuntu* only apply to those within one's own group, while outsiders remain sub-human? Should Christians apply an ubuntu perspective only to fellow Christians? Tutu's emphatic response is 'no', because the creation account shows that all humans are created in God's image. Therefore, Tutu speaks of the one 'human family' to which all humans belong, without exception.[49] The teaching that all humans bear this image and have inherent, God-given dignity is one of the doctrines that inspired Tutu's fight against apartheid and leading the TRC after Nelson Mandela became president.[50]

The desire to bring victims and perpetrators together, asking the offenders to confess their wrongs and thereby give some release and dignity to the victim, was naturally a painful, difficult process. Tutu confesses freely that, "frequently we in the commission were quite appalled at the depth of depravity to which human beings could sink and we would, most of us, say that those who

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[46] Battle, *Reconciliation*, 40–41; quoting Tutu, sermon at Birmingham Cathedral, 12 April 1988, p. 3.

[47] Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*, 13.

[48] Tutu, *In God's Hands*, 43.

[49] Tutu, *In God's Hands*, e.g., 35, 40, 42, 97, and 98.

[50] Nelson Mandela (1918–2013) was South Africa's first post-apartheid president (1994–1999).

committed such dastardly deeds were monsters because the deeds were monstrous."[51] The commission heard terrible stories of the depths of human depravity which could have left them quite pessimistic toward those confessing. Were such people monsters?

Despite the disturbing reports he heard, Tutu rejects that: "Theology reminded me that, however diabolical the act, it did not turn the perpetrator into a demon." He reasons thus: if the offenders were considered monsters,

> then we were thereby letting accountability go out the window because we were then declaring that they were not moral agents to be held responsible for the deeds they had committed. Much more importantly, it meant that we abandoned all hope of their being able to change for the better.[52]

Choosing to forgive the offender was an act not of forgetting a wrong, but rather of liberation and restoration of the divinely-given ability to create new relationships and self-narratives.[53] Tutu's stance in the TRC reveals the foundational nature of his belief that each person bears the image, and that even a horrible person can change and reflect that image more fully.

In part because of the Bible's teaching on the relational, interdependent image in all people (which aligns with ubuntu's claim), Tutu rightly reads the Bible as a radical, subversive book; the doctrine of the *imago Dei* is a prime example.[54] He claims, "The missionaries placed in the hands of Blacks something that was thoroughly subversive of injustice and oppression."[55] He repeats,

> The last thing you should give to those whom you want to subjugate, to oppress, is the Bible. It is more revolutionary, more subversive of injustice and oppression than any political manifesto or ideology. How so? The Bible asserts . . . that each one of us, without exception, is created in the image of God (the *Imago Dei*). Whether you are rich or poor, white or black, educated or illiterate, male or female — each one of us, exhilaratingly, wonderfully, is created in the image of God.

Our worth is intrinsic; it comes, as it were, with the package.[56]

This image applies to all humans. Tutu insists that: "what endows you and me with worth, indeed infinite worth, is this one fact: that we are created in the

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[51] Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 83.
[52] Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 83.
[53] Tutu and Tutu, *Made for Goodness*, 150–151.
[54] Tutu, *In God's Hands*, 20.
[55] Tutu, *In God's Hands*, 10. See also Lamin O. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*. Sanneh makes the argument that the translatability of Scripture served to undermine colonialism.
[56] Tutu, *In God's Hands*, 19–20; see also Tutu and Tutu, *Made for Goodness*, 194.

image of God. Our worth is something that comes with the package. It is intrinsic and universal. It belongs to all human beings, regardless."[57] This stance rejects attempts to divide humanity into different classes, whether by the myth of 'race' or levels of value.

This core belief was one impetus for Tutu's fight against apartheid and resulted in the TRC, because "The first step as Tutu saw it — and in some ways the only step — was that ubuntu would humanize the oppressors in the eyes of blacks and that a sense of common humanity would form: 'We will grow in the knowledge that they [white people] too are God's children, even though they may be our oppressors, though they may be our enemies.'"[58] Standing firm in this knowledge led Tutu to fight apartheid while offering opportunities for redemption to the oppressors.

The Bible is also subversive in its description of God's undeserved love to humans, shown in bestowing upon them the image. Tutu repeatedly highlights that God's love is not earned but graciously, wondrously free.[59] The reality is that "God does not love us because we are lovable. We are lovable precisely because God loves us."[60] This aspect of God's nature — his unfathomable grace and love — were also important in Tutu's approach in the TRC. While frequently brought to tears and sickened by the confessions he heard in the TRC, he still felt compelled to offer forgiveness and reconciliation to the offenders in the knowledge that, "In this theology, we can never give up on anyone because our God was one who had a particular soft spot for sinners."[61]

This view of humanity's God-given value then applies in the realm of daily life, inclusive of socio-cultural and political realities:

> If we really believed what we asserted — that each human being without exception is created in the image of God, and so is a God-carrier — then we would be appalled at any ill-treatment of another human being, because it is not simply unjust but also, shockingly, blasphemous. It really is like spitting in the face of God.[62]

Thus Tutu concludes that apartheid did not just dehumanize the oppressed blacks in South Africa, but also dehumanized their very oppressors.[63] It is the

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[57] Tutu, *In God's Hands*, 20; see Tutu and Tutu, *Made for Goodness*, 15.

[58] Battle, *Reconciliation*, 47, quoting Tutu, "Where Is Now Thy God?," public address given at Trinity Institute, New York, 8 January 1989.

[59] Tutu and Tutu, *Made for Goodness*, 24.

[60] Tutu and Tutu, *Made for Goodness*, 21.

[61] Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 84; see also Tutu and Tutu, *Made for Goodness*, 2–3, 103. Bryan Maier evaluates dangerous ways in which forgiveness theologies can be applied. See Maier, *Forgiveness and Justice: A Christian Approach.*

[62] Tutu, *In God's Hands*, 21–22.

[63] For example, Tutu, *God has a Dream*, loc. 542, 543; see also Tutu and Tutu, *Made for Goodness*, 85–86.

same Bible and its teachings about the image — in Tutu's theology inseparable from ubuntu — as well as the loving God of Scripture that grounded Tutu's efforts in opposing apartheid and later offering reconciliation to oppressors.[64]

He repeatedly points to biblical mandates for God's people to pursue justice.[65] The God-bestowed dignity of humans comes with a special responsibility: "God asks us to be co-creators with God, to be those who promote flourishing, not promoting death."[66] When accused of mixing politics and religion, Tutu says, "We would quote with happy abandon from the books of prophets such as Amos, Jeremiah, Isaiah and others to show that real authentic religion was no exercise in escapism. No, it was earthy and thoroughly relevant to the business of human living, speaking to how we conducted our politics."[67] Tutu's claim is clear: his political actions were a result of his theological convictions.

Ubuntu also links in with eschatology, in that the goal toward which God is taking his people is an intentionally diverse community, where the variety of cultures are respected and the 'glories' of each nation become a part of the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:24, 26). One person needs another, and indeed the various ethnic groups need one another.

> God is smart, making us different so that we will get to know our need of one another. We are meant to complement one another in order to be truly human and to realize the fullness of our potential to be human. After all, we are created in the image of a God who is a diversity of persons who exist in ineffable unity.[68]

Tutu speaks of this 'dream' of God which is yet to come, but on its way. "Elsewhere the prophet Isaiah, echoed in identical words by the prophet Micah, speaks of a time of universal peace, when we will 'beat our swords into pruning-hooks', and all humankind will march to the Holy City to be, once again, one community living in peace and harmony (Isa. 2:4)."[69] Tutu lived his own life as one who sought to work toward that dream of God, and taught others that "God's invitation to wholeness is *ubuntu*."[70] The method and the goal were both permeated by ubuntu and the firm hope of God's dream being fulfilled. These themes of the image of God, and God's nature and plan for humanity are the deeply-held beliefs which led Tutu on a life-long crusade against injustice,

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[64] Seeking reconciliation in no way condones or excuses wrongs. Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 85.

[65] Tutu championed restorative, not retributive, justice. E.g., see *No Future without Forgiveness*, 54–55.

[66] Tutu, *In God's Hands*, 17.

[67] Tutu, *In God's Hands*, 55.

[68] Desmond Tutu, *An African Prayer Book*, xiv–xv.

[69] Tutu, *In God's Hands*, 111.

[70] Tutu and Tutu, *Made for Goodness*, 47; emphasis original.

inspired him to fight to overturn apartheid, and to continue to work for a united, reconciled South Africa.

Ubuntu as a Corrective in Mission

Tutu spoke frequently about God's dream — the goal which God had at creation and which God continues to work towards even after sin warped all creation. As Tutu expresses it,

> God can keep reminding us, 'I have a dream that one day my people will know that I created them to be a family; I created them for togetherness; I created them for complementarity; I created them for a delicate network of interdependence where each makes up for what is lacking in the other'.[71]

This dream of harmony and flourishing in all creation links with the topic of this conference,[72] the place of vulnerability in missions.

How can Christian mission address the problem of condescension in missionaries? While there is no single panacea, I propose that a deep commitment to ubuntu would assist in addressing this failure. What specifically does ubuntu offer in the context of cross-cultural mission? As mentioned earlier, ubuntu cultivates an attitude of humility and vulnerability, in recognizing that an individual must open themselves to relationships, recognizing their need of others. Ubuntu cultivates humility in learning to adjust to other individuals and cultures, realizing that the diversity of others is not a threat but a gift to be treated with care and respect. This humility to adjust oneself is expressed in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23, where Paul says that he is willing to become like a Jew to the Jews, like a Gentile to the Gentiles, and like a weak person for those who are weak. Paul is willing to adjust his ways for the sake of those he wants to share the gospel with, and this means a careful study and imitation of their ways.

Living well cross-culturally requires willingness to become like a child who needs to learn language and culture. Further, it is to hold the expectation that the missionary is arriving in a place where God is already at work. Therefore, the missionary should expect to see the Holy Spirit preparing hearts for the gospel, providing general revelation, and teaching the missionary, if they have the eyes to see and ears to hear.

To be specific to my own context, missionaries involved in theological education in Kenya can practice ubuntu by making changes to course content and required readings. There are many publications by African scholars available for theology students to engage with, and those works are better at addressing local contexts than works written by those with no awareness of

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[71] Tutu, *In God's Hands*, 110.

[72] I.e., "Mission as Vulnerablity in the African Context;" see footnote 1, above.

either the Kenyan context or other related African contexts. Why are the questions, the key topics, and the required readings still primarily drawing on a Western context? It is unnecessary and shows no respect for the church in Kenya. Instead, the lecturer ought to assist the learners to see the God-given strengths in their own context, and built on those to develop their own theological voice.

Ubuntu in mission calls for a deep identification with those whom the missionary seeks to serve. It requires learning to love diversity, instead of assuming one's own ways are superior or the standard for other cultures. In the Old Testament, Rahab the Canaanite serves as a warning against false assumptions that individuals from so-called Christian cultures are better than those they are to be witnesses to. Rahab was neither ethnically nor culturally Israelite, but when she saved the Israelite spies and confessed her faith in YHWH, she revealed a stronger trust in God than many ethnic Israelites. And in the end, Rahab became a follower of God and ancestor of Jesus. Rahab is a reminder that God can and will use anyone, whether from a supposedly 'pagan' culture or not; she is also a reminder that God's followers can expect to see the Holy Spirit at work in other people and cultures, if they are willing to look with faith.

Conclusion

As mentioned at the beginning, missions has a sadly checkered history which includes wonderful testimonies of the transformation that the gospel brings, but also testifies to failures and debilitating blind spots of missionaries. One such area has been an overwhelming emphasis on the 'lost' state of non-Christians that in turn led to pride and blindness on the part of missionaries, who sometimes forget that their potential converts are also created in God's image, and that a delicate network of ubuntu links the missionaries with their host cultures. Missionaries have opportunities to value the dignity of their hosts, to see that there are areas of goodness, worthy of redemption, in those host cultures, and indeed that missionaries have much to learn from their hosts and from what the Holy Spirit is already doing in that context.

To reiterate: the proposal at hand is that missions, in both theology and praxis, needs a strong foundation on ubuntu as a corrective. Such an approach requires humility on the part of the missionary, the honesty and vulnerability to see their own need of the other (in this case, those they seek to share the gospel with), and has the potential to be produce greater effectiveness in mission work through producing believers who are linked together in a diverse unity which demonstrates the glory and wisdom of God (Eph. 3:1–11)!

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Without Exceptions

Envisioning Ubuntu Churches Confronting Abuse in Africa

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Abstract

Abuse is an ever-present and growing reality on the continent of Africa, even within the church. The Church should be a place of healing and belonging. So the Church must actively protect the vulnerable and relieve them of the shame and burdens placed on them by abuse. The Church must also hold abusers accountable and call them to repentance. When interpreted biblically and theologically, the traditional values of African people reflected in the philosophy of ubuntu can empower the Church to accomplish this task. Ubuntu, *when practiced without exceptions*, can enhance and deepen the Church's theology and praxis so that she responds well to abuse in her midst. Bias plays a significant role in the global failure to adequately address abuse; thus ubuntu's insistence on recognizing the humanity of others offers a significant African contribution to the global efforts to eliminate abuse.

Résumé

Les abus sont une réalité omniprésente et croissante sur le continent africain, même au sein de l'Église. L'Église devrait être un lieu de guérison et d'appartenance. Elle doit donc protéger activement les personnes vulnérables et les soulager de la honte et du fardeau que leur imposent les abus. L'Église doit également demander des comptes aux abuseurs et les appeler à la repentance. Interprétées bibliquement et théologiquement, les valeurs traditionnelles des peuples africains reflétées dans la philosophie de l'ubuntu peuvent permettre à l'Église d'accomplir cette tâche. L'ubuntu, lorsqu'il est pratiqué sans exception, peut améliorer et approfondir la théologie et la pratique de l'Église de manière à ce qu'elle réagisse bien aux abus commis en son sein. Les préjugés jouent un rôle important dans l'incapacité globale à traiter les abus de manière adéquate ; l'insistance d'ubuntu sur la reconnaissance

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de l'humanité des autres offre donc une contribution africaine significative aux efforts globaux visant à éliminer les abus.

Resumo

O abuso é uma realidade sempre presente e crescente no continente africano, mesmo dentro da Igreja. A Igreja deve ser um lugar de cura e de pertença. Por isso, a Igreja deve proteger ativamente os vulneráveis e aliviá-los da vergonha e do fardo que lhes é imposto pelo abuso. A Igreja deve também responsabilizar os abusadores e chamá-los ao arrependimento. Quando interpretados biblicamente e teologicamente, os valores tradicionais dos povos africanos reflectidos na filosofia do ubuntu podem capacitar a Igreja para realizar esta tarefa. O ubuntu, quando praticado sem excepções, pode melhorar e aprofundar a teologia e a praxis da Igreja para que ela responda bem aos abusos no seu seio. O preconceito desempenha um papel significativo na incapacidade global de lidar adequadamente com o abuso; assim, a insistência do ubuntu em reconhecer a humanidade dos outros oferece uma contribuição africana significativa para os esforços globais de eliminação do abuso.

Keywords

abuse, Church, trauma, ubuntu, bias, christological compassion

Mots-clés

abus, Église, traumatisme, ubuntu, parti pris, compassion christologique

Palavras-chave

abuso, Igreja, trauma, ubuntu, preconceito, compaixão cristológica

Introduction

As we come to the end of the first quarter of the twenty-first century, Africa is still suffering. The continent is bleeding from abuses of all forms. As people seek to recover from the traumas they have endured, cries for help are common across the continent: the land itself is groaning in pain (Rom 8:19–21). This "is the absence of *shalom* in all its meanings."[1] Cornelius Plantinga defines shalom as

> the webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfilment, . . . universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight — a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural

[1] Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, 86.

> gifts are fruitfully employed . . . *Shalom*, in other words, is the way things are supposed to be.[2]

Ubuntu is the traditional African virtue that arises from the recognition that humans exist as "individuals-in-community" and that "to be human is to be with others."[3] Both the gospel and ubuntu call the community to seek the flourishing of all its members, without exceptions, and thus the concept of flourishing gives us a tool to evaluate for the presence of abuse. Where there are individuals or communities suffering deeply rather than flourishing, there is abuse. Where there are people who are harassed, helpless, defenseless, and abused, there are other people who are benefitting themselves at the expense of others. Ubuntu perspectives recognize that "human flourishing is at heart a matter of right relationship: with God, with fellow humans, and with other creatures."[4] Kenneth Loyer links the concepts of 'flourishing' and 'dignity' because together they express special features: a "vibrant, flourishing life occurs when we live in justly ordered relationships with God and with others by recognizing and celebrating our own God-given dignity and that of others."[5] "Justly ordered relationships" is an apt description of ubuntu. Christlike, ubuntu-motivated churches will seek the dignity and flourishing of all their members and of all the members of their surrounding communities.

We will highlight, through the lens of christological compassion, how ubuntu is lacking in the context of abuse. Ubuntu is the African/Bantu value of "humanness or the quality and essence of being human,"[6] famously expressed by John S. Mbiti as "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am."[7]

> It implies compassion, open-mindedness, and fraternity; it signifies our mutual involvement in each other's life. A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirms others, does not feel threatened by others, and is open to doing good for others. Ubuntu is a rich expression of solidarity, participation, and willingness to share with others, to forgive others, and to mutually work together

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[2] Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, 10; emphasis original. For an accessible reproduction of his argument, see also his online article, "Sin: Not the Way It's Supposed to Be."

[3] David Kirwa Tarus and Stephanie Lowery, "African Theologies of Identity and Community: The Contributions of John Mbiti, Jesse Mugambi, Vincent Mulago, and Kwame Bediako," 306.

[4] Ian Christie, "Human flourishing and the environment."

[5] Kenneth M. Loyer, "Dignity, justice, and flourishing within the human family: Methodist theology and the enrichment of public discourse and life," 15.

[6] Augustine Chingwala Musopole, *Umunthu Theology: An Introduction*, 33.

[7] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 141; repeated verbatim on pp. 147, 152, 166, 189, 279, and 293.

> for human and cosmic flourishing through solidarity, community, dialogue, and commitment to peace-building, etc.[8]

Within this article, we will focus on violence against women. This is not to ignore other forms of abuse but rather to offer a critical process we can apply to all forms of abuse. Too often, we rush to establish policies to prevent abuse, but many or even most of those polices are misguided or misapplied or, perhaps more often, are laid aside entirely when we are confronted with specific situations of abuse. Years ago, I, Ruth, was starting on a journey while my husband was away. He usually takes care of mapping our route, and it was not until I was already driving that I realized that I did not know how to get to my destination and had not ensured I had a map to guide me. Similarly, by rushing to prevention before identifying where the church is currently located in our responses to abuse, we do not arrive at the correct destination. Therefore, we must take the time to identify our starting point. That starting point is bias, an ubuntu with exceptions. While ubuntu recognizes that I am because we are, and sees the self in the other, bias says certain people are different and better or worse than others. A person who is biased against another, whether consciously or unconsciously, fails to see the self in that other.[9] Thus the African Church must navigate toward an ubuntu without exceptions so that she may become an effective source of support for abused people and of accountability for abusive people.

Despite thirty years of focused attention from the UN and other organizations, violence against women remains a stark global reality. Abraham and Prabha note, "in this frightening scenario, the angst of the women who are victims of gender-based violence is a global concern." The abuse of women is an urgent call for ubuntu, but we must lament that thirty years after ubuntu became a formative principle guiding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa, "one begins to question the whole philosophy of ubuntu, as it cannot be practiced by ignoring the sufferings of women."[10] How have three decades of global focus on the abuse of women and three decades of ubuntu's application as a political principle failed so dramatically to decrease violence against women? How can we ensure our application of ubuntu over the next thirty years *does* significantly diminish violence against women?

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[8] Stan Chu Ilo, "Africa's Place in World Christianity: Towards a Theology of Intercultural Friendship," 142, footnote 46.

[9] The favoritism condemned as sin in James 2:1–9 can be understood as an anti-ubuntu bias.

[10] Lillykutty Abraham and Krishna V. P. Prabha, "The Angst of the Dehumanized: Ubuntu for Solidarity," 1.

Christ, Ubuntu, and the Harrassed and Helpless Crowds in Africa Societies Today

As we consider these two questions, let us briefly examine ubuntu's application within the TRC and consider what it offered both to those who benefited from apartheid and to those who suffered from apartheid. Here, Barnard-Naudé's analysis in *Spectres of Reparation* is helpful. As he discusses in depth, what the TRC offered to its two primary foci — oppressor and oppressed — was not equitable. Both received an opportunity for speech: the oppressor received the opportunity for confession, and the oppressed received the opportunity for telling the story of their oppression. However, only one group received a tangible benefit. Though the interim constitution which empowered the TRC itself noted the need for tangible benefit to both parties, it only granted the TRC the authority to tangibly benefit one of the groups: the oppressor, who received amnesty for the harms they had perpetrated and confessed. Though the interim constitution acknowledged the simultaneous need for reparation to the oppressed, it failed to empower the TRC to offer that reparation.[11] The TRC itself acknowledged this failure, stating "reparation is 'essential to counterbalance amnesty' in that amnesty denies the victims the right to institute juridical claims against the perpetrators."[12] Thus, instead of offering amends to those who had been harmed, the TRC further injured them by removing their right to seek legal redress. From this, we can see that when ubuntu has not been applied equitably and without exceptions, when the focus of ubuntu's force becomes the needs and fears of the powerful oppressors over the needs and fears of the vulnerable oppressed, it fails to secure the flourishing of all its members and instead perpetuates suffering.

Jesus offered ubuntu compassion without exceptions toward the vulnerable crowds, whom he characterized as helpless sheep — wandering and leaderless, uncared-for and unwell (Matt 9:36).[13] He recognized the humanity in the oppressed people who were harassed, helpless, and defenseless. It is easy for the traumas of individual members of a crowd to be overlooked and unknown, even to other members of the crowd. However, as Matthew's narrative highlights, Christ continually draws the attention of his listeners, which includes both the crowd situated in his own moment in time and us, who are listening two millennia onward, to the particularities of suffering experienced by individual

[11] Jaco Barnard-Naudé, *Spectres of Reparation in South Africa: Re-Encountering the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. The author discusses this theme throughout the book, see especially the Introduction, pp. 1–32.

[12] Barnard-Naudé, *Spectres of Reparation*, 2; citing "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa," in *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report,* volumes 1–7 (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1998), 170 (available at: https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/report/).

[13] J. R. C. Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, 86–94.

members of the crowd. As Kingsbury emphatically states, "time and again, Jesus touches on matters that are alien to the immediate situation of the crowds or the disciples."[14] That Christ's ubuntu had no exceptions is highlighted when we contrast his interactions with the crowds with their leaders' interactions with those same crowds. In Matthew the crowds are depicted within the context of their relationship with their wicked shepherds — the scribes, Pharisees, chief priests, and elders — who mistreat the sheepish crowds,[15] and who criticize Christ precisely *for* offering compassion to the vulnerable. Jesus condemns them for their failure to offer compassion to the vulnerable, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matt 12:11–12, NIV[16]). They treated their own literal sheep, which enriched them, better than the figurative sheep of the crowds whom God had entrusted to their care as shepherds. The suffering people were exceptions to the leaders' ubuntu. Verse 14 tells us that Christ's choice to offer compassion to a suffering man on the Sabbath led the leaders to begin scheming to kill Jesus. Christ had compassion, a vital component of ubuntu, on the vulnerable, which contrasts with and highlights their leaders' lack of compassion, exposing their wickedness to public scrutiny, and it was this exposure which led them to kill Christ.

Offenders lack the qualities of the "ideal person" that Lesiba Teffo describes "according to the African worldview": someone who "has the virtue of compassion … [and can be] judged in terms of [their] relationship with others, for example, [their] record in terms of kindness and good character, generosity, hard work, discipline, honour and respect, and living in harmony."[17] As the waHangaza of northwestern Tanzania[18] say, *Umuntu niwe yih'ubuntu* [kiHangaza: literally, 'a human person is the source of humanity'].[19] This proverb teaches that an individual person should first of all offer respect to others in the community before the community offers respect to them. The community will judge each person based on his or her qualities of listening to and affirming others, level of trust and fairness, desire to build a caring

[14] Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 107.

[15] Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, 92. Cf. Sjef van Tilborg, *The Jewish Leaders in Matthew*, 142–160; and David E. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23*, 36-41.

[16] All scripture quotations are taken from NIV-2011.

[17] L. J. Teffo, "The other in African experience," 103.

[18] The waHangaza are based in Ngara District of Kagera Region in northwestern Tanzania.

[19] In the kiHangaza language, *umuntu* is 'a human person'; *niwe yih'* can mean 'is a source', 'should be a source', 'must give himself or herself', or 'how we ought to be'; and *ubuntu* is the state of 'being human and humane especially in terms of its radical possibility of finding a way of living in the waHangaza society'.

community, capacity to embody communal responsiveness, and commitment to live together with respect, compassion, and dignity. Ubuntu, then, starts from a person showing that he or she is an *umuntu* with *ubuntu* qualities. Nussbaum explains that ubuntu "is the capacity in African culture to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining community."[20] Broodryk emphasizes "the 'core' and 'associated' ubuntu values" as "Humanness: warmth, tolerance, understanding, peace, humanity; Caring: empathy, sympathy, helpfulness, charitable, friendliness; Sharing: giving (unconditionally), redistribution, open-handedness; Respect: commitment, dignity, obedience, order; Compassion: love, cohesion, informality, forgiving and spontaneity."[21] Christ's ministry in Matthew highlights the offenders' lack of these qualities and their callousness toward suffering individuals.

The leaders' inability to look with compassion on the suffering crowds leads them to act in dehumanizing ways towards the sufferers without any recognition that their actions are shameful, but Jesus confronts them with the truth of that shame. Shame[22] is regularly anathematized or ignored in the aftermath of

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[20] Barbara Nussbaum, "*Ubuntu:* Reflections of a South African on Our Common Humanity," 21.

[21] Johann Broodryk, *Ubuntu: Life lessons from Africa*, 32.

[22] It is important to discuss Brené Brown here. In her 2010 Ted Talk, "The Power of Vulnerability," Brené Brown's definition of the concept of shame vs guilt went viral. Brown argues, "Based on my research and the research of other shame researchers, I believe that there is a profound difference between shame and guilt. I believe that guilt is adaptive and helpful—it's holding something we've done or failed to do up against our values and feeling psychological discomfort.

"I define shame as the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging—something we've experienced, done, or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection." Brown, "Shame vs. Guilt."

Here Brené Brown implies that her findings on shame are universally agreed upon by shame researchers, yet she elides the work of many shame researchers who disagree with her conclusions, as Christopher L. Flanders notes: "such approaches as Brown's typically overlook the extensive philosophical, theological, and biblical resources that authorize distinct types of constructive shame and ways that moral commitments push against shamelessness." Flanders, "About-face transformation: Learning to embrace honor, shame, and face," 317. For example, Brené Brown's definitions differ from the usage of the words shame and guilt as employed in the criminal justice community and in the abuse community as well as in Barnard-Naudé's reflections on the TRC. Within the realm of criminal justice, guilt is whether a person has committed actions defined as criminal, not how they feel about such actions. Thus, a person can admit guilt without displaying any remorse or other negative emotion. In fact, some will even convey pride in and/or offer justifications of their actions as

violence, but a failure to recognize the importance of shame deprives ubuntu of its transformative power for abusers. Bystanders urge victims to be silent about their abuse so as not to shame their abusers yet themselves shame the victims for speaking up. Both Barrnard-Naudé and Judith Herman cite Braithwaite's concept of "reintegrative shaming" as a vital component of our response to violence. "In the same way as the TRC, perhaps unwittingly, stigmatized the anger of victims, its ideological context of forgiveness also occluded the value of what the literature refers to as 'reintegrative shaming' …."[23] This critique of the TRC's "ideological context of forgiveness" is especially relevant for the church as we wrestle with our failure to address abuse. The church has elevated forgiveness to such a degree that it completely overpowers accountability in the context of abuse. Paul himself engaged in what we now call *reintegrative shaming* with the Corinthian church regarding their failure to hold an offender accountable and celebrated its positive effects:

> . . . yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. (2 Cor 7:9–10)[24]

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they acknowledge their guilt. This phenomenon also occurs within the abuse community; for example, my father acknowledged to me that he had had sexual contact with me (Ruth) as a child, but he stated that he did not believe God forbids such actions and deflected blame unto me for behavior he felt justified his actions and unto the "world" for ungodly standards which condemn his actions. Reflecting this, the criminal justice and abuse communities use *guilt* and *shame* differently and use the terms *reintegrative shame* vs *stigmatizing* or *disintegrative shame* or *healthy* vs *toxic shame* where Brené Brown uses the terms *guilt* and *shame*.

It is also important to note that the stigmatization of shame itself has roots in cultural supremacy, as noted by Thomas J. Scheff: "Reflecting the ageism, sexism, and racism of his time, Freud seemed to think that shame was the emotion of children, women, and savages." Scheff, "Shame in Self and Society," 251. Similarly, Flanders notes, "Dividing the world into realms of 'honor–shame' and 'guilt–justice' ultimately proves to be an unfortunate type of Saidian Orientalism, a sophisticated and exoticized form of 'othering.'" Flanders, "About-face transformation," 316.

[23] Barnard-Naudé, *Spectres of Reparation*, 74–76; quote on p. 75; citing John Braithwaite, *Crime, Shame and Reintegration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and Braithwaite, "Shame and criminal justice," *Canadian Journal of Criminology* 42, no. 3 (2000): 281–298. See also Judith L. Herman, *Truth and Repair: How Trauma Survivors Envision Justice*, 100–103.

[24] For more Biblical examples of reintegrative shaming, consider the stories of Tamar and Abigail and Nathan (Gen 38; 1 Sam 25; 2 Sam 12). See also Zechariah 12:10, "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn

This reintegrative shaming should, in the context of "*Ubuntu* Justice," motivate the perpetrator of abuse to "genuinely commit to treating the victim as an equal, affirming both the humanity and the dignity of the victim."[25] Jesus calling attention to the shamefulness of the leaders' callousness toward the crowds and Paul making space for godly sorrow contrasts sharply with Christian responses which silence and shame victims' righteous exposure of abuse but which rush to soothe the abusers' godly sorrow with instant expressions of forgiveness, leaving no space for shame to work.

Ubuntu *versus* Bias: two foci

As we consider how to apply ubuntu within the context of abuse, we must begin with the two-fold question, *Currently, where is the focus of our compassion in the context of abuse, and where should that focus be?* The second is like it: *Where is the focus of our shaming in the context of abuse, and where should that focus be?* Both questions point to the issue of bias. Nicole Bedera's research is particularly relevant and highlights the obstacle of bias to addressing abuse.[26] Twenty years before the TRC and the Fourth UN Conference on Women cited above, the United States enacted Title IX, a federal civil rights law which prohibits sex-based discrimination and sexual harassment within any educational institution which receives federal funding. Under Title IX, US educational institutions are mandated to investigate and to address claims of sexual harassment and violence against female students and staff and to offer support to those harmed, yet, as Bedera starkly highlights, "It is well-established fact that sexual assault survivors who report the violence they endured are retraumatized by the reporting process."[27]

Over the course of 12 months, Bedera observed one US university's Title IX administrators and, through later interviews, established their rationalizations for their decisions. There are two key elements to note. First is that Title IX administrators have a federal mandate to administer justice regarding sexual violence and to support victims, which differs from the TRC, which was

for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son." A Davidic Psalm declares, "Let a righteous man strike me — that is a kindness; / let him rebuke me — that is oil on my head. / My head will not refuse it, / for my prayer will still be against the deeds of evildoers" (141:5). Proverbs also calls for reintegrative shaming: "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, / but an enemy multiplies kisses" and "Whoever rebukes a person will in the end gain favor / rather than one who has a flattering tongue" (27:6 and 28:23)

[25] Headman S. Ntlapo and Peter White, "*Ubuntu* Justice and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission: An African missiological response," 1.

[26] While Bedera's research was undertaken in North American contexts, her findings are relative to contexts here in Africa.

[27] Nicole Bedera, "I Can Protect His Future, but She Can't Be Helped: Himpathy and Hysteria in Administrator Rationalizations of Institutional Betrayal," 30.

empowered only to offer tangible help to oppressors, yet they continue to support perpetrators of sexual violence and to fail to support victims, resulting in "Title IX outcomes that undermine the very goals of Title IX,"[28] "in nearly every case."[29] Second is that though universities are often centers for gender research and the dismantling of gender myths, those same universities' administrators employ gender myths in their rationalizations. In every arena, there remains a sharp contradiction between stated beliefs/values and actions in response to abuse. As Bedera noted, "gendered stereotypes can persist and adapt in an environment even when they are stigmatized."[30] She further explained,

> Beyond the university context, gendered biases are central in how we understand (or deny) the realities of sexual violence. Most notably, men's violence against women is normalized as "not that bad", while an allegation of sexual assault is considered a threat to a man's reputation that could "ruin his life." In this framing, it is men — in the role of perpetrator — who receive society's sympathy at the expense of survivors' well-being, a phenomenon Manne calls "himpathy."[31]

Bedera found that Title IX administrators "manufactured ignorance" of the victims' perspective, both perpetuated by and resulting in a failure to empathize with the victims, while seeking the perpetrators' perspective, motivated by and resulting in an empathetic alignment with the abusers. Practically, although a just Title IX decision was "crucial for survivors' recovery and academic success," the university perpetrated a near total betrayal of victims and a failure to address gender-based violence on their campus.[32] This not only harms past and current women students and staff, but also will, inevitably, lead to the continuation of gender-based violence and to more women being victimized. This stands in sharp contrast with Jesus, who drew the attention of his listeners to the particularities of the sufferers' stories, leading to his compassionate engagement. Thus, bias plays a pivotal role in the failure to offer compassionate action in response to abuse.

Often communities fail to acknowledge abuse at all, but many times when they *do* acknowledge abuse, they do immensely more harm than good. Singha and Kanna's article "Physical Abuse in the Absence of Ubuntu" recognizes that the presence of abuse indicates the absence of ubuntu, and the authors appropriately call for ubuntu in addressing the global abuse crisis: "Ubuntu has not been put into practice to its full potential. It can be successfully applied in

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[28] Bedera, "I Can Protect His Future, but She Can't Be Helped," 48.
[29] Bedera, "I Can Protect His Future, but She Can't Be Helped," 44.
[30] Bedera, "I Can Protect His Future, but She Can't Be Helped," 33.
[31] Bedera, "I Can Protect His Future, but She Can't Be Helped," 32; citing Kate Manne, *Entitled: How Male Privilege Hurts Women* (New York: Crown, 2020).
[32] Bedera, "I Can Protect His Future, but She Can't Be Helped," 49.

theology, philosophy, management, and other domains."[33] We join them in this call. However, the authors write in extremely dehumanizing ways about victims of abuse, describing them and abusers as "wild creatures" and claiming that victims will become abusers unless professionals intervene. Ironically, they recognize that a refusal to listen to victims is a failure to respond to them with humanity and thus with ubuntu and yet they advocate against listening to victims' stories, prefacing this advice by claiming, "Being human, for example, may not be necessary for every situation."[34] Their assertion that victims will necessarily become abusers themselves and perpetuate a cycle of abuse is a common but deeply harmful victim-blaming myth.[35] The logic of this myth is

[33] Ranjit Singha and Yogesh S. Kanna, "Physical Abuse in the Absence of Ubuntu," 1–2. They further correctly note that "if *ubuntu* begins to be practiced, the hegemonic masculinity that considers it normal for women to be treated as objects will be broken;" p. 9.

[34] Singha and Kanna, "Physical Abuse in the Absence of Ubuntu," 3. This assertion is so horrendous that context should be provided: "Being human, for example, may not be necessary for every situation. Narrating abuse-based stories is a form of emotionally abusing someone with the same intensity as when the incident occurred; it is an emotional release for the abused person, but they transfer the same emotion with which they were abused. When an abused person tells the same story to multiple people on occasion, they enjoy sharing the same feeling with others. It is not recommended to listen to abuse stories if you are not trained to do so. As a human, there is a possibility that you might want to hear and give advice, but it's not a good idea because if you are not a professional, it could make you feel the same way as the other person who experienced the abuse when it occurred to them." Singha and Kanna, "Physical Abuse in the Absence of Ubuntu," 3. This is incredibly harmful in multiple ways. They, like many others, say that sharing the story of abuse is itself emotional abuse and that victims "enjoy sharing" their feelings "with" others (with the strong implication not of *sharing with* but of *inflicting on*). Have they asked victims if they "enjoy" sharing their stories? Victims share their stories not to inflict their pain on others but rather to plead for help . . . and for empathy. Victims' sharing their stories is *not* emotional abuse and labeling it as abuse is horrifying. In addition, telling people not to listen to victims unless they are professionals is immensely stigmatizing, communicating that victims are "unclean" and will contaminate others. Jesus refused to comply with such stigmas, as seen in his willingness to touch lepers (ref. Matt 8:2–3, Mark 1:40–42). Finally, arguing that there is no need to "be human" with victims who are sharing their stories is exactly the kind of exception to ubuntu that we are arguing against. We absolutely *must* "be human" with victims of abuse who are themselves humans and not "wild creatures" as they argue.

[35] Singha and Kanna, "Physical Abuse in the Absence of Ubuntu," 2. This stigma deeply impacted me, Ruth. It convinced me that I was destined to either become an abuser or to marry an abuser simply because I had been a victim of abuse. I focused my undergraduate and graduate studies on Literature, Psychology, and Christian Doctrine, specifically and solely because I was desperately searching for a way to escape

completely belied by the abuses of colonization and apartheid. Did abusive white colonizers start their lives as oppressed and colonized Africans and was it their pain at being colonized that made them become colonizers? Of course not. To suggest that victims of abuse become abusers unless a professional helps them stop abusing is illogical, offensive, and harmful to victims. Ironically, it serves to stigmatize victims while serving to excuse and minimize the brutality of the abusers by suggesting they are only abusive because they themselves had been victimized. This article is of especial concern because it was the first article listed on a Google Scholar search of *ubuntu* and *abuse*. In a context where scholars have limited resources and better papers are behind a high paywall, open-access articles such as this will have an undue influence.[36] The article, unfortunately, accurately reflects deeply-rooted and wide-spread biases.

Navigating a Correlation Between Ubuntu and Christological Compassion for the Abused

Ubuntu enriched by christological compassion has value for undermining bias where biases are recognized and actively dismantled in every aspect of human engagement. God's heart always overflows with compassion for all his people, and that compassion is especially embodied in God's care for those who are suffering. Compassion, in its literal sense, means 'to suffer with.' This is demonstrated in the compassion of Jesus himself. In a third Matthean sheep passage, 25:31–46, Jesus tells his listeners that their treatment of the most vulnerable *is* their treatment of himself. Thus, when they cause or fail to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable, they are causing or continuing Christ's own suffering. God's intention is to establish Jesus as the climax of his compassion for mankind. Christ's radical compassion generated an imperative to act. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus's miracles extended to the lame, the lost, and the helpless. He manifested compassion through word and deed, as ultimately seen in him becoming a sacrifice on the hill of Golgotha. Unfortunately, the idea of acting on behalf of the abused and traumatized, a clear mandate of both ubuntu and the Christian gospel, has been watered down within the church. It is fading away as churches continually fail to faithfully engage the issue of abuse. Our responses to abuse must move beyond words to include deeds. Zylla's words are

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that destiny. Often, when I have experienced interpersonal conflict and sought help from pastors or other mentors, including trained counselors, they have automatically believed I was the cause of the conflict simply because I was an abuse victim and therefore destined to become an abuser, and no amount of evidence to the contrary changed their biased and unfounded view of me. This has greatly hindered my flourishing. People must stop perpetuating this stigma.

[36] As of March 2025, according to Google Scholar, this article has been cited twelve times. We can only hope that it has been cited critically and not used to support dangerous stigmas.

well-timed for both the ubuntu-embracing communities and the church in Africa:

> Telling people that they are not alone in their suffering is not enough. We must demonstrate our care through the act of showing up in their lives. At its core, ministry to the suffering means coming near in their time of grave concern and anguish. The activity that we must generate as the compassionate community of God is the capacity to discern where the greatest needs are and simply to show up. In this way we dispel the dark cloud of abandonment and rejection, enabling suffering persons to experience themselves as loved and cared for by others.[37]

McNeill, Morrison, and Nouwen emphasize that compassion is "the center of Christian life" and "is not a gesture of sympathy or pity for those who fail to make it in the upward pull. On the contrary, compassion means going directly to those people and places where suffering is most acute and building a home there."[38] The church is called to *enact* Christlike compassion for the vulnerable.

Our intentions shape the actions we choose, so we must ensure that our intention in responding to abuse is rooted in compassion, a desire to alleviate the suffering of the abused and traumatized, and not in bias. A longing for compassion stands at the base of the radical cry for justice. Therefore, as ubuntu informs us, our intention should arise from a recognition of the essence of human dignity in our common humanity. As Davies asserts, "an analysis of the intentionality of compassion gives access to the very structure of consciousness itself, and thus provides a resource for articulating a new language of being."[39] This language of *being human* brings ubuntu to the fore, drawing a parallel to the larger christological compassion, reminding us that all humanity is made in the image of God. God is the source of our humanity and the power of the gospel. This offers a deeper perspective on being human and necessitates a fresh look at ubuntu as a theological and moral virtue an individual possesses. Ubuntu's theological connotations are supported by the African worldview which affirms that "life, relationships, participation and community are holistic realities, blending the spiritual and the material organically."[40] As we care for the abused and traumatized in Africa, we must apply ubuntu not merely as a humanitarian principle but as a reflection of the image of God. As Magesa reminds us, Christian compassion

> makes explicit the absolute value of the individual person. Created

[37] Phil C. Zylla, *The Roots of Sorrow: A pastoral theology of suffering*, 173.
[38] Donald P. McNeill, Douglas A. Morrison, and Henri J. Nouwen, *Compassion: A reflection on the Christian life*, 8, 27.
[39] Oliver Davies, *A Theology of Compassion: Metaphysics of Difference and the Renewal of Tradition*, 20.
[40] Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa*, 182.

> in the image and likeness of God and imbued with divine breath, a person has value in and for him — or herself. One's value and dignity as a human person are not given by nor do they flow from one's community. They originate from God's own self. . . . People cannot begin to grow toward the full stature of their dignity as the image of God unless it leads them to community.[41]

Ubuntu is rooted in each person's value as a unique embodiment of the image of God and is expressed through the interconnectedness of community.

This sense of community God intends for his people resonates well with what is expected of the community which embraces ubuntu. A Christian can love relationally and be moved by compassion grounded on the virtues of ubuntu. In both the Christian theological perspective and the ubuntu community, a person (*umuntu*) is expected to move towards the suffering of others with active help. This active help is meant to be a unique engagement of personal encounter rather than a shallow transaction. The *umuntu's* compassion must bear lasting fruits, in our case, for the abused and traumatized. As Mayeroff writes,

> When the other [*umuntu*] is with me, I feel I am not alone, I feel understood, not in some detached way but because I feel [*umuntu*] knows what it is like to be me. I realize that [the caring *umuntu*] wants to see me as I am, not in order to pass judgment on me, but to help me. I do not have to conceal myself by trying to appear better than I am; instead I can open myself up [allowing *umuntu* to] get close to me, and thereby [offer assistance] for [the caring *umuntu*] to help me.[42]

We can see the sharp contrast here between this description and Bedera's description above of the biased response to women victims of sexual assault and with Singha and Kanna's warnings against interacting with victims as humans. From Mayeroff's testimony, the picture drawn from 'the other' is that *umuntu's* unwavering decision to act arises from ubuntu itself which expresses that a human person is a person through other persons. We all need each other. No one exists in isolation; rather, we hold together our diversity and care for each other. Similarly, Mayeroff's description speaks to the human capacity, under God's help, to act on behalf of the abused and to commit to sustained support for the sufferers until their suffering is alleviated. It also speaks to the Christian's respect for God, who is the beginning of our humanity. As Grenz aptly suggests, "the affirmation that God is the origin of our essential humanity means that God is the source of value for all creation. Neither other human beings nor the human community has the ultimate prerogative to determine the value of

[41] Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation*, 194.

[42] Milton Mayeroff, *On Caring*, 31; recall that *umuntu* means 'human person' in many Bantu languages and shares a common root with *ubuntu*.

anyone or anything that God has made."[43] Thus as Christians, we should base our actions in response to abuse on God's affirmation of the humanity of the victims and not on human biases.

Exploring the Impact of Bias

An examination of the Church's responses to abuse reveals biases toward abusers and against victims, leading to her failure to act compassionately on the victims' behalf — ubuntu is withheld from victims but an incomplete ubuntu stripped of shame is offered to abusers. This is a global phenomenon[44] which is evident in Christian responses to various forms of abuse from the breaking of abuse allegations against Christian leaders to the acknowledgement of wrongdoing by those same Christian leaders.[45] Churches quickly dismiss

[43] Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 131.

[44] For example, in a conversation with scholars in West Africa, I (Ruth) asked what churches were doing to address child molestations. One of the responses was that they encourage wives to give husbands more sex. This shows a lack of empathy for wives who, for example, could naturally be expected to feel disgust rather than desire in response to their husband's sexual interest in children, while aligning empathetically with the flawed perspective that male sexual desire is an intrinsic need which cannot be mediated with self-control but must be satisfied. Similarly, many sayings reveal a bias against women, as in the Tsonga proverb, "*Ku teka nsati I ku hoxa nyoka exinkwameni* ['to marry is to put a snake in one's handbag']" which depicts women as seductresses/serpents who are the enemy of men, such that it becomes natural for men to perpetrate violence against women; Magezi E. Baloyi, "Wife beating amongst Africans as a challenge to pastoral care," 4; citing Henri Phillippe Junod, *The Wisdom of Tsonga* (Braamfontein: South Africa: Sasavona Publishers, 1990), 181.

[45] Christian responses to perpetrators' 'apologies', which are usually vague and misleading, demonstrate this bias. These apologies are prioritized and celebrated over victim revelations of abuse, which, by contrast, face intense condemnation. This prioritizing of abuser apologies was poignantly captured in a video released on social media in which even after a victim confronted the pastor who raped her, interrupting his misleading apology, and even after the pastor acknowledged the truth of her allegations, many church members gathered around the pastor to pray for him, while they largely ignored the victim. (See, e.g., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ax-FK2KWpks). This bias is also seen in the common sympathetic response from male Christian leaders to a revelation that another male Christian leader perpetrated clergy sexual abuse, 'There but for the grace of God go I.' This communicates to victims that other Christian leaders empathize with the perpetrator and could even envision themselves as the perpetrator. As Kyle Howard notes, "A healthy response from someone who has been made aware of abuse is not a consideration of how they could be like the abuser, but rather a connection with the abused." He adds, "Connecting the refrain "it could've been me" with the abuser rather than with the victim is a massive red flag to the vulnerable and is a profoundly unhealthy outlook on the part of those with power. Howard, "Ministry leaders' rush to empathize with Ravi Zacharias is beyond alarming."

allegations of abuse by leaders and fail in their responsibility to investigate those allegations, as in the case of Ravi Zacharias. By contrast, churches are quick to believe allegations against the vulnerable among us. For example, the leaders of a Kenyan church I, Ruth, attended immediately removed a young woman from her role as a Sunday School teacher after she became pregnant. In addition, the church excluded her from dedicating her baby to God alongside the other new parents. However, when I spoke to her about what happened, she told me she had been date-raped. Because the church acted to remove her from her position without ever asking her what had happened, she never had the opportunity to reveal the rape, and she felt they would not have believed her even had she tried to tell them. They had already decided what they believed had happened. That betrayal deeply harmed her, and she left the church. The church failed to view her through the perspective of ubuntu, instead viewing her through bias, and thus failed to act toward her suffering with Christian compassion. By contrast, that same church failed to remove a battering husband from his role as a greeter and MC even after he broke his wife's ribs. Both in our failure to acknowledge and investigate the allegations of abuse by Christian men, especially leaders, and in our quick condemnation without investigation of vulnerable women, we are displaying bias and are failing to display ubuntu and to embody Christ's compassionate alignment with sufferers.

Our bias toward abusers has an impact on victims. As Judith Herman notes, "The wounds of trauma are not merely those caused by the perpetrators of violence and exploitation; the actions or inactions of bystanders — all those who are complicit in or who prefer not to know about the abuse or who blame the victims — often cause even deeper wounds."[46] Thus, it is not only the offender's violent injustice but also the bystander's callous and unjust indifference which must be repaired in the aftermath of abuse. Herman's initial work looking at complex trauma proposed three stages of trauma recovery for victims:[47]

1. Establishing safety, which includes recovering their agency.
2. Mourning and making meaning of the past.
3. Refocusing on the present and regaining a vision for the future.

In her later work, she writes that she began to envision a fourth and final stage of trauma recovery:

4. Justice.

She explores this final stage in *Truth and Repair*, asking victims of abuse what justice looks like to them. Often, victims are perceived as bitter and vindictive,

[46] Judith L. Herman, *Truth and Repair: How Trauma Survivors Envision Justice*, 9.

[47] Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 8–9. Herman uses the common phrases "establishing safety" and "making meaning."

yet Herman found that most victims had little desire for retribution.[48] Instead, what victims most longed for was acknowledgement of the wrongdoing *from their communities*.[49] Instead of vindictiveness, Herman found a deep desire for vindication: "They want bystanders to take a stand, recognize that a wrong has been done, and unambiguously denounce the crime," to offer "assurances … that they did not deserve to be abused." [50] Although bystanding communities often assure victims with their words that the victims are not to blame for their own abuse, the bystanders' thoughts and their actions continue to place the entire weight of shame on the victims. The deep longing of victims of abuse is for their communities to see them through the lens of ubuntu and to be moved by a deep christological compassion to alleviate their suffering and to shift the target of shaming from the victims of the abuse to the perpetrators of the abuse. In short, victims "want the burden of shame lifted from their shoulders and placed on the shoulders of the perpetrators, where it belongs."[51] As a mantra of the MeToo movement declares, *Shame must change sides*.[52]

Although victims rarely pursue legal justice, their reasons when they do are significant to this discussion. Herman found that the motivation is rarely to see the perpetrator suffer but rather to see potential future victims protected. This is ubuntu. Victims of abuse recognize other vulnerable people as potential future victims who must be protected by their act of compassionate accountability toward the abuser,[53] and they seek legal justice from a desire to prevent suffering, not from a desire to inflict suffering. Yet as Herman explored, judicial responses to gender-based violence ignore the legitimate needs of victims, instead focusing on the perceived needs of the perpetrator. Thus, victims often become mere witnesses and even targets of attack in judicial cases about their own abuse rather than the central figures.[54] Unfortunately, this focus on perpetrators of abuse is seen in both retributive justice responses and in

[48] Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 97.
[49] Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 69.
[50] Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 76.
[51] Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 76.
[52] The French motto *La honte doit changer de camp* ('Shame must change sides'), first used in the 1970s, emphasizes that it is abusers and rapists, and not their victims, who should be ashamed. At least as early as 2013, protesters in Paris carried placards declaring that "La honte doit changer de camp [French: 'Shame must change sides'];" e.g., see "Des marches pour que « la honte change de camp » ['Marches so that 'shame changes sides']." This motto, in both English and French, has since been frequently adopted across social media, journalistic news reports, and academia.
[53] Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 97.
[54] This is starkly evidenced in cases involving domestic violence, where protective mothers who were themselves battered by their husbands can lose their parental rights to their children in favor of their abusers through the very process of trying to protect their children from their abusive father.

restorative justice efforts inspired by the TRC's enactment of the ubuntu principle. Herman cites Howard Zehr's reflections upon his restorative justice work, "'In my earlier work with prisoner defendants, I had not understood the perspectives of victims. Indeed, I did not want to, for they served primarily as interference in the process of finding "justice" for the offender.'"[55] This echoes Bedera's research, which found that both Title IX administrators *and* victim advocates ignored and minimized the needs of the victims themselves, with administrators insisting victims were so broken they could not be helped, and victim advocates insisting victims were so strong they needed no help, and neither acknowledging that help would be transformative and healing for victims.[56] This was also seen in South Africa when Mbeki depicted freedom as the full embodiment of reparation for the victims, even though it was clear that the victims were continuing to suffer the effects of the violence perpetrated against them within the apartheid system. Barnard-Naudé quotes Saleci, "the discourse of universal human rights *strives to produce the impression that the object has already been attained*,"[57] implying that nothing more is needed and thus failing to recognize the more which *is* needed. In applying ubuntu and Christian compassion in response to abuse, we must not only ensure that the immediate abuse stops but also that the on-going needs of the present victims are met and that potential future victims are protected.

African Church – Called to Live as The Image-Bearers of God, Modeling Christ's Compassion

The church is called to embody the gospel model of compassion through a radical orientation of care for those who are abused and suffering, and only in fulfilling this calling will she be a city on a hill in our different African cultures in our time. When the Church in Africa fully embraces ubuntu and christological compassion to meet the abuse crisis within and around her, this will dynamically transform society. Christ has called the church as an institution to respond to the needs of both its own members and the world, to respond "in Christian mission to the realities of our own generation."[58] The church must do so faithfully, serving as a passionate and compassionate witness to Christ's love. Unfortunately, this is contrary to what is happening today whereby the Church has tended to close her eyes even to relatively simple matters like, from my, Alfred's, experience, the abuse of domestic servants by church members. This is contrary to Matthew's christological compassion which shows how sending Jesus into the world formed the climax of God's compassion. When the church

[55] Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 104.
[56] Bedera, "I Can Protect His Future, but She Can't Be Helped," 41–44.
[57] Barnard-Naudé, *Spectres of Reparation*, 211; emphasis original.
[58] *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action: The Third Lausanne Congress*, 8.

in Africa, which should be an ubuntu-embracing community, fails to value ubuntu as a resource for meeting the needs of the abused, it fails to "underscore the values of God's sovereign rule, namely truth and truthfulness, peace and reconciliation, with dignity of each and all, and justice, compassion-mercy-sacrificial love."[59] This indicates a limited sense of compassion, an ubuntu with exceptions, and a failure to hold a vision for an abuse-free Africa. George Kinoti quotes John Stott to help us understand what this vision should be:

> Vision is a deep dissatisfaction with what is and a clear grasp of what could be**.** Vision begins with indignation over the status quo, and it grows into the earnest quest for an alternative. This combination we find in Jesus who was indignant over disease and death, and the hunger of the people, for he perceived these things as alien to the purpose of God.[60]

Without such a vision, the church cannot enable believers to see Christ within vulnerable others nor inspire them to actively care for these vulnerable people.

Jesus was an active, participatory, and compassionate bystander to sufferers, in contrast to the church's common stance as a passive, disinterested, and callous bystander to abuse in her midst and in the world around her. The church's failure to address abuse stems from her failure to hold a vision for the compete deliverance of the abused. Bystanders falsely envision the ending of the initial abuse or the separation of the victim and abuser as the terminus of the victim's suffering. When victims assert that the abuse itself and/or the effects of the abuse are still ongoing and seek community support, bystanders see this as victims maintaining a 'victim mentality'. Yet victims continue to face many challenges after the formal ending of abusive relationships, which may include harm to their sense of self, loss of support, and ongoing abuse.[61] Seeking counseling to repair the harm adds to the burden with significant financial and time requirements, and often counseling is simply inaccessible for victims. Many victims also carry an ongoing burden of concern and grief for potential future victims when perpetrators remain or even advance in positions which give them access to other vulnerable people. Thus, churches must hold a vision not only for the severing of abusive relationships, but also for the alleviation of the current victim's suffering and the prevention of future victims. In addition, the Church must do the work to dismantle its biases and victim stigmatization and become an environment in which victims are able to fully develop or repair

[59] John S. Pobee, "Good news Turned by Native hands, Turned by Native Hatchet and Tended with Native Earth — A History of Theological Education in Africa," 24.

[60] George Kinoti, *Hope for Africa and What the Christian Can Do*, 68.

[61] For example, battering husbands often continue to threaten and harass and even physically harm or kill their former wives and children after divorce. Churches contribute to the ongoing abuse when they shame and/or retaliate against a battered woman for divorcing her husband.

their sense of self. According to Desmond Tutu, "in ubuntu theology, personhood is formed ultimately through the church as the church witnesses to the world that God is the one who loves human identities into being."[62] Looking back toward the TRC, we see how the TRC's vision and intention for particular sufferers did not extend beyond the ending of the abuse itself, which left the sufferers without the help they desperately needed to recover. Significantly, the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) begins only after the violence has ended. The Church must offer compassionate support to victims even after the abuse has ended, lest Jesus condemn us as he condemned the leaders who passed by the wounded man.[63]

Churches as bystanding communities also fail to respond appropriately to abusers. Jesus communicated to the Jewish leaders that he found their failure to compassionately care for the needs of the suffering people shameful, yet churches fail to communicate that abuse is shameful and repulsive to us. As Herman says, reintegrative shaming "embraces an apparent contradiction; it envisions public rebuke and disgrace as a means not to humiliate and stigmatize harm-doers but rather to recognize their humanity and invite them to engage in repair."[64] This is ubuntu in action. For us to fully recognize ourselves in the other, to recognize our own humanity in the humanity of those around us, we must recognize the ethical and moral failures that are part of our shared humanity and face the specific manifestations of those failures. Our expressions of ubuntu must make space for godly sorrow through our reintegrative shaming of abusers and our comforting of victims. Reflecting on the TRC, Barnard-Naudé writes, "Shame as an ethical orientation towards the Other was never really properly dealt with in the amnesty process and thus remains part of the unfinished business of the TRC."[65] He asserts, "First, it is crucial that shame felt by the *victim* in connection with the offence must be removed," and "second, the victim's shame can only be removed if 'all the shame connected with the crime is accepted by the offender'."[66] It is vital to understand this also in the context of abuse. The victim's shame is a shame which *cannot* accomplish the

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[62] Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu*, 44.

[63] Psalm 40:2–3 says "He lifted me out of the slimy pit, / out of the mud and mire; / he set my feet on a rock / and gave me a firm place to stand. / He put a new song in my mouth, / a hymn of praise to our God. / Many will see and fear the LORD / and put their trust in him." It is not enough to lift the victim from the slimy pit. We must ensure that they have a firm place to stand and that their legs are not still shaky from their struggle to escape. We must walk alongside them until their tears of suffering truly transform into spontaneous songs of praise.

[64] Herman, *Truth and Repair*, 102.

[65] Barnard-Naudé, *Spectres of Reparation*, 64.

[66] Barnard-Naudé, *Spectres of Reparation*, 76; emphasis original; quoting Thomas J. Scheff, "Community Conferences: Shame and Anger in Therapeutic Jurisprudence," *Revista Juridica Universidad de Puerto Rico* 67, no. 1 (1998): 97–120, 105.

purpose of godly sorrow: repentance that leads to different choices and the discontinuation of the offense, *because it was never the victim's choice nor their offense.* The shame that is placed on the victim is, therefore, an impotent shame. It cannot produce its purpose.[67] However, when we remove the shame from the victim and place the shame on the perpetrator through the process of reintegrative shaming and not disintegrative shaming, that shame *can* accomplish its purpose, *because it was the perpetrator's choice and their offense.* The shame that is placed on the perpetrator is, therefore, a potent shame. It can produce within the perpetrator different choices and the discontinuation of the offense if we allow enough space for that shame to work before moving to forgiveness.

Conclusion

The Church must pursue a robust understanding and application of ubuntu as a vital value for addressing abuse and trauma in Africa today. She must recover the dynamic and transformative link that exists between ubuntu and the call for believers to respond to the needs of the world, especially for the abused, harassed, and helpless — for all those experiencing trauma in our African communities. We have built toward this end by studying Matthew 9:35–36 and 12:11–13, observing the richness of ubuntu affirmed in the gospel. Living in the community that God has established and called us to — that is, living a common life woven together with Christ — requires us to embody an ubuntu without exceptions. If well interpreted, refined by the gospel, conformed to biblical truth, and redeemed by the church, ubuntu has the potential to create an impetus for caring for the abused.

The Church's starting point for our journey toward addressing abuse is bias. As Christians we prefer to assume we are starting from a place of concern for victims and condemnation of abuse, and it is difficult to acknowledge that this is *not* the Church's starting point. Zylla writes,

> Dread, not compassion, is the natural response to the suffering of the afflicted. Our acknowledgment of the innate resistance to

[67] Growing up in an abusive family, I (Ruth) remember asking my parents many times what I needed to change so that they would stop abusing me. I would listen and work hard to change what they told me to change, but none of that change stopped the abuse. That led me to a deep despair. Eventually, I came to recognize that changing myself could not change the abuse, because the abuse was rooted in my parents' choices and not my own. Only then did I begin to recognize how much shame the community itself placed on my shoulders and how resistant the community was to me trying to place the shame where it belonged. Victims face intense pressure to continue to carry the shame, and it can be very difficult for victims to withstand that pressure. I believe that this resistance is rooted in a rightful recognition that part of the shame belongs on the community for failing to respond well to abuse.

> suffering is an important step in reforming compassionate ministry. If we lull ourselves into the conviction that we are intuitively caring, we will miss much of the opportunity for compassion. In fact, suffering repels us and calls up an inner resistance that is a more natural response to suffering and affliction."[68]

If anyone claims to be without the sin of bias regarding abuse, they deceive themselves and the truth is not in them. (1 John 1:8)[69] We must realize that we stand across a vast river from the victim. That river's current rushes with myths, victim-blaming attitudes, and sympathy for the powerful which pull us away from the victim and toward the abuser. The current pulls us to seek out information which feeds these biases. Regarding victims, we look for reasons they deserved the abuse, but regarding abusers, we look for reasons to justify or minimize their choice to abuse. If we are not aware of the current and are not equipped to resist it, even though we start out with the intention of embodying ubuntu for victims, we *will* be pulled toward betraying victims "in almost every case" as Bedera found. We *will* convince ourselves that we *do* support victims of abuse, but each victim we encounter will become *the* exception who deserved the abuse. Instead, we must cling to the truth that nobody deserves abuse and nothing justifies abuse.

As Bedera demonstrated, this current pulls even those of us in academia, and that extends to theological academia. Though we have begun to center the voices of the marginalized in theological discussions regarding their specific contexts, we still regularly exclude victim voices when we engage in theological discussions regarding abuse. We must center victim voices and perspectives in our theological discussions about abuse, and our initiatives to address abuse in the church must be victim-led. Thus, to address the abuse crisis in the church, we, including those of us in academia, must first identify the exceptions to our ubuntu. We *are* being pulled to offer an ubuntu with exceptions, which fails to see ourselves in the vulnerable other, an ubuntu stripped of its Christological power to convict the powerful other.[70] In the rush of this current, we must find

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[68] Zylla, *The Roots of Sorrow*, 27.

[69] Even I, Ruth, as a victim myself, feel a strong pull to disbelieve other victims.

[70] Russell Meeks suggested two main causes of this failure, both of which speak to bias as well as to a failure of ubuntu and of Christian compassion. First, he suggests, we can't believe that one of our own leaders could have committed such abuse, though we could see other's leaders doing so. We are refusing to see the full humanity of our leaders by failing to see their ethical failures, and we are failing to see the full humanity of the other leaders by ascribing to them some quality which makes them inherently more susceptible to ethical failures. Second, he suggests that to recognize the ethical failures of our leaders would be to recognize that we ourselves are imperfect, because we did not spot signs of abuse in that leader. Instead, it becomes easier to see the victim as

ways to hold onto an ubuntu without exceptions which retains its power to convict and transform the abuser while centering and empowering the victim.

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The Prosperity Gospel in African Christianity

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Ernst Conradie has commented that the prosperity gospel "is undoubtedly the fastest growing form of religion on the African continent."[1] Andrew F. Walls noted a quarter of a century ago that increasingly, "anyone who wishes to undertake serious study of Christianity these days needs to know something about Africa. It follows that the student of Christian history not only must know something about Africa but also must consider the part that Africa plays in the total story of the faith."[2] It in turn follows that anyone who desires to undertake serious study of Christianity these days must consider the role of the prosperity gospel in Africa.

As I have explained elsewhere,

> Ordinary African Christians, and especially those whose life is full of economic uncertainty or health concerns, bring a particular set of questions to biblical texts. *If I will not give my child a snake for a fish or a stone for bread, then how much more must the Father delight to give good gifts to us his children? Does God desire to bless or to curse? Does God desire for us to die or to live?* Many African Pentecostals and charismatics have responded to the questions asked by holistic African worldviews by developing a theology of deliverance. Believing that God can deliver from sin, from demonic influence, from the curses of witchcraft, and from various illnesses and injuries, they are moved to ask: cannot God also deliver from

[1] Ernst M. Conradie, "Climate change as a multi-layered crisis for humanity," chapter 14 in *African Perspectives on Religion and Climate Change*, edited by Ezra Chitando, Ernst M. Conradie, and Susan M. Kilonzo, 215–234, Routledge Studies on Religion in Africa and the Diaspora (London: Routledge, 2022), 225. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003147909-15

[2] Andrew F. Walls, "Eusebius Tries Again: Reconceiving the Study of Christian History," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24, no. 3 (2000): 105–111, p. 106. https://doi.org/10.1177/239693930002400303

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> poverty? Or, conversely, 'If I can't trust God for my money, why would I trust him with my salvation?' Such questions have led many to embrace the Prosperity Gospel.[3]

As I note in that article, much popular discourse on the prosperity gospel comes from either its proponents (including those who financially profit from its practice) or from those who utterly reject it as heretical without fully understanding its contexts. Instead of either naïvely and uncritically accepting the claims of clearly abusive prosperity gospel proponents at face value or, conversely, taking "the polemical approach of asking 'in what ways is this wrong?'," it is far more helpful to ground our approach to this wide topic with two questions in mind: "(1) What cultural questions or problems does this theology or movement try to answer? (2) What is God doing through this movement?"[4]

There is an increasing abundance of studies examining the prosperity gospel in Africa, together with variations such as the productivity gospel that are considerably more balanced than the "health and wealth" and "name it and claim it" messages proclaimed by so many charlatans. As an aid to my fellow researchers and practitioners, I have compiled this bibliography. It includes articles, chapters, books, and select dissertations and theses. Whenever possible, I have included links to these works. For books and book chapters, I have included links to publisher's product pages. Many of these books have digital editions available for purchase. Many of the works listed are open access; this is noted parenthetically after the links. Note that many of the DOI links resolve to a publisher's page that hosts the article or chapter behind a paywall, and therefore are less accessible. However, many of these materials are also available via services such as EBSCOhost, Global DTL,[5] JSTOR, and Project Muse; check with a librarian to see whether you have access to those services.

Note that sometimes African publishers and journals lack funding to maintain ownership of their websites; it is possible that some of these links which worked when tested may have expired by the time you have found this

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[3] Joshua Robert Barron, "Is the Prosperity Gospel the Gospel? The Prosperity and Productivity Gospels in African Christianity," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 47, no. 4 (2023): 321–338, pp. 321–322; https://www.academia.edu/108797143/

[4] Barron, "Is the Prosperity Gospel the Gospel?," 331. For this approach I am especially indebted to Mark Shaw, the director of the Centre for World Christianity (CWC) at Africa International University (AIU) and Professor of World Christianity at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology at AIU (Nairobi, Kenya), and also Kyama Mugambi, formerly assistant director of CWC and currently Assistant Professor of World Christianity at Yale Divinity School (New Haven, Connecticut, USA).

[5] Note that the Global Digital Theological Library offers a discount for institutions (e.g., seminaries, Bible colleges, universities) that have programs accredited by ACTEA. If applicable to you, contact ACTEA's office at info@ACTEAweb.org for more information.

bibliography. Sometimes such files are available via Internet Archive, https://archive.org/.[6] Also note that some books and articles may have been uploaded to Internet Archive.[7] You may use the advanced search to see if something is available there: https://archive.org/advancedsearch.php

Access to copies of articles archived on the Academia.edu or ResearchGate.net platforms[8] require registering for a free account on those platforms; some of the articles listed here may have been shared by their authors on those sites.

It is my hope that this bibliography will help you to investigate the prosperity gospel in Africa through the lenses of these two questions:

1. "What cultural questions or problems does this theology or movement try to answer?"

and

2. "What is God doing through this movement?"[9]

Tolle lege, disce investiga.[10]

[6] In the Internet Archive search bar, enter the exact expired link. If the content has been archived, you will be able to access it.

[7] I have not checked to see whether any of these sources are available at the Internet Archive site or not, but items are being continually added its collection. Internet Archive functions as a public digital library. It may be necessary to create an account using your email address, but access is free. Previously I have found classic texts of African Theology there such as John S. Mbiti's *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background: A Study of the Encounter between New Testament Theology and African Traditional Concepts* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) and Mercy Amba Oduyoye's *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York, USA: Orbis Books, 1986).

[8] The built-in search engines of Academia.edu and ResearchGate.net are inadequate. I recommend using the internet search engine of your choice to search those platforms. For example, in your browser address bar or on the search engine's home page, you may search for *"prosperity gospel" "Africa" site:academia.edu* — this will find articles archived at Academia.edu that contain both the phrase "prosperity gospel" and the word "Africa."

[9] Barron, "Is the Prosperity Gospel the Gospel?," 331.

[10] The Latin phrase *tolle lege* means 'take and read'; this phrase was part of a children's song that helped lead Augustine of Hippo toward conversion to faith in Christ. Similarly, *disce investiga* means 'study and research'. I thank Nathan Scott, a one of the journal's peer reviewers, for ensuring that the Latin of the second phrase is correct.

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Debating the Steps to Decolonize Theological Education in Africa

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY
Nyika, Felix Chimera, Mzee Herman Y. Mvula, and Kenneth R. Ross, eds. *Decolonizing the Theological Curriculum in an Online Age.* Zomba, Malawi: TSM Press, 2022. Pp. 426. K 22,000 (paperback); US$62.37, £53.36 (paperback); US$62.37, £50.82 (eBook).[1]

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Introduction

Decolonizing the Theological Curriculum in an Online Age is a vital contribution to the ongoing dialogue on how to reform theological education in light of both its colonial history and recent technological transformations in learning. This volume arose from the young Theological Society of Malawi's second national theological conference (2021), and their deliberations upon the necessity of decolonization. The book addresses the growing recognition that many theological institutions, particularly in the majority world are still shaped by Eurocentric assumptions, colonial power dynamic, and western theological frameworks. At the same time, it grapples with the challenges and possibilities of delivering decolonized theological education through online platforms.

In an era when theological education is increasingly delivered digitally, this book explores how technology can either perpetuate the old colonial structures or be used as a tool to disrupt them. The editors and contributors argue that if decolonization is to be taken seriously, it must extend beyond curriculum content to include pedagogical practices, technology, and the very structures of

[1] Available locally in Malawi for Kwacha 22,000. Internationally, the volume may be purchased from African Books Collective at https://www.africanbookscollective.com/books/decolonizing-the-theological-curriculum-in-an-online-age

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theological education itself. The book not only reflects on the need for change but offers practical case studies and thoughtful critique on how decolonization can be realized in theological institutions today.

Overview: Structure & Content

This book can be divided into five major categories as different authors explore the main theme of the book from different word views. Each category addresses a crucial aspect of decolonizing theological curricula in an online age:

Theoretical Foundations for Decolonization

The chapters in this category —

- Kenneth R. Ross, "Decolonizing the Theological Mind: Work in Progress,"
- Augustine Chingwala Musopole, "Decolonizing the Theological Curriculum in an Online Age,"
- Cogitator Mapala, "Decolonizing Theological Education in Malawi: A Challenge to Curriculum Reforms in Institutions of Higher Learning,"
- Yonah Hisbon Matemba, "Towards an Anticolonial Agenda for Decolonizing Theological Education in the Information Age South of the Sahara," and
- Phoebe Chifungo, "Online Learning and Decolonizing the Theological Curriculum,"

— introduce core concepts of postcolonial theology and curriculum reform.

Kenneth R. Ross recalls Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's compelling call to decolonize the mind, emphasizing that a maturing church must find its own theological voice. This voice will not only contextualize theology but also bring a plurality of perspectives to the global church. Key means of decolonization identified include the use of vernacular languages, the incorporation of indigenous African wisdom traditions, and informing Christian theology with a thoughtful engagement with Islam and African Traditional Religions (ATRs). **Augustine Chingwala Musopole** challenges readers to reflect on their identity as a church in Malawi, asking, "What is our self-understanding of being the church in Malawi?" He questions what it would take to decolonize the theology that has been received, highlighting the need for the church to write its own catechism and to utilize indigenous epistemologies that emphasize relational and holistic ways of knowing.

In a critical examination of educational institutions, **Cogitator Mapala** addresses the current state of decolonization in Malawi's higher learning environments. He concludes that there is an alarming lack of African resources

being employed and an excessive reliance on Western curricula, which stifles local theological development. Similarly, **Yonah Hisbon Matemba** points out that the notion of "African Christianity" often hinders the decolonization process. He asserts that to truly advance, it is necessary to decenter European knowledge systems and restore the rightful place of African knowledge in theological education. Adding to this discourse, **Phoebe Chifungo** emphasizes the need to first decolonize one's thinking to fully embrace the advantages of online learning. Her chapter explores how increased local engagement and the production of knowledge through online platforms can contribute significantly to the decolonization of the theological curriculum. Together, these chapters create a rich tapestry of thought, urging the church and educational institutions to embark on a transformative journey toward decolonization that honors African voices, wisdom, and contexts.

Contextualization and Indigenous Epistemologies

The chapters in this category —

- Rhodian Munyenyembe, "Epistemological Contextualization: The Place of African Philosophy and African Theology in Decolonizing the Theological Curriculum in an Online Age,"
- Frank Barden Chirwa, "Incorporating Traditional Tonga Theology into a Decolonized Theological Curriculum," and
- Volker Glissmanni, "Decolonization of Content and Pedagogy: Reflection for Biblical Curriculum Design"

— explore the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge and perspectives into theological education.

Rhodian Munyenyembe argues that for true decolonization to occur, theological education must be deeply rooted in African philosophy and theology. These disciplines are essential as they reflect an African worldview, sharing a common goal of rediscovering African identity and recovering the African voice and initiative. By grounding theological study in local contexts, Munyenyembe emphasizes the transformative potential of African philosophies in shaping a more inclusive curriculum. **Frank Barden Chirwa** builds on this idea by exploring Traditional Tonga theology. He identifies three key concepts from Tongan culture that exemplify general revelation, which can significantly aid in the process of African theologizing. Chirwa advocates for an approach that first seeks to harmonize with Western theology, creating a bridge before embarking on the journey to decolonize African theology. This emphasis on harmonization highlights the need for a thoughtful integration of diverse theological perspectives.

Volker Glissmanni contributes to the discussion by reflecting on the content and pedagogy of biblical curriculum design. He argues that theological

curricula must prioritize biblical knowledge while integrating various disciplines. Additionally, Glissmanni addresses the issue of selectivity in theological education, which has often excluded vital voices and nuances. He advocates for a pedagogical approach that emphasizes dialogue and engagement, calling for a more rigorous involvement of students in their learning processes. Together, these chapters underscore the necessity of contextualization and the incorporation of indigenous epistemologies in theological education, paving the way for a more authentic and relevant theological discourse that resonates with African realities.

Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation

In this category, the chapters —

- Winston R. Kawalei, "Decolonization of the Interpretation of Genesis 1 from the Chewa Perspective,"
- Jonathan Nkhoma, "Decolonizing the Bible: Re-reading the Bible through the Lens of African Biblical Hermeneutics," and
- Takuze Saul Chitsulo, "Contextual Bible Study: Constructing Interpretations that Have Decolonizing Effects"

— explore innovative approaches to biblical interpretation through the lens of African contexts.

Winston R. Kawalei demonstrates how employing the Chichewa language and Chewa creation myths can lead to a clearer and more nuanced interpretation of Genesis 1 than traditional English interpretations provide. By drawing from local linguistic and cultural resources, Kawalei highlights the importance of context in understanding scripture, showing that interpretation is not merely a linguistic exercise but a culturally embedded practice. **Jonathan Nkhoma** further expands this dialogue by comparing various approaches used in African biblical hermeneutics. He emphasizes that African biblical hermeneutics seeks liberation and cultural sensitivity, moving beyond the often-rigid frameworks found in Western models. This approach not only honors the unique experiences and perspectives of African communities but also fosters a more participatory and inclusive reading of the Bible, enabling readers to connect deeply with the text. **Takuze Saul Chitsulo** adds another layer to this discussion through his exploration of contextual Bible study. He argues that African contextual biblical hermeneutics employs a tri-polar approach that simultaneously considers the African context and the biblical text. In this process of appropriation, there is ample room for dialogue, allowing the community to 'own' the Word of God. Chitsulo contends that this ownership is crucial for achieving liberation from colonial interpretations that have historically marginalized African voices. Together, these chapters illuminate the significance of decolonizing biblical interpretation by incorporating local

languages, cultural narratives, and community engagement. They advocate for a richer, more authentic understanding of scripture that resonates with the lived experiences of African Believers.

Decolonizing Church Historical Perspectives and Theological Education

In this category, the chapters —

- Felix Chimera Nyika, "Trajectories for a Decolonial Malawian Church Historiography,"
- Kenneth R. Ross and Klaus Fielder, "Decolonizing Malawi Church History: The Making of a Textbook,"
- Joyce Mlenga, "Training of Clergy in the University Context in Malawi: A Reflection for Decolonization in Approaches," and
- Rabbi Lawrence Janeit Chipao, "Theological Education Decolonization"

— explore the imperative of rethinking church history and theological education in the Malawian context.

Felix Chimera Nyika advocates for a historiography that not only identifies colonial influences but also elevates the narratives of African agents within Christian history. Drawing on Christopher Wright's insights, Nyika proposes a missional approach to church history, emphasizing the role of Christians as agents of God's holistic redemption. By focusing on these underrepresented voices, Nyika seeks to foster a more inclusive understanding of the church's historical journey in Malawi. **Kenneth R. Ross** and **Klaus Fielder** contribute to this discourse by detailing the process of creating a decolonized view of Malawian church history. Their chapter emphasizes the importance of highlighting local stories, the roles of women, and the contributions of smaller, non-missionary founded churches. This approach aims to recover lost voices and ensure that the history of the Malawian church is represented in a way that resonates with its cultural and social realities.

Rabbi Lawrence Janeit Chipao complements these discussions by engaging with Juan José Tamayo's work, *Theologies of the South: The Decolonizing Turn*.[2] Chipao proposes that Tamayo's findings provide valuable insights into the process of decolonization in theological education. By considering alternative theological frameworks, Chipao advocates for a more culturally relevant and contextually sensitive approach to theological training in Malawi. Together, these chapters illuminate the critical need for decolonizing church historiography and theological education in Malawi. They advocate for a more inclusive, contextual understanding of the church's history and the

[2] Published in Spanish as *Teologías del Sur: El giro descolonizador* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 2017). To the best of our knowledge, an English translation does not exist.

formation of clergy that honors local traditions and spiritual practices, ultimately aiming to empower the Malawian church in its mission and identity.

Practical Applications of Decolonization in Church and Society

The chapters in this category —

- Luke Limbithui, "Decolonizing Musical Instruments Usage during Church Worship: Reflection on Western Musical Instruments in Adventist Churches in Malawi,"
- Mzee Hermann Mvula, "Towards a Theology that Responds to Governance and Political Processes in Malawi: A Biblical Perspective on Good Governance from the Book of Deuteronomy,"
- Timothy Kabulunga Nyasulu, "Towards a Practical Approach to Decolonization of Theology in Malawi with Reference to Chipangano Church in Mzimba District," and
- Brian Theu, "Decolonizing the Theological Curriculum: A Driving Force for Responding to Witchcraft Pastoral Questions"

— offer insights into how decolonization can be practically applied within church practices and societal governance.

Luke Limbithui explores the use of musical instruments in church worship, comparing the biblical accounts of 1 Chronicles 13 and Daniel 3. He argues that just as the Israelites embraced local instruments in their worship of God, contemporary churches should feel empowered to incorporate traditional instruments into their services. This shift not only honors local culture but also enriches the worship experience, allowing congregations to connect more authentically with their heritage. **Mzee Hermann Mvula** shifts the focus to governance, examining the implications of Deuteronomy 17 for contemporary Malawian politics. He argues that the biblical text offers vital guidelines for good governance and serves as a critical resource for addressing the colonial legacy that has often neglected the theological engagement with public life. By applying biblical principles to modern governance, Mvula advocates for a theology that actively informs and shapes political processes in Malawi.

Timothy Kabulunga Nyasulu highlights the role of the Chipangano Church in Mzimba District, asserting that African Initiated Churches (AICs) have been historically sidelined despite being "pioneers of decolonization" (312). He commends the Chipangano Church for its orthodox beliefs and practices, noting its commitment to inclusivity and discipline, particularly in welcoming the lost. Nyasulu's insights reveal how grassroots movements within the church can drive theological innovation and social transformation. **Brian Theu** addresses a pressing pastoral concern regarding witchcraft. He proposes that instead of merely debating whether witchcraft involves spiritual forces, the

Church should take this issue seriously and respond pastorally. Theu advocates for making ATRs a core subject in theological education, emphasizing the importance of addressing these issues directly and compassionately. Collectively, these chapters underscore the practical implications of decolonization for church practices and societal governance. They advocate for a theology that is not only reflective of local contexts but also actively engages with pressing social issues, fostering a more relevant and impactful church in Malawi.

Evaluation

While the contributors come from a variety of backgrounds, all agree on the necessity and urgency of decolonization for the future of the Malawian church and her theologizing. As the editors note in the introduction, while Malawi may be "historically post-colonial," they are still heavily influenced by colonialism (17). Certainly, the same could be said for Malawi's neighbors on the continent, and therefore the deliberations contained in this book are applicable across the continent and beyond.

Some themes arise repeatedly: the need for theologizing in vernaculars and, when employing colonial languages, to appropriate them in ways that seek to undo their original effect of hegemony. Multiple chapters discuss the impact of the present online age, debating whether online education simply increases the divide between powerful and powerless, or whether it can truly help in decolonizing both knowledge and means of knowing. The contributors agree that one step in decolonization of theological education is to incorporate more African voices into the curriculum and recover African agency in the church's history. Yet even that is not simple, as it can be difficult to find resources that are suitable for use as assigned readings in theological institutions. Surely this lack is a clarion call for academics to write contextually-appropriate resources for the church and the academy!

There is also agreement that the overall shape and approach of theological curriculums inherited from Western missionaries needs a major overhaul, so that non-Western approaches can be centered. In other words, there is concern with the depth and extent of decolonization. For instance, is replacing Western textbooks with African-authored ones sufficient? No. Does having African leaders of institutions or countries guarantee decolonization has occurred? No, not necessarily, if ways of thinking and practices have not changed. The desire that is expressed again and again in this book is for a thorough transformation, one which takes seriously African agency and African contributions which the global church needs to hear.

As in any edited volume, the quality of chapters varies — there are a few

chapters with little connection to the overall theme. For example, **Chipao**'s chapter has but one clear reference to Malawi, and instead mainly consist of summary of Tamayo's *Theologies of the South*. It was also surprising to find one author, **Matemba**, arguing against 'African Christianity' yet for decolonization, which seems somewhat contradictory, as it would seem that decolonization against a Western form of Christianity implies that other forms of Christianity exist, and furthermore exist legitimately. **Matemba**'s stance is that if Christianity is already African, then what is decolonization from (or for)? At the same time, he argues for an anti-colonial approach in order to decolonize. This seems contradictory. In response, we would ask, if Christianity *cannot* become African, why engage in a debate on decolonization at all? Yet Matemba asserts that Christianity in Africa is not an African religion, and Christianity is and will always be foreign. On this point, the author can expect strong dissent from others, particularly in a volume dedicated to decolonization.

A strength of this volume is the diversity of perspectives included, both ecclesiastically and in terms of disciplinary specialties: some chapters address hermeneutics, some focus on curriculum reform, while yet others focus on Malawian church history. In other words, the multifaceted nature of this book means that it offers a fuller picture of the state of theologizing in Malawi, as well as insights into various aspects of decolonization. The volume's size also indicates the ongoing struggle of decolonization, which requires a long-term commitment to re-forming one's views. Decolonization will not take place easily or quickly, but it will be worth it for the church locally and globally when the church in each context thinks deeply and brings her wisdom to the universal church.

In light of these insights, it is recommended that the chapters in volumes of this type be organized thematically to enhance readability and coherence. Grouping chapters into distinct categories would allow readers to navigate the critical themes more effectively. This approach would not only honor the diversity of perspectives but also clarify the shared urgency for transformative action in decolonization of theological education. Decolonization will not take place easily or quickly, but it will be worth it for the church locally and globally when the church in each context thinks deeply and brings her wisdom to the universal church.

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The Problem of Curses in African Christianity

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY
Adeboye, Godwin O. *Can a Christian Be Cursed? An African Evangelical Response to the Problem of Curses*. Bukuru, Nigeria: HippoBooks, 2023. Pp. xx + 99. £15.99.

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Can a Christian be Cursed?, authored by a Nigerian evangelical scholar, is a scholarly exploration on the subject of curses. Belief in the efficacy of curses is prevalent in African Christianity, as evident in sermons, movies, and publications. From his evangelical worldview, Adeboye leaves no stone untouched in interrogating the backgrounds, including African traditional beliefs, that inform African Christians' understandings and fears of curses. This book argues for a robust Christological response to the fear and problem of curses premised on the reality of Christ's atonement and full payment of our debts.

Methodologically, Adeboye addresses Christian engagement on the topic through extensive field research, pastoral experience, and thorough exposition of biblical texts. Confronting over-generalizations, poor hermeneutics, flawed and biblical exegesis, his work affirms the need for scholarly attention to contextual existential realities and issues prominent in the African contexts. Such scholarship should use a multidisciplinary methodology that neither dismisses nor undermines the experiences or lived reality of African Christians. Rethinking received tradition in light of new problems, Adeboye writes with both intellectual humility and a holism more appropriate to African contexts than the supposed rational objectivity of Western epistemology. As an African himself, he praises the quests of African churches to address the problem of curses by utilizing the Bible as its resource while addressing misuse of biblical texts.

The first two chapters lay the groundwork, highlighting the blend of African Christian experience and past introductory studies which inform his work. Chapter three addresses questions of methodology. Engaging with African theological methods and approaches as constructed by African biblical

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scholars such as David Tuesday Adamo, Musa Dube, Justin Ukpong, and Teresa Okure, among others, Adeboye selects *intercultural hermeneutics* as practiced by Elizabeth Mburu as the most appropriate approach for "theological engagement of practical issues in African contexts (27). Adeboye especially appreciates Mburu's "four-legged interpretive hypothesis" (27),[1] asserting that its major strength is that "it easily detects and avoids syncretism because it sees biblical primacy as non-negotiable and differentiates between culture-bound values that can be negotiated and transcultural values that cannot be negotiated and must apply in all cultural contexts" (27–28).

Chapter 4 presents a biblical theology of curses and cursing drawing on both the Old and New Testaments. Adeboye recognizes that curses from a biblical perspective should "not be discussed in isolation from biblical contexts: both textual contexts and historical contexts" (33). He emphasizes that the majority of curses in the Old Testament are *conditional*, only coming into effect when certain divine prohibitions are violated, and insists that in the New Testament, curses must be understood in the context of the redemptive work of Christ. Adeboye also explores the ideas of curses in biblical social and cultural contexts in the Ancient Near East, Greco-Roman contexts. Considering important selected texts dealing with curses (e.g., Gen 3:14–19, Num 22–24, Deut 28:15–68, Psa 109 as an example of the imprecatory psalms, and Gal 3:10–14) to be mostly misconstrued by African Christians, Adeboye offers a helpful corrective through expository engagement of those texts.

Chapter 5 discusses understandings of curses, and solutions to curses, in traditional African religio-cultural contexts. Chapter 6 engages with the reality and fear of curses in African Christianity, focusing on how African Christians interpret their lived experiences and express their fear of curses. Adeboye offers a detailed description of contemporary African responses to fears of curses. These responses include name-changing, popular prayers, deliverance programs, mass migration to Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, dietary prescriptions and prohibitions, etc. Chapter 7 examines the solutions offered to the dilemmas of curses in contemporary African Christianity with specific attention to the instances of cursing/imprecatory prayers, interpretation of lived experiences, and analysis of curses in popular African sermons. Adeboye highlights key texts frequently used in discourse about curses in African Christianity; e.g., curses placed on Adam and Eve (Gen 3:14–19), curses of the patriarchs (Gen–Deut), the curse on Eli's family (1Sam 2:30–36), the Jabez narrative (1Chr 4:9–10), the Jericho curses (Josh 6:26 and 1Kgs 16:34), and Jesus's becoming a curse for us (Gal 3:13–14). Adeboye critically addresses the overemphasis of most African preachers' on the experiences of biblical

[1] See "An African Hermeneutic: A Four-Legged Stool," chapter 4 in Elizabeth Mburu, *African Hermeneutics* (Bukuru, Nigeria: HippoBooks, 2019), 65–89.

characters while ignoring the divine purpose and historical context of the texts, the overgeneralization of personal spiritual experiences and revelations, the selective use of texts mostly picked from the Old Testament in preaching on curses, the disposition to interpret patterns and repeated occurrences in the Bible as expressions of curses, deliverance programs and spiritual solutions, spiritual offers to cure curses, and syncretism.

Chapter 8 discusses an evangelical solution to the African dilemma and fear of curses, building on central tenets of evangelicalism such as the primacy of the Bible, the centrality of the cross of Jesus, the centrality of personal conversion and repentance, and the necessity of active missions. When "rightly understood," Adeboye argues, these "evangelical theological paradigms can be used to help Africans properly transact between their traditional beliefs [about] curses and biblical teachings" (131). Chapter 9 places curses in the context of theodicy and considers curses in the context of philosophical discussions of the problem of evil. Exploring curses as a form of moral evil, Adeboye emphasizes that "a proper understanding of moral responsibility must be entrench[ed] in the moral consciousness of African Christians" (150), who must recognize that actions have consequences.

Chapter 10 presents contextual biblical and practical guidelines and recommendations in responding to curses, emphasizing the proper use of the imprecatory psalms, active mission, discipleship, strong and intentional pastoral care and counseling, contextual theological training and research, etc. Chapter 11 insists that while spiritual problems are real, "they are not the only real problems" (169) faced by Africans. Enumerating challenges facing the African church, Adeboye asks "how can the church in Africa make a spiritual impact that will birth a holistic transformation of Africans?" and argues that African Christians must embark on what he calls "the evangelization of orientation and worldviews" (169). In conclusion, Chapter 12 affirms God's sovereignty and the Lordship of Christ, emphasizing God's understanding of the peculiarity of human contextual experiences, and the unique experiences faced by Africans and Christians respectively.

Evaluation

Adeboye's detailed work is well and clearly written. It helps readers and Christian practitioners rethink the subject of curses in the context of African Christianity. The author maintains a healthy balance between being critical, presenting relevant data, and providing practical guidelines to pastors, missionaries, and Church leaders. His quest to correct flawed hermeneutics is laudable as he points to a better way by maintaining a healthy dialogue with the African worldview while upholding a high view of the Bible. His insistence on the sacrificial work of Christ as the guide rail for African churches in their quest

to raise liberated congregations free from the fear of curses is commendable. However, the book has a few weaknesses. First, the author's assertion that African Christians' establishment of sacred places "points to their level of fear of curses" (104) is unwarranted. Rather, this probably points to the holism common to both African Christian worldviews and traditional African worldviews. In their quests to attain wellbeing and meaningful life, many Africans, whether Christian or not, attempt to localize and appropriate divine presence through the therapeutic use of anointed sacred objects and spaces. Second, in the author's explication of the real curses plaguing the African continent in Chapter 11, little is done to connect Africa's despair with global processes marked by exploitation as evident in the colonial nation-state project in Africa. Finally, the author's argument for the need for an "evangelization of orientation and mindset" (173) in the African Church would have been strengthened with a presentation of an articulated vision of the kingdom of God which could help the African Church redefine and reimagine its *telos* in light of the bewildering issues plaguing the continent and to actualize such vision.

Conclusion

No mere introductory study, *Can a Christian Be Cursed?* addresses important questions relevant to African Christianity. Adeboye's commitment to upholding a high view of the Bible and the fundamental tenets of evangelicalism holds a central position in this work and is commendable. Due to its accessibility and practicality, this resource will serve as a hands-on resource for seminaries, missionaries, pastors, and theologians grappling with the issue of curses. It also can guide theologians grappling with theologically engagement with culturally rooted questions. I highly recommend this book.

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The missio Dei *and the identity of the church in 1 Peter*

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY
Urga, Abeneazer G., Jessica A. Udall, and Edward L. Smither, eds. *Reading 1 Peter Missiologically: The Missionary Motive, Message and Methods of 1 Peter*. Reading Missiologically. Littleton, Colorado, USA: William Carey Publishing, 2024. Pp. vii + 252. US$ 26.99 (paperback); $15.99 (epub ebook).

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In 2023 the editors Abeneazer G. Urga, Edward L. Smither, and Linda P. Saunders brought together an accomplished team for the book *Reading Hebrews Missiologically: The Missionary Motive, Message, and Methods of Hebrews* (Littleton, Colorado: William Carey Publishing, 2023). Because there are not many missiological studies in the General Epistles, this book (as does the first volume) seeks to fill the gap within missiological scholarship by paying more attention to these letters of the NT. Now, the second book in the series has appeared, this time discussing 1 Peter. As with the first volume, reader have a truly global perspective in their hands. The editors and authors of *Reading 1 Peter Missiologically* come from north to south, from east to west: they represent world Christianity at its best. So, we see contributions from authors who have served, studied, or lived in the following countries: Ethiopia, Zambia, China, Netherlands, USA, Ghana, Norway, Germany, Egypt, Canada, Kenya, England, Greece, etc. This is the global church coming together to produce a resource for the church catholic.

The book is divided into three major sections: (1) the "why" (reason/missionary motive), (2) the "what" (content/missionary message), and (3) the "how" (strategy/missionary method). In the following pages, I will summarize each chapter in a brief manner. Chapters which, to my mind, make an outstanding contribution by showing in great depth the missional implications of 1 Peter will be treated in more detail.

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Benjamin Marx

The *missio Dei* and the Identity of the Church in 1 Peter

BOOK REVIEW: *Reading 1 Peter Missiologically*, edited by Abeneazer G. Urga, Jessica A. Udall, and Edward L. Smither

Part I: "The Missionary Motive of 1 Peter"

The first part starts with "**Salvation of the Nations: The Vision of God's Mission in 1 Peter 1:10–12**" by **Joshua Bowman** (ch. 1). In this essay, Bowman argues that the salvation mentioned in 1 Peter 1:10 "provides a solid biblical and theological basis for engagement in mission" (3) and gives reason to endure suffering. As suffering is an ever-present reality in this world, believers need to know how to respond in a godly manner to such. Instead of fear and reclusion, "confidence, peace, and even joy come from faith in the promised salvation of the Lord" (5). Such hope is based in the story of the Christ — his suffering and glory. Bowman states that "the historic, prophetic testimony of the faith is vital to current confidence and future hope" (10) which ultimately gives boldness to missional engagement in this world.

Bowman's chapter is followed by **Gift Mtukwa**'s "**Like Father, Like Son: Holiness and the *Missio Dei* [sic] in 1 Peter**" (ch. 2). Mtukwa contends that Peter's commands on holy living are integral to the mission of God's people. In order to enrich our understanding of this topic, the author uses African Biblical Hermeneutics (leaning on Elizabeth Mburu's *African Hermeneutics* [Carlisle, Cambria, UK: HippoBooks, 2019]) focusing on Shona proverbs. The Shona proverbs selected could be equated to the English "like father, like son" and thus emphasize resemblance and imitation. In this way, Mtukwa argues that holiness is at the heart of God's mission (see, e.g., 1 Pet 1:15). Being holy and doing good attracts the surrounding society like a magnet (1 Pet 2:12). Further, Mtukwa sees 'praise' not solely as a vertical aspect (worshipping God) but also incorporating a horizontal aspect in terms of proclamation (1 Pet 2:9). There is thus an accord of word and deed which is grounded in the identity of God's people. Though the Shona proverbs do not present the missional aspect, they are useful to appreciate the importance of resemblance and imitation. This resemblance and imitation focuses on holiness in Peter's writing, which has a missional component in reaching those who are not yet part of God's people.

In chapter 3, **Jacob Chengwei Feng**'s "**Mission by God's Living Stones: Watchman Nee's Missional Exegesis of 1 Peter 2:5–11**" shows how Watchman Nee's missional exegesis enriches our missional reading of Scripture, as well as our understanding and practice of mission "as a 'coordinated spiritual house,' which is accomplished by all believers as living stones and priests of God and by their migration" (35). The church is missional in nature; thus, mission is not something the church does, rather it is part of her identity. And as the church is a communal body, mission too is to be lived in community and in coordination. For Nee the terms 'aliens/foreigners' and a 'exiles' do not refer to a static discipleship in one's own hometown but rather to a dynamic and missional engagement by means of migration.

Feng not only summarizes Nee's missional understanding of 1 Peter, but he also proposes some missional implications. For example, Feng says that if Theological Interpretation of Scripture (TIS) is the way forward for the community of the church to engage with the Bible, and if the church by its definition is missional, then why "should not the interpretation of Scripture be *missional*?" (45; emphasis original). This would then lead to a reorientation of TIS into a more missional landscape — something the church catholic needs to reflect upon more.

Boubakar Sanou in his "**Embodying God's Mission in an Unfriendly World: The Identity and Missionary Mandate of the Church in 1 Peter**" (ch. 4) puts forward the argument that the believers' identity is "determined by God's verdict rather than by their social location" (52). He then explores mission in 1 Peter looking at two aspects: 1) identity, and 2) the task of being witnesses. Similarly to Mtukwa's argument above, we see a strong connection between identity and lifestyle (holiness and doing good). Again, verbal proclamation and ethical lifestyle are two aspects of the church's participation in the *missio Dei* — word and deed in harmony (see also LeMarquand's argument in ch. 6).

In chapter 5, "**The Role of the Spirit in Mission in 1 Peter**" by **Yimenu Adimass Belay**, emphasis is given to the Spirit in mission. This chapter could be strengthened by a more rigorous exegesis of the corresponding biblical texts as well as a more thorough argumentation of its individual points. At times the reader is at loss for lack of clarity. To give one example, we read that "the work of mission is not separated from the work of the Spirit in the Old and New Testaments" (65). Yet, the author then goes on to state that the Old Testament (OT) "contains no clear depiction of mission and the role of the Spirit" (65–66). No further explanation is then given as to how we should relate the former declaration to the latter concerning the OT.

A splendid essay (ch. 6) is written by **Grant LeMarquand**. With the title "**Eschatology and Mission in 1 Peter**" LeMarquand engages Ferdinand Hahn's *Mission in the New Testament* (Studies in Biblical Theology 47 [London: SCM Press, 1965]). For Hahn, mission is only present in a modified way in 1 Peter, as Christian give testimony while being persecuted. Hahn, so LeMarquand, rightly recognizes the eschatological aspect of Peter's letter, but he might overplay his hand in seeing an organized persecution of Christians. Further, the concept of mission differs between Hahn's and LeMarquand's works. According to LeMarquand, Hahn limits mission in two ways: 1) mission as a function of the church, and 2) mission as being exclusively verbal proclamation. LeMarquand's understanding of mission is that 1) mission is primarily God's in which the church participates, and 2) mission is not limited to verbal proclamation but includes witness to the lordship of Christ in word and deed.

With this, LeMarquand continues his argument by integrating Peter's eschatological outlook with his missionary understanding.

In order to advance this argument, LeMarquand first engages in a careful analysis as to 1) what "eschatology" and then 2) "mission" refer to. Eschatology is the understanding that early Christians "were aware that the Christian life was eschatological, that is, lived in hope, in the reality of the last things inaugurated by the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah" (80). The author then proceeds to show from 1 Peter these features in the letter. The end times are present in (what many have called) an "already-but-not-yet" fashion: "The readers of 1 Peter live in the end but still look forward to the final end" (83). In terms of mission, LeMarquand argues for a broader definition of mission, mentioning the concept of the *missio Dei* and not limiting the church's participation therein to mere verbal proclamation (although he states that this is a crucial aspect of mission), but also to include aspects like honorable deeds. So far in the book, LeMarquand is the only author who from the outset lets the reader know what he means by "mission" in explicit terms. To relate the concepts of eschatology and mission, Le Marquand states that OT and Jewish "eschatology anticipated God's future rescue of Israel and he creation from decay of sin, evil, and death. Eschatology, therefore, is the expectation of God acting to judge and to save, the assurance that the God who has come in the past will once again act decisively. In other words, eschatology is inherently missional" (84). The author proceeds in a two-fold manner: examining passages which portray 1) the mission of God and 2) the mission of the church in 1 Peter. Concerning the former, LeMarquand shows that 1 Peter 1:1–12 portrays the church as the recipient of God's mission, and in 3:18–22 we see Peter's contribution in "thinking eschatologically about the mission of God in Christ" (87). In regard to the church's mission, the author mentions "worship and ethics" in 2:1–12 (89–91) and suffering and submission in 2:13–3:2; 3:13–17; 4:12–19 (91–94). Le Marquand states: "Mission, said Peter, is always one with an eye toward God's future action" pointing to 1 Peter 3:15 — the hope we have (94).

In conclusion regarding part I, it seems that the majority of the authors base the mission of the church in her identity (leaning specifically on 1 Pet 2:9–12) with its two aspects of verbal proclamation and ethics — word and deed.

Part II: "The Missionary Message of 1 Peter"

The second part of the book concerns Peter's missionary message. This part starts with "**Salvation and Judgment as Missionary Message in 1 Peter**" (ch. 7) by **Markus T. Klausli**. Klausli asserts that there are different levels of Christian persecution, and that Peter adapts his missionary message accordingly. One

aspect of this message is the "rich presentation of God's salvation in light of the reality of God's judgment" (99). The author speaks of a 'subversive' mission strategy in that Christians live according to God's will while giving a response to people who ask about their hope (1 Pet 3:15–16). Again, words and actions come to the fore. Klausli then divides his chapter into two parts: 1) God's salvation from future judgment, and 2) a worthy response to God's salvation in light of present judgment. Jesus's death and resurrection are the centerpiece of salvation (101–102), and the heart of Peter's missionary message is "that a pleasing response to God's grace has the potential to awaken interest in the gospel and provide believers with the opportunity to explain God's saving acts" (106). There is thus an attractive lifestyle of believers which potentially gives way to verbal proclamation.

In chapter 8, **Sarah Lunsford**'s "**The Missiological Message of Hope in 1 Peter**" makes use of Jürgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*. Lunsford starts out by quoting Moltmann that "Christianity is eschatology, is hope" and then explores the missiological dimension of hope. This hope is anchored in the resurrection of Jesus (116), and the object of that hope is the promises of God (123). She argues that "the redemption and consummation of this fallen creation into a glorified family of God ruling over a new heaven and new earth is the *missio Dei*, the grand uniting theme of all Scripture" (121). Our hope is thus theologically grounded, and Christologically secured. Our participation in the *missio Dei* is "revealed in us through our ethical response to suffering and injustice, our sacrifices of praise, and our loving community of faith" (126). One minor issue in this essay is that Lunsford cites two articles from *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* incorrectly by neither mentioning the authors nor the titles of the entries.

The last chapter (ch. 9) of part two is "**Mission to the Dead and the Resurrection of Jesus: 1 Peter 3:18–22 and Ancestor Christology in Africa**" by **Rudolf K. Gaisie**. This is another essay which merits some more space. In this chapter, Gaisie sets out an Akan contextual reading of 1 Pet 3:18–22 and 4:5–6. Gaisie focuses on one of the Christological passages of 1 Peter — 3:18–22 — because, as he says, in African contexts there is no expressed dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual world (133). He starts by stating that Jesus's death is not only good news for the living but also "a message for the dead" (129). The purpose of his essay is to highlight "some aspects of a functional Ancestor Christology for the Akan context and beyond" (129). Gaisie highlights the importance of Christ's resurrection and its missional aspect for Ancestor Christology. He can do this because it is the resurrection which "ratifies the image of ancestor for and the ancestorship of Jesus" (130).

If there is one area in this essay which could be improved, it is the small section on the OT ideas on death and resurrection. Here Gaisie could have spent more space covering the idea of resurrection or life after death in OT writings. [However, word count limits might have not allowed him to dig deeper here.] Nevertheless, in this section he rightly points out that "death as an enemy to life from God will ultimately be defeated by the true source of life himself, God," pointing to Isa 25:8 (131).

Gaisie argues that the "spirits in prison" (3:19) and the "into heaven" (3:22) refer to two domains of the spirit realm: "With the assumption that heaven, God's 'perfect' domain, is for 'obedient or obeying spirits,' the reading of hell (the domain of disobedient spirits) and heaven respectively in verses 19 and 22 seems *natural* in the flow of thought" (135, emphasis original). The missiological implication of Jesus's resurrection is that he is Lord of both, the living and the dead: "Jesus did not go to the realm of ancestors and deities as one of them but rather as their Lord" (138).

In more general terms, Gaisie points out that Christology — our understanding of Jesus — is shaped by our experience of him in our context and thus "our christological insights find meaning and clearer expression" (139). Further (and with this I will conclude my reflection of this essay): "What we say of Jesus during the process is always germinal, and there is room for clarity or improvement" (139).

Part II of this book seems to be a bit weaker than the essays presented in Part I. At times it is not clear what the difference between 'motive' (Part I) and 'message' (Part II) is. Is hope, judgment, or salvation a motive or message? To me, the distinction is not obvious. Nevertheless, the essays in Part II contribute to our overall understanding of 1 Peter with its missiological heart. With this we will come to the last section of the book — the missionary methods.

Part III: "The Missionary Methods of 1 Peter"

Part III with the topic of missionary methods begins with "**Missional Hospiltality: Responding to Physical and Spiritual Alienation**" (ch. 10) — a tremendously insightful essay written by **Tricia Stephens** who explores the concept of diaspora mission via 1 Peter. This essay is well written, argued, and researched. Stephens starts out by grounding Christian hospitality in God's own hospitality. Further, from the beginning she points out — leaning on Enoch Wan's work on diaspora mission[1] — that in Westernized mission

[1] Enoch Wan, "Diaspora Missiology and International Student Ministry (ISM)," chapter 2 in *Diaspora Missions to International Students*, edited by Enoch Wan, 11–42 (Portland, Oregon, USA: Western Seminary Press, 2019).

understanding, mission has been understood more in terms of doing rather than being. The latter sees mission as part of the church's identity and also brings the relational aspect of mission to the forefront.

Stephens acknowledges other people's work and shows that her essay contributes to the "traditional host-guest power dynamics by shaping a powerful Christian identity as alien and strangers" (146). Hospitality and eschatology via a Christocentric view become the motivation of Christian engagement in this world. After an overview of Greco-Roman understanding of hospitality, the author then examines the social conditions of the reader of 1 Peter. Some interpret the language of 'strangers' and 'aliens' as technical terms referring to the political-legal standing of the readership (see, e.g., ch. 3 of this book), whereas others understand the terms in more metaphorical ways. Stephens then argues for a multivalent *topos* of this language and states that "believers experience legal and social alienation, but it is their gentile neighbors who are experiencing spiritual alienation" (151). A minor change I would love to see is in her chart on p. 152, concerning the then-now of the believers' lives. The author has two columns: "Christians' Lives before Christ" and "Christians' Lives after Christ." Knowing that this is standard evangelical terminology, I would still prefer to read "in Christ" rather than "after Christ" (whatever that might mean).

In the next section, Stephens redefines Christians as both hosts and guests — something which every missionary should take to heart. (I have experienced this struggle of being 'solely' a guest in the Quechua communities here in the Andes of Peru, thus receiving hospitality.) Being a host reflects "God's generosity and love" and being a guest "cultivates humility and openness" (153). This understanding of being a Christian then also links hospitality to eschatology, which Stephen does by exploring 1 Peter 4:7–11. She reasons that "an eschatology of hope receives those who are suffering in the interim and reflects a hope of the fulfillment of God's kingdom" (156).

Again, the essay of Stephens is both insightful as well as helpful in challenging the reader into a new understanding of our participation in God's mission. The only issue I have is with the brevity of the chapter. One really would love to listen more to what Stephens has to say, but I suppose her doctoral dissertation on which she is working will satisfy that need.

In chapter 11, "**Suffering in God's Mission: Reflections from 1 Peter**" by **Edward L. Smither**, we read about some reflection on Peter's encouraging the church to participate in God's mission in the midst of suffering. There were different kinds of sufferings and levels of persecution for Peter and his audience alike. Smither, with some others, thinks that the status of 'aliens' and 'strangers' is not to be seen a s purely metaphorical description of the audience. These

Christians were truly living diaspora realities: they were suffering trials, accusations, and various insults from the surrounding society. So Smither sets out four areas in which Peter's audience was to respond and engage in mission in the midst of suffering: 1) imitating Christ in suffering, 2) godly living (holiness lifestyle), 3) communal witness (as the people of God), and 4) verbal witness. Smither states that "gospel speech should align with their godly conduct," thus connecting word and deed once more. In addition, Peter also imparts a theology of suffering combined with an eschatological hope. In the last section Smither concludes with some reflections on the implications for the global church in the twenty-first century.

In her essay "**Ethical Living as Proto-Evangelion: Holiness, Honor, and Hope in 1 Peter**" (ch. 12), **Jessica A. Udall** puts forward the argument that Peter admonished his readers to live a life full of holiness and honor "which God uses to silence critics of the Christian faith and even to inspire questions regarding the great hope that motivates such good lives" (181). This, the ethical life (characterized by holiness and honor) serves as a proto-evangelion. One could even say that attraction leads to proclamation. One minor error on p. 185 is that Udall unfortunately mixes up the two Wrights, and names N. T. Wright as the author instead of Christopher J. H. (rightly cited in the bibliography). Nevertheless, her argument — that our lifestyle matters in terms of missional engagement with the world — rings true. Udall maintains that holiness and honor as a lifestyle is "not simply a missionary method . . . but part and parcel of Christian identity itself" (190; quoting Miroslav Volf, "Soft Difference, Theological Reflections on the Relation between Church and Culture in 1 Peter," *Ex Auditu* 10 [1994], 25).

In chapter 13, "**Evangelism in 1 Peter: The Verbal Proclamation of a People Awaiting the Return of Their King**," **Will Brooks** states that "Peter's missiological and eschatological vision compelled them to engage the world around them" (193). This reminds us of LeMarquand's essay, discussed above. Brooks is one of the few authors in this book who lets the reader know from the start what he means when he talks about 'mission.' His essay then engages two principal passages in 1 Peter: 2:9b and 3:15 in their respective literary contexts. In the concluding section, Brooks puts forth some missiological insights like evangelism as a communal endeavor, the need for theological education to equip "students with the skills to do theology in context" (204), and the importance of understanding our faith (theology) in more general terms.

Another very insightful essay is "**Missional Implications of Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits**" by **Sigurd Grindheim** (ch. 14). He, like Rudolf K. Gaisie in chapter 9, tackles the difficult passage of 1 Peter 3:18–22. Grindheim argues that this passage is crucial in that it undergirds other passages in 1 Peter

and their call to evangelism. The author sees the spirits in 3:19–20 as evil spirits which led the nations astray. This follows Second Temple Judaisms' understanding of fallen angels and evil spirits in the period before the flood. Thus, Christ's preaching to them is not evangelistic in spirit (pun intended!) but proclaims his victory over them. "The powers that are deceiving the nations and leading the people astray have been made subject to the supremacy of Christ" (218). This in turn is motivation for Peter's audience to keep proclaiming the gospel as they hope for the conversion of their earthly-human antagonists.

The last essay (ch. 15) is written by **Sofia Papaspyrou** with the title "**The Pilgrimage Motif in 1 Peter and Its Implications for Evangelism**." Here, the author explores the motif of pilgrimage and what this means in terms of our evangelistic endeavors. She explores 1 Peter 2:11 and the different views as to whether the collocation of "strangers and aliens" is literal or metaphorical language. Papaspyrou concludes this section by stating that it is the "theological significance" which helps us contemplating our place in this life (229). She then explores the different mentalities of tourists and pilgrims and how they relate to mission. Papaspyrou states that in Greece she has encountered missionaries with pilgrim mentalities — meaning, missionaries who immerse themselves in a given culture and context — as well as missionaries with tourist mentalities who have more their own benefit and development in mind than anything else. The final part then gives a case study of slow tourism in which connections to local communities are established. According to Papaspyrou, 1 Peter 2:11 helps us to examine our true identity and how we are shaped by our current culture. Ultimately "this verse serves as a foundational reminder of the Christians' role as ambassadors of Christ" (237). By adopting a pilgrim mindset, we will be engaging in this world in a humble, missional manner.

With this we will now come to some brief final reflections concerning the entire book.

Concluding Thoughts and Reflections

While reading this book many of my senses have been reawakened. Memories of the smell of coffee during the Ethiopian ceremony returned, and I recalled the taste of injera with vegetables, spicy stews, and meat. This book is like a typical Ethiopian meal: rich in taste and best enjoyed in community.

One of its main strengths and contributions to world Christianity is that it is written by global Christians as indicated in the introduction above. Though the quality and depth of the different chapters vary, the overall insightfulness and challenging remarks make this book a must read for students of 1 Peter as well as current and future missionaries. One aspect which might have been of further benefit could have been a concluding chapter by the editors, or a part IV

"Review and Response" as in the earlier book on Hebrews. Additionally, it needs to be stated that it would have been beneficial for the reader if the authors had stated how terms like mission or missional are to be understood. Though it is difficult to define mission satisfactorily for everyone, it would at least be useful to know how each author defines these terms — as, for example, LeMarquand and Grindheim do in their respective chapters.

As often stated in the book, mission should not be seen as a mere task but rather as some kind of identity of the church — participating in God's mission. This is even strengthened by the close relationship between eschatology and mission, which is pointed out in several essays. A theology of hope (eschatology) motivates and invites us to engage in the *missio Dei*.

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The Heavenly Intercession of Jesus in Hebrews: *Background, Nature, and Significance*

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY
Urga, Abeneazer G. *Intercession of Jesus in Hebrews: The Background and Nature of Jesus' Heavenly Intercession in the Epistle to the Hebrews.* Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2/585. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023. Pp. xx + 290. €99.00 (paperback/e-book).

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The work is a slightly revised version of the author's PhD thesis, completed at Columbia International University. Abeneazer Urga, an Ethiopian biblical scholar, notes that while scholars have focused on Jesus's mediatorial role before and after his ascension, there has been less emphasis on his intercession as his current mediatorial task in heaven. The author establishes that New Testament scholars have neglected the function of Christ in heaven (i.e., intercession) while focusing on "the death, entry, and offering of Christ" (1). In this monograph, Urga argues that in the book of Hebrews, Jesus's vocal intercession began on earth and constitutes his primary role as high priest in heaven following his sacrifice on the cross.

This study examines the heavenly intercession of Jesus as described in the book of Hebrews. It also explores the idea of intercession and key passages and words related to this theme through the lens of the Old Testament, Second Temple Jewish Literature (STJL), and other New Testament texts apart from Hebrews. This broader perspective helps us understand the background and nature of his role as high priest for believers and allows for a deeper comprehension of how intercession is portrayed and the reasons behind it. Urga employs the concept of semantic domain developed by Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida in their *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domain* (2nd edition: United Bible Societies, 1989). In some passages, words directly related to intercession are not used; however, concepts of

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intercession are prevalent in the OT, STJL, and NT texts.

The book is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the research, providing a broader perspective and outlining the methodology along with the literature review. The literature review examines various scholars' work on Jesus's intercession in Hebrews since 1977. However, the selection of 1977 as a cutoff year lacks clear justification. Contrary to some scholars, this study argues that intercession is the primary function of Jesus' heavenly ministry as high priest. Additionally, it shows that this motif is not a "foreign element" but a natural aspect rooted in the mediators' intercession in the Septuagint (LXX) as well as in the STJL (31).

Chapter 2 examines the motif of intercession in the Old Testament, analyzing both the Masoretic Text (MT) and LXX textual traditions. The aim is to investigate whether the author of Hebrews has appropriated the concept of intercession from the OT in composing the Epistle to the Hebrews. The chapter begins by defining the term "intercession," noting that it refers to a form of prayer offered on behalf of someone else. In the Old Testament, intercessors can be either human mediators or angelic beings. It explores intercession in the Old Testament, focusing on figures such as Abraham, Moses, Amos, the Suffering Servant, Jeremiah, Daniel, and angels. The chapter emphasizes that "the motif of intercession is prevalent in the Old Testament. God-appointed mediators engaged in intercession on behalf of others to declare God's judgment against people. All intercessory prayers arose from the sinful actions of both the elect and the Gentiles" (76–77). An important insight from this chapter is that the idea of intercession is communicated through many words, phrases, and expressions, even though the word "intercession" is not used directly in some significant OT texts, such as Isaiah 53:12.

The background research continues in Chapter 3, where the motif of intercession and intercessors is examined in STJL. The aim is to compare the concept of intercession in the OT and STJL. The Greek word ἐντυγχάνειν (*entugkhánein*) is frequently encountered in STJL, so this chapter primarily focuses on this term. The texts of 1–2 Maccabees, the *Testament of Levi*, *1 Enoch*, the Mishnah, *The Genesis Apocryphon*, and Philo are analyzed to understand the concept of intercession. The examination reveals that intercessory prayer was a common practice among mediators during the Second Temple period, involving priests, military chiefs, angels, and martyrs. The roles of intercessory mediators in STJL are largely similar to those in the OT. However, the practice of interceding for the dead, as well as the concept of deceased saints interceding, emerges as unique to STJL.

Chapter 4 shifts the focus to Jesus's intercessory work during his earthly ministry and passages that address his heavenly intercession in New Testament

texts outside of Hebrews. Key passages include Jesus's prayers for his disciples (Luke 22:31–32; John 17:1–2), for himself in Gethsemane (Matt 26:36–44; Mark 14:32–42; Luke 22:39–46; John 18:1), and for others during his passion (Luke 22:39–46; 23:34a, 46). Acts 7:55–58, Romans 8:34, and 1 John 2:1–2 are also covered in detail. This chapter demonstrates Jesus's intercession both on earth and in heaven within the broader New Testament corpus. Urga observes the motif of high priesthood in these texts.

Chapter 5 serves as the centerpiece of the book, specifically addressing Jesus's heavenly intercession as described in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Urga applies all the previous discussions of the book to the text of Hebrews itself. Key passages such as 1:3c–d, 13; 2:17–18; 3:1–6; 4:14–16; 6:19–20; 7:25; 8:1–4; 9:11–12, 24; 10:11–14, 19–25; and 12:1–2 are analyzed to demonstrate how they portray Jesus as a high priest who intercedes. The intended readers of Hebrews are identified as those who were in danger of committing apostasy because they were troubled by sin, temptation, spiritual apathy, and immaturity. Some may have already left Christian fellowship. To such an audience, the author affirms that Jesus is the only one who "can provide efficacious mediatorship because of his sacrificial offering on earth and his perpetual intercession as the high priest of God's people" (235). Jesus's intercession, when compared with OT and STJL, is superior and effective because of his death on the cross as a sacrificial offering, and he intercedes from an exalted position.

Urga's book attempts to answer the question, "What is the background and nature of Jesus' heavenly intercession on behalf of believers in the Epistle to the Hebrews?" (237). It indicates that previous studies on the subject have significantly contributed to delineating the priesthood of Christ and his superior mediatorship. However, the areas of Jesus's present ministry, particularly his perpetual intercession, have yet to receive significant attention. Urga makes a strong case in this book for how the issue of intercession in the Epistle to the Hebrews depends on texts from OT, STJL, and other parts of NT. Urga's work demonstrates real scholarship, sound exegetical skill, and well-rounded interaction with important scholars on the subject.

The intercessory role of Christ is a controversial topic within the Ethiopian Christian context, from which the author hails. While Protestants in Ethiopia emphasize Christ's intercessory role, adherents of the Orthodox church highlight the intercessory roles of other saints. This distinction serves as a significant identity marker between the two groups. I hope the author will produce more materials on this topic in various local Ethiopian languages and translate his work for a broader readership. This would facilitate a more inclusive and accessible discussion of this important theological issue.

CALL FOR PAPERS
Nicaea at 1700: Roots and Branches in African Christianity

For the majority of Christians around the world, the Nicene Creed of 325 and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381 remain normative. But many dismiss Nicene articulations of Christian faith as a corrupted hellenization of Christianity. Calls to *de-hellenize* Christianity are as common as calls for decolonization. Historian Robert Louis Wilken revisits the value of this ancient contextual theology:

> The notion that the development of early Christian thought represented a hellenization of Christianity has outlived its usefulness. . . . a more apt expression would be the Christianization of Hellenism . . . Christian thinking, while working within matters of thought and conceptions rooted in Greco-Roman culture, transformed them so profoundly that in the end something quite new came into being.[1]

Similarly, Kenyan biblical scholar Andrew M. Mbuvi affirms the validity of the historical hellenization both on its own terms and as a model to be followed in other contexts.[2] Yet Mugambi's complaint that Nicene trinitarian jargon of 'persons' — and presumably of *homoousia* and *homoiousia* as well! — is so foreign to African contexts as to be simply unhelpful is fair.[3]

Nonetheless, from Athanasius (c. 296 – 373) and Augustine (354–430) to Yared the Melodist (500s) of Aksum in the patristic era, to medieval Coptic and Nubian and Ethiopian Christian communities, to millions of contemporary Christians from Angola to Zimbabwe, the Creed is not mere western dogma but an *African* doxology which arises not from philosophical speculation but from lived experience of God in Christ. Moreover, the Nicene Creed was *not* created from the top down — the attendees represented a suffering people who had just emerged from a period of intense persecution at the hands of Empire — and the Creed arose as an ecumenical and global expression of a lived faith.

To mark the seventeenth centennial of the Nicene Creed in 2025, ***African Christian Theology*** 2, no. 2 (September 2025) will be a themed issue: "Nicaea at 1700: Roots and Branches in African Christianity." Submissions on this theme that fall within the scope of the journal should be received by 11 July 2025. Submission guidelines are available on the journal's website. Submissions may be made online or sent to submissions@AfricanChristianTheology.org

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[1] Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven, Connecticut, USA: Yale University Press, 2003), xvi–xvii.

[2] Andrew M. Mbuvi, *African Biblical Studies: Unmasking Embedded Racism and Colonialism in Biblical Studies* (London: T&T Clark, 2023), 123.

[3] Jesse N. K. Mugambi, *African Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers / Heinemann Kenya, 1989; reprint edition: Nairobi, Acton Publishers, 2002), 7.

APPEL À CONTRIBUTIONS
Nicée à 1700 ans : Racines et Branches dans le Christianisme Africain

Pour la majorité des chrétiens dans le monde, le credo de Nicée de 325 et le credo de Nicée-Constantinople de 381 restent normatifs. Mais nombreux sont ceux qui rejettent les articulations nicéennes de la foi chrétienne comme une hellénisation corrompue du christianisme. Les appels à la *déshellénisation* du christianisme sont aussi fréquents que les appels à la décolonisation. L'historien Wilken revient sur la valeur de cette ancienne théologie contextuelle :

> L'idée selon laquelle le développement de la pensée chrétienne primitive représentait une hellénisation du christianisme a fait son temps. . . . une expression plus appropriée serait la christianisation de l'hellénisme . . . La pensée chrétienne, tout en travaillant sur des sujets de pensée et des conceptions enracinés dans la culture gréco-romaine, les a transformés si profondément qu'en fin de compte quelque chose de tout à fait nouveau a vu le jour.[4]

De façon similaire, le bibliste kenyan Andrew M. Mbuvi confirme la validité de l'hellénisation historique à la fois en tant que telle et en tant que modèle à suivre dans d'autres contextes.[5] Pourtant, la plainte de Mugambi selon laquelle le jargon trinitaire nicéen des « personnes » — et vraisemblablement aussi de l'*homoousia* et de l'*homoiousia* ! — est tellement étranger aux contextes africains qu'il n'est tout simplement pas utile.[6]

Néanmoins, depuis Athanase (c. 296 – 373) et Augustin (354–430) jusqu'à Yared le Mélodiste d'Axoum (années 500) à l'époque patristique, en passant par les communautés chrétiennes médiévales coptes, nubiennes et éthiopiennes, jusqu'aux millions de chrétiens contemporains de l'Angola au Zimbabwe, le Credo n'est pas un simple dogme occidental, mais une doxologie *africaine* qui découle non pas de la spéculation philosophique, mais de l'expérience vécue de Dieu dans le Christ. En outre, le Credo de Nicée n'a *pas* été créé du haut vers le bas — les participants représentaient un peuple souffrant qui venait de sortir d'une période de persécution intense aux mains de l'Empire — et le Credo est apparu comme l'expression œcuménique et mondiale d'une foi vécue.

Pour marquer le dix-septième centenaire du Credo de Nicée en 2025, ***Théologie Chrétienne Africaine*** 2, nº 2 (septembre 2025) portera sur : « Nicée à 1700 ans : Racines et Branches dans le Christianisme Africain ». Les soumissions correspondant au champ d'application de la revue doivent être reçues avant 11 juillet 2025). La ligne éditoriale est disponible sur le site web de la revue. Les contributions peuvent être soumises en ligne ou envoyées à submissions@AfricanChristianTheology.org

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[4] Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven, Connecticut, États-Unis : Yale University Press, 2003), xvi–xvii ; notre traduction.

[5] Andrew M. Mbuvi, *African Biblical Studies: Unmasking Embedded Racism and Colonialism in Biblical Studies* (London : T&T Clark, 2023), 123.

[6] Jesse N. K. Mugambi, *African Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Nairobi : East African Educational Publishers / Heinemann Kenya, 1989; reprint edition : Nairobi, Acton Publishers, 2002), 7.

CONVITE DE ARTIGOS
Nicéia a 1700 anos: Raízes e Ramos do Cristianismo Africano

Para a maioria dos cristãos em todo o mundo, o Credo Niceno de 325 e o Credo Niceno-Constantinopolitano de 381 continuam a ser normativos. Mas muitos rejeitam as articulações nicenas da fé cristã como uma helenização corrompida do cristianismo. Os apelos à *des-helenização* do cristianismo são tão comuns como os apelos à descolonização. O historiador Robert Louis Wilken revê o valor desta antiga teologia contextual:

> A noção de que o desenvolvimento do pensamento cristão primitivo representou uma helenização do cristianismo ultrapassou a sua utilidade. . . . uma expressão mais adequada seria a cristianização do helenismo . . . O pensamento cristão, embora trabalhando em matérias de pensamento e concepções enraizadas na cultura greco-romana, transformou-as tão profundamente que, no final, surgiu algo muito novo.[7]

De forma semelhante, o biblista queniano Andrew M. Mbuvi afirma a validade da helenização histórica, tanto nos seus próprios termos como um modelo a seguir noutros contextos.[8] No entanto, a queixa de Mugambi de que o jargão trinitário niceno de 'pessoas' — e presumivelmente também de *homoousia* e *homoiousia* ! — é tão estranho aos contextos africanos que simplesmente não é útil, é justa.[9]

No entanto, desde Atanásio (c. 296 – 373) e Agostinho (354–430) até Yared o Melodista (anos 500) de Axum, na época patrística, passando pelas comunidades cristãs medievais coptas, núbias e etíopes, até aos milhões de cristãos contemporâneos, de Angola ao Zimbabué, o Credo não é um mero dogma ocidental, mas uma doxologia *africana* que surge não da especulação filosófica mas da experiência vivida de Deus em Cristo. Além disso, o Credo Niceno *não* foi criado de cima para baixo — os participantes representavam um povo de sufrimento que tinha acabado de sair de um período de intensa perseguição às mãos do Império — e o Credo surgiu como uma expressão ecuménica e global de uma fé vivida.

Para assinalar o décimo sétimo centenário do Credo Niceno em 2025, ***Teologia Cristã Africana*** 2, nº 2 (setembro de 2025) será uma número temática: "Nicéia a 1700 anos: Raízes e Ramos do Cristianismo Africano." Os trabalhos sobre este tema que se enquadrem no âmbito da revista devem ser recebidos até à 11 de julho de 2025. As normas de submissão estão disponíveis no sítio Web da revista. As submissões podem ser feitas em linha ou enviadas para o meu endereço submissions@AfricanChristianTheology.org

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[7] Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven, Connecticut, Estados Unidos,: Yale University Press, 2003), xvi–xvii; nossa tradução.

[8] Andrew M. Mbuvi, *African Biblical Studies: Unmasking Embedded Racism and Colonialism in Biblical Studies* (London: T&T Clark, 2023), 123.

[9] Jesse N. K. Mugambi, *African Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers / Heinemann Kenya, 1989; reprint edition: Nairobi, Acton Publishers, 2002), 7.

CALL FOR PAPERS

ASET (Africa Society of Evangelical Theology)

16th Annual Conference 2026

Hamartiology: Doctrine of Sin in African Christianity
6–7 March 2026
Ethiopia (venue TBA) / Online

The Africa Society of Evangelical Theology invites papers to be presented on this theme. Presenters can approach this topic from theological, biblical, historical, missiological, educational, philosophical, apologetical, practical theological and cultural perspectives. **Abstracts of approximately 300 words should be submitted by 31 July 2025** online at https://forms.gle/TG5CTDyGZ9LMrNqF7 and correspondence should be sent to Prof. David Ngaruiya at aseteditors@gmail.com. Topics might include but are not limited to:

- African views on sin's origin
- Human depravity
- Sin's transmission
- Cultural understandings of sin
- Sin and Temptation
- Sin from ATR and other religious/cultural perspectives: taboo, magic, witchcraft
- Sin in African Christian hymns
- Devil
- Flesh
- World
- Sin and punishment
- Guilt, shame, and redemption
- Corruption
- Curses
- Sin and suffering
- Sin and death
- Sin in church
- Sin and Revival
- Restitution and sin's punishment
- African Church Fathers and doctrines of sin
- Morality in African churches
- Unintended/intended sin
- Sin's evolution and morality in human history
- Social sin and systemic evil
- Degradation and destruction of human environment
- Sin in art, literature, and media
- Human construction of sin
- Sin's enslavement, deviances
- Cybercrimes/technology and human sin / ethical dilemmas in contemporary times
- Africa's natural wealth and corporate sins
- Sin's cure

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BOOK NOTE REVIEW

Knoetze, Johannes, ed. *Evangelism — Perspective from an African Context*. Wellington, South Africa: Barnabus Publishers, 2024. Pp. 323. R250.00 (paperback).

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In 2023, the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria organized a conference on the theme "Critical Discussion of Evangelism in (Southern) Africa in 2023." The book *Evangelism – Perspective from an African Context* captures the key lessons from that gathering in twenty chapters, divided into four parts:

1. Theological Perspectives on Evangelism
2. Evangelism and Other Religions, Faiths, and Worldviews
3. Evangelism as a Holistic Approach
4. Evangelism in Specific Contexts

One of the book's central arguments is that evangelism should not be reduced to a purely individual decision for Jesus. In chapter 19, **Lourens Bosman** articulates this well, arguing that true evangelism leads to following Jesus and, in turn, calls believers to Kingdom living. When evangelism is solely about personal salvation — *my* faith, *my* eternal life, *my* experiences — it risks fostering a self-centered spirituality. This individualistic approach can overshadow the broader reality of God's Kingdom on earth and the cosmic scope of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Instead, Bosman advocates for a holistic and integrated evangelism, where the church as a faith community collectively embodies the Gospel through both word and deed. In the African context, this communal perspective resonates deeply. Bosman also highlights the importance of corporate prayer for evangelism as an expression of this communal perspective.

A particularly insightful chapter is "**Evangelism in Southern African Pentecostalism**" by **Jones Mawarenga**. The professor from University of Malawi (in Zomba) explores how the Azusa Street Revival influenced early Pentecostal missionaries, such as John G. Lake, who brought the movement to South Africa. Migrant workers (*matchona*) played a crucial role in spreading Pentecostalism to countries like Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania. The Pentecostal emphasis on the second coming of Christ fueled a strong zeal for

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evangelism. Additionally, Pentecostalism's belief that *any* believer, regardless of gender, could be empowered by the Holy Spirit for evangelism led to a natural inclusion of women in ministry. Mawarenga provides three short biographies of influential Pentecostal evangelists: Laiton Kalumbule (Malawi), Nicholas Bhengu (South Africa), and Reinhard Bonnke (Lesotho). He also notes that Pentecostalism aligns well with Africa's oral culture, making it more accessible than other Christian traditions. The movement's openness to incorporating African musical instruments and its emphasis on meeting the needs of the poor further contributed to its widespread appeal. Moreover, Pentecostalism inspired various theological education initiatives with a strong evangelistic focus. Another Zomba-based scholar, **Brian Theu**, reinforces Mawarenga's points in chapter 14, arguing that Pentecostals experience *Spirit baptism* as empowerment for evangelistic ministry.

The book also includes two European perspectives. Stefan Paas and Michael Biehl offer insights from outside Africa, with Biehl's chapter on *reverse evangelism* among African migrants in Germany standing out. He observes that evangelistic strategies commonly used in Africa, such as emphasizing the Holy Spirit, often do not translate well to German society: "It is because Germans do not give space to the Spirit" (291).

However, some chapters, such as **Christo Lombaard**'s discussions on Implicit Religion and Religious Appropriation (in chapter 10), become overly philosophical, making their practical relevance to the African context unclear. More focused editing could have improved readability. Additionally, a concluding chapter summarizing the book's key lessons for evangelistic practice would have strengthened its impact.

Evangelism — Perspective from an African Context is a valuable contribution to contemporary missiological discussions, particularly for those engaged in evangelism in Africa. By emphasizing a communal and holistic approach, the book challenges the dominance of individualistic evangelism models. While some chapters could have been more practically oriented, this collection provides significant insights for theologians, church leaders, and missionaries alike.

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BOOK NOTE REVIEW

Aleshire, Daniel O. *Beyond Profession: The Next Future of Theological Education*. Theological Education Between the Times. Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Eerdmans, 2021. Pp. vii + 149. £15.99 (paperback).

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The future of theological education is a hot topic around the world. The International Council for Evangelical Theological Education's (ICETE) C-25 event will focus on what's "Next for Theological Education." The 2023 inaugural General Assembly of the Association for Christian Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA), the publisher of this journal, was dedicated to "African Theological Education: Retrospect and Prospect." Plenary addresses from anglophone and francophone perspectives can be found in *African Christian Theology* 1(1): 28-65.[1] That Daniel Aleshire's *Beyond Profession: The Next Future of Theological Education* was provided to participants at ACTEA's inaugural General Assembly suggests that it might make a contribution to the discussion about the future of theological education in Africa.

Aleshire, who served as executive director of the Association of Theological Schools, an accrediting body for graduate theological schools in Canada and the United States, from 1998 to 2017, writes about American theological education. His book "constitutes what I want to say about American theological education at the conclusion of the four decades I have been involved in it" (7). It says nothing about theological education in Africa or anywhere else outside of the United States. The "particular expression of theological education" about which Aleshire writes — "postbaccalaureate education for religious leaders . . . that offers a theological curriculum including a range of theological disciplines, is oriented to educational goals of knowledge and competence, and is characterized by educational practices of degree-granting schools and accountable to standards of quality in higher education" (16) — may not be the dominant form of theological education in Africa. ICETE and ACTEA are

[1] The assembly also included an address from a lusophone perspective. It was not published, but can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BV7cBMxqMkI

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equally concerned about the intersection of formal and informal theological formation, micro-credentials, and contextual curriculum — topics Aleshire's book does not address.

Yet, *Beyond Profession* does provide a framework for thinking about theological education that is relevant for Africa. Aleshire proposes the following goal for theological education: "the development of a wisdom of God and the ways of God, fashioned from intellectual, affective, and behavioral understandings and evidenced by spiritual and moral maturity, relational integrity, knowledge of the Scripture and tradition, and the capacity to exercise religious leadership" (82). The goal is tripartite: intellectual formation (knowledge of the Scripture and tradition), professional formation (the capacity to exercise religious leadership), and spiritual formation (spiritual and moral maturity and relational integrity).

From its earliest days, American theological education has been strong on intellectual formation. In the twentieth century, as the disciplines of practical theology developed and theological education became "a form of professional education" (36), theological schools began to attend to the development of pastoral skills. But Protestant theological education in America has yet to sufficiently address spiritual formation. Catholic theological education has done so and thus, for Aleshire, offers something of a model for Protestants. Aleshire argues that the next future for theological education in America is formational theological education that shapes the heads (intellect), hands (skills), and hearts (character) of its students.

This is a useful framework for thinking about theological education in any context. In my experience of theological education in Africa, formal theological programs tend to focus on intellectual formation. They could benefit from the inclusion of more robust programs of field education for professional development. Informal theological programs tend to focus on professional formation or skill development. They could benefit from increased teaching in Scripture and the Christian theological tradition. All programs are challenged to include spiritual formation.

Aleshire describes Titus 1:7–9 and 1 Timothy 3:2–7 as texts that "remain instructive about characteristics fundamentally important for persons who lead communities of faith" (76). These qualities are "not bound by time or culture" (77). They are as relevant and applicable in Africa as they are in the United States. Aleshire proposes "to retrieve [these] qualities . . . and then find ways to modify the goals and practices of theological education to focus on these characteristics" (139). It is an important proposal and worthy of attention in both African and international conversations about the future of theological education.

Aleshire's proposed educational practices, which he acknowledges may be "more theories of practice than strategies of practice" (110), also warrant consideration. He notes that "theological schools are derivative institutions; they do not exist for their own purposes . . . they do not have a mission apart from the religious communities they serve" (71). "A theological school's ultimate client is the communities of faith in which [its] graduates serve" (130). The next future for theological education begins with "a renewed sense of the vocation of the theological school" (112), and theological education more broadly. All conversations about theological education do well to remember that theological education is not an end in itself. Theological education must always be in service to the church and its mission. Faithful service in the church requires formational theological education. This too must be part of conversations about theological education in Africa's next future.

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BOOK NOTE REVIEW

Galadima, Bulus, and Sam George, eds. *Africans in Diaspora and Diasporas in Africa*. Carlisle, Cambria, UK: Langham Global Library, 2024. Pp. xvi + 221. £22.99 (paperback).

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The term 'new world' continues to call for redefinitions in an ever-changing world. Futuristic novels soon become stale in the face of fast-paced inventions, digitalization, fresh political and economic dimensions and analyses. Demographic reinterpretation has therefore become inevitable every once in a while. *Africans in Diaspora and Diasporas in Africa* is a volume of multifaceted paradigms on migration and the impact on global Christianity.

Migration is as old as human existence on earth and cannot be ignored in any serious academic and missionary engagement As the African continent is a focal point of this phenomenon, both outward and inward, the Global Diaspora Network of the Lausanne Movement hosted a conference in Cape Town in August 2022 to bring together a wide range of scholars, pastors, and practitioners to explore the realities, opportunities, challenges, and implications of patterns of global migration for world Christianity. The sixteen chapters in this volume resulted from that consultation.

Bulus Galadima and **Sam George**, the co-editors, have engaged extensively on this subject. Galadima works with diasporas for the Lausanne Movement and George serves as director of Global Institute at the Wheaton College Billy Graham Centre, Illinois, USA. The strength of this volume is its comprehensiveness of authorship and perspectives. Rev. Dr **T. V. Thomas**, the Chair of the Global Diaspora Network, provides an illuminating foreword that shows his thorough grasp of the issues. Africa had been the most colonised of all continents and lingering effects of its being the last to be decolonize make this book timely. In the first chapter, **Jehu J. Hanciles** demonstrates that "the link between migration and missions reminds us that the entirety of what God is doing in the world is more than we can measure" (21). The need to engage missionally with Diaspora communities is stressed throughout the book.

Chapter contributors include **Hanciles**, originally from Sierra Leone but based in the United States; Malawian missiologist **Harvey Kwiyani**, currently

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based in the United Kingdom; the Ghanaian **Moses Biney**, now based in the US; and **Tharwat Wabha**, an Egyptian who draws on the experience of his student days in the UK. **Andre Chitlango** from Mozambique jolts the reader by his disclosure that the transatlantic slave trade deposited more Africans in Brazil than anywhere else. **Yaw Perbi**, a Ghanaian who has spent much time in Canada, is able to perceive what an incredible force African diasporas can be in this unabating tide of migration.

The international and multi-ethnic contributions to this book enrich its discourse: **Godfrey Harold**, a South African of Indian descent; **Mitch Hamilton**, an American living in the Middle East who puts the floodlight on the life-threatening experiences of Sub-Saharan African migrants crossing North Africa to Europe; **Hashit Gudka** and **G. John Daniel**, both Indians, write about "Indians in East Africa and Africans in India," bringing in the experiences of study in the US and the UK, and showing how Indian diasporas in Kenya have contributed to nation-building and the great potential for more effective witness among Africans in India. These perspectives from non-Africans are important in a volume that explores the potentials for achieving maximum gospel impact among Africans in diaspora and diasporas in Africa. The Chinese scholar **Wenhui Gong** writes about the ministry of a missionary organization among the Chinese diasporas in Kenya and how the church in Kenya can partner with the organization to reach the Chinese. **Bulus Galadima**, a Nigerian residing in the US, collaborates with the Kenyan biblical scholar **Elizabeth Mburu**, who has had considerable experience of living in the US, to provide a chapter that recalls the contributions of ancient African diasporas in the global development of theological education. They then argue that the trends of migration and growing diasporas "must be taken into consideration in theological education and Christian witness" (116).

This volume is a helpful a guide to new missional horizons and terrain in a world that increasingly challenges familiar assumptions and conclusions. **Anne Abok**, a Nigerian resident in the UK, describes how endemic human trafficking is today in Africa especially among women and children. Experiences like these are traumatic, and this makes **Clene Nyiramahoro**'s chapter on "**Trauma Healing for Refugees: Building Resilience and Restoring Dignity**" especially pertinent. As a Rwandan living in Kenya, he understands his subject well. The book touches on related issues such as hospitality and the need to engage the media meaningfully. This book offers credible voices drawn from scholars, pastors, and missionaries and presents a clarion call to theological and ecclesial engagement with migration, a subject that can no longer be ignored.

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BOOK NOTE REVIEW

Maxwell, David. *Religious Entanglements: Central African Pentecostalism, the Creation of Cultural Knowledge, and the Making of the Luba Katanga*. Africa and the Diaspora: History, Politics, Culture. Madison, Wisconsin, USA: University of Wisconsin Press, 2022. Pp. xx + 352. US$80 (hardback); US$33 (paperback).

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David Maxwell's *Religious Entanglements: Central African Pentecostalism, the Creation of Cultural Knowledge, and the Making of the Luba Katanga* presents a nuanced exploration of the intricate interactions between Pentecostal missionaries and the Luba-speaking peoples in southeastern Katanga[2] during the colonial period. Published in 2022, this work examines the multifaceted relationships that shaped cultural knowledge and identity formation in the region. Maxwell's study focuses on the Congo Evangelistic Mission (CEM), established in 1915 by William Burton. Through eight chapters, the book explores how the CEM's Pentecostal framework influenced its engagement with Luba society, resulting in significant cultural exchanges. The narrative commences with an examination of Burton's role and the CEM's ecclesiology, underscoring their rejection of worldly status and emphasis on strong community interactions. The following chapters outline the historical transformations of the Luba people, the dynamics of their encounters with missionaries, and the collaborative production of knowledge that arose from these interactions. Maxwell highlights the reciprocal nature of this relationship, demonstrating how both missionaries and indigenous peoples contributed to the creation of cultural knowledge and the formation of Luba identity.

One of the book's significant strengths is its challenge to conventional

[1] Dr Ngoy is from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

[2] Editors' note: Katanga was a historical region in what is now southeastern DRC. For a time in the 1890s, it maintained independence between the colonies of Belgian Congo and Northern Rhodesia, before being incorporated into the Belgian Congo. Today the region is primarily divided between four constitutional provinces of DR Congo: Tanganyika, Haut-Lomami, Lualaba, and Haut-Katanga.

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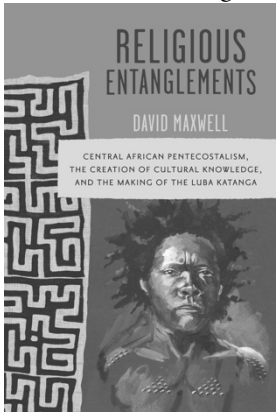
narratives which often depict Western missionaries as unilateral agents of change. Maxwell presents a more balanced perspective, showcasing the collaborative nature of knowledge production between missionaries and the Luba people. This approach provides a deeper understanding of the entangled relationships that influenced cultural and religious transformations in the region. The book's structure, with each chapter building upon the previous one, offers a comprehensive and coherent analysis of the subject matter. Maxwell's meticulous research is evident in his use of diverse sources, including missionary records, colonial documents, and indigenous accounts, which enrich the narrative and provide multiple perspectives. Furthermore, the book's focus on the role of indigenous agents in the missionary enterprise highlights the agency of African actors in shaping their own religious and cultural landscapes.

Although Maxwell's work is thorough and insightful, some readers may find the dense academic prose challenging. The detailed analysis, while comprehensive, can feel overwhelming for those who are not well-versed in the subject matter. Furthermore, the book's focus on CEM and the Luba people, while providing an in-depth case study, may limit its applicability to broader discussions of missionary activities in other regions of Africa. Some readers might also wish for more exploration of the perspectives of ordinary Luba individuals, as the narrative predominantly centres on prominent figures and overarching structures.

It was a privilege to review this book. As a native of Luba Katanga, I find it inspiring and motivating to see how my people contributed alongside the missionaries in creating knowledge about African Christianity. As a reviewer from the Luba Katanga tribe, I believe this book is not only intended for the Luba of Katanga; it highlights the global implications of Maxwell's work. This book adds to broader discussions about missionary encounters, cultural exchange, and the co-creation of religious worlds. However, while *Religious Entanglements* provides a compelling and nuanced analysis of the interactions between Pentecostal missionaries and the Luba people, the book's cover raises concerns regarding representation. The imagery used fails to accurately reflect the Luba people's historical engagement with literacy, knowledge production, and cultural agency, which Maxwell articulates so effectively in the text. Instead, the cover appears to depict the Luba as passive, primitive (a term often employed by the author to refer to the native Luba of Katanga) or illiterate, a portrayal that contradicts the book's emphasis on Indigenous agency in shaping religious



and cultural knowledge. Given that Maxwell's research highlights the dynamic intellectual exchanges between the CEM missionaries and the Luba, the cover fails to communicate this complexity visually. This disconnect between content and design is problematic, as it risks reinforcing outdated stereotypes rather than challenging them. A more representative visual choice—perhaps incorporating historical artefacts, texts, or depictions of Luba intellectual traditions—would better complement the book's rich analysis. This misalignment underscores the importance of involving local voices in decisions about representation, ensuring that visual narratives do not undermine the scholarly arguments within.

Religious Entanglements is a seminal contribution to the historiography of missions in Africa. Maxwell's nuanced analysis offers a fresh perspective on the collaborative nature of cultural and religious exchanges between missionaries and indigenous peoples. Despite its dense prose, the book provides valuable insights for scholars interested in the complexities of missionary activities, knowledge production, and identity formation in colonial Africa. It stands as a testament to the intricate web of relationships that have shaped the continent's cultural and religious landscapes.