

AFRICAN THEOLOGY AND ECLESSIOLOGY:
Defining the matrix on which to build a valid African theology

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1. INTRODUCTION

The subject matter for which I have been tasked to present before you this morning is one that I have always taken a keen interest in.

There has been to date, such a plurality of approaches taken by various African theologians. The likes of John Mbiti, Desmond Tutu, Kwame Bediako, Nyamiti, Dickson, Oduyoye, Kato and many others, who have written and published extensively on the subject of African theology. It remains that we may still fail to agree on the terminology to use let alone the crux of what we may have come to know as African theology, theology in Africa, Christian African theology or African Christian theology. I am inclined to believe that spending time trying to define by terminology will be futile and will not aid our discussion here this morning.

By the nature and agenda of this gathering I can strongly deduce, that many of you here, being either Africans or non-Africans serving in Africa, may have done some degree of study pertaining to “African Theology and ecclesiology (which we will begin address as such for the sake of this discussion). So my approach here is not to try and represent the academic research that you may already know about this topic, or may have forgotten about this topic over the years.

Instead I wish to offer a perspective on African theology and ecclesiology from two contexts.

- I have drawn general insights about African theology from researching African scholarly work, done by those who have already grappled with the idea of African theology. (Such insights, which will be limited only to that which will aid our attempt to discuss the subject matter: developing missiological methodology that is relevant for the Africa we are currently serving in today.) Perspective From this general historical

context, I'm praying, will lay down the foundation and give us an opportunity to analyse and speak to the matters arising.

- And secondly from a specific Zimbabwean context which has given me a vantage point from which I have observed through my own research the interplay between Shona and Ndebele traditional religious culture and Eurocentric theology. I believe that by analysing that interaction and its outcomes will give us an opportunity to evaluate our missiological methodology in indigenous contexts all over the continent of Africa and maybe beyond. Even though much of the cultural dynamics I will highlight may be ubiquitous in Africa Zimbabwe, will be as it were “a specific case study”

Here is the general outline I will follow as we try to frame the questions I believe we have to grapple with in a few moments.

The general view on African theology from a historical point of view

1. Defining African theology
2. History : The development of early African theologies
3. Dynamics :The conflict between methodology and African culture

The specific view on African theology from Zimbabwean religious cultural setting

1. Christian bubbles
2. Syncretism
3. Defining the matrix on which we may a solid African theology.

1. DEFINING AFRICAN THEOLOGY

African theology most commonly refers to the systematic working out of theological issues which pertain to Africans. Beginning in the 1960 s the conversation about the indigenization of Christianity or the working out of a distinct African identity within African Christianity developed into the many

branches of what one may call African theology today. Even though it is difficult to define one set of characteristics for this movement there are a few paradigms one can identify, at least about four of them. African contextualization theology, identity theology, African liberation (black) theology and African feminist Theology. These different approaches have a relevance collectively in helping to analyze as a whole what African theology is.

1.1 HISTORY

The roots of the African theology movement seem to trace back to the efforts of Henry Venn and others. In their attempt to work out relevant objectives for the 19th century missionary movement, theologians began to think seriously and call for the indigenization of the Christian faith in Africa.

Their ideas, however, were poorly reflected in the missionary endeavors all over the continent. However their efforts set forth the stage for the key questions that made African theology possible to be asked. And it is no later that the proto African, Edward Blyden of Liberia used the term “African Theology” in 1897 in expressing his vision for the future of Africa. (Bowers: 2002)

These values of men such as Venn and Blyden are given credit for the emergence of the 19th century political and cultural movement known as pan Africanism. During this era the expectations and aspirations of Africa’s emerging and educated elite scholars, and like-minded Africans in the diaspora came together in pursuit of the liberation of Africa from European dominance.

In no time the idea of eminent independence from colonial rule captured the imaginations of the continent as a whole in a great wave. And pan Africanism found its voice in two fronts, the political and cultural arena. The cultural movement found its expression through two congresses that were held in Paris in 1956 and Rome in 1959.

The Catholic Church was represented at the first congress and at the second, the congress incorporated into its agenda a subsection for African theologians. The following year in 1960 at the faculty of Catholic theology in Kinshasa. A public debate on “the validity of developing an African theology” was organized and took place. (Bowers: 2002).

Meanwhile, during the early 20th century, protestant missionary thinking was still concerned with the vision of an indigenous African church. The first Africa-wide Conference of missions held in 1929 in Le Zoute led to a greater emphasis in training African clergy. This in turn led to the evaluation and survey of protestant theological education in Africa, and because of this shift in focus. Literature like “The Christian Ministry in Africa” by scholar Bengt Sundkler was published in 1960. Sundkler focused his work beyond just the idea of clergy formation, but also what he called “Christian African Theology”.

If we look closely back through the precipitative events of the 1960s, it is most likely we will see that the conversation about African theology came from the collaborative influence of these two awakenings. One from

Catholic francophone Africa and from protestant Anglophone Africa. In the years that followed these two movements began to merge into a collective effort with papers read at consultations, articles that were published in journals and several foundational monographs, the movement began to forge towards identity and definition.

In the 1970s the conversation had expanded to multiple venues and platforms and by the 80s a succession of monographs began to appear and amongst the prominent contributors of this period and later on are names like: Kato, Nyamiti, Pobe, Dickson, Tienou, Ela, Ukpong, Oduoye, Mbiti, Bediako and many more.

1.1.1 Dynamics

It is true that African theology has some of its roots in ideas of indigenization but still this may not be its most prominent driving force. The influence of modern intellectual African thought has much a role to play in how it plays itself out.

Intellectual life in Africa for more than a century has focused itself on one formative experience, which is Africa's traumatic encounter with the west and its reaction to that encounter. Colonial rule left a void in African fundamental self-understanding. As life progressed on the continent the old guard of political leadership and intelligentsia in Africa was pushed into the sidelines by the new regiment of Africa's new elite scholars emerging during the colonial period. This generation of progressive scholars were the ones who championed the overthrow of domination by the colonial regimes and set forth a new direction in intellectual thought on the continent of Africa.

The Africa that resulted was then shaped to the needs and intentions of Africa's new educated elite. Hence Africa's post-independence intellectual life has been symptomatic of the pre occupations, commitments, anxieties and values of this new class. This new order sought above all, at a material level, African development and rapid modernization. At an ideological level they sought to affirm their own African identity and traditional heritage in order to contest western cultural.

And so the issue of African authenticity and self-reliance in combination with a comprehensive critique of the west and its role in Africa has functioned as the main dynamic of Africa's intellectual life in almost all fields of learning and expression in the latter part of the 20th century moving into the 21st century. This has been true for literature, sociology, political science, anthropology, philosophy, history and theology.

In a nutshell, in the past the current preoccupations of African theology have matched the dynamics of the larger intellectual life of Africa.

2. CHRISTIAN BUBBLES AND SMALL BAPTIST CHURCHES IN ZIMBABWE.

To aid our discussion let's take a look at a general summary of observations put together of Baptist churches in Zimbabwe and their ecclesiology. I would like to highlight what I observed and described as "Baptist Christian bubbles". Having visited a number of Baptist union churches around the country, I noticed a certain pattern, which was not distinct at first but most certainly became apparent. That the central churches (those in low density urban settings) seemed to be uniform in doctrine and the way that they did church and for the most part contained strong Baptist D.N.A. The high density suburb churches however, tended to vary and in some cases some falling into a class of their own. Meaning it is difficult to still classify them as Baptist. Our rural congregations are much worse in this regard with some congregations even displayed some Pentecostal attributes.

The reasons for this dynamic are not obvious and I cannot for sure say at the moment, but I have some theories which I cannot share as they are still just conjecture and pending verifiable research results. None the less allow me to focus on the characteristics that I observed in these divergent congregations when I attempted to analyze them collectively.

These Baptist congregations shared some similar traits in their ecclesiology. These are either small or maybe even medium sized church communities that are generally not missional in their ecclesiology. Their liturgy does not include an evident outward focus and seldom are their programs evangelistic. It's often a mystery as to how any of them found their way to church in the first place. Well it's not really, in the history of many of these type of churches there is a well-meaning Baptist missionary.

There are also some common threads in the character of leadership style in these churches. Most are mainly deacon board led congregations. These deacon boards play an eldership role sometimes with the pastor as main leader. In some cases the pastor is subordinate to the deacons, and if, or rather when they have a falling out, the pastor may be fired. If he stands his ground there may be a split in the church resulting in two smaller congregations. In many cases conflict has resulted in physical violence or was taken to the police and civil court. In a number of these churches Elders play a vestigial or ceremonial role. I discovered that there was no biblical criteria used in some cases to appoint elders except that they were very old.

In many of them it seemed evident that the pastor viewed the church as his lifelong occupation and way of sustenance hence the grooming of new leadership is often the cause of falling out or church splitting into two smaller congregations. This dynamic may replicate itself over and over again. Hence a number of small Baptist churches you will find in Zimbabwe were the result of growth by church splitting and not necessarily church planting.

The saddest reality about these small churches, and why I call them bubbles, is that they have no credible witness of Christ in the communities in which they are planted. Their church life is divorced from the social and religious concerns of the communities in which they exist. Instead they come together as members during Sunday services, funerals and weddings. Kind of like special members only clubs or spaces in the community where Christian life is experienced if one ventures inward.

These congregations keep their church life and their day to day lives separate. There is almost a common understanding that church life is for just that. Church. But when life gets real, they have to get back to the real world where real life issues that can't be solved by praying have practical solutions. The local church is for them a community to identify with on Sundays and midweek meetings, but does not interfere or influence day to day life. Case in

point I encountered a girl in Kadoma, who was a witch doctor, but a member of a Baptist church. My own grandmother was the same too, even though she was Anglican. She would go about her spirit medium duties during the week but was in church on Sunday, she would even preach.

This kind of syncretic lifestyle, I discovered is not a nuance of the 21st century. But may be a worldview handed down over a few decades, way back in the early 1900s when there were Christian villages in Zimbabwe.

There are two motivating factors which led to the creation of small Christian communities and churches as a model in Zimbabwe.

1. Was the idea that the indigenous Christians were unable to maintain a Christian lifestyle while living among their pagan brethren, hence Christian bubbles had to be created within African society where these African Christians could live.
2. The ecclesiological teaching of communion put into practice. That as the acts church had done, Christians were to live together, love one another and share their lives together.

The acceptance of Christianity by a significant proportion of Africans in colonial Zimbabwe was not achieved without a struggle. This struggle was essentially a clash of culture. Two Factors which, from the missionaries' point of view, militated most strongly against acceptance of Christianity by Africans. The institution of polygamy and the belief in ancestral spirits.

A Jesuit missionary at Empandeni said that the "Ndebele were so preoccupied with the materialistic aspects of life that it was useless to talk to them about the soul and its destiny. 'Most of them', he wrote, 'do not believe in the existence of an immortal soul. Death is for them the end of all things'. He said that it was futile to talk to them about Heaven and Hell, as their reaction invariably was, 'Who has seen Heaven? Who has seen Hell?' He added that the Ndebele had 'no intention of giving up their pagan habits and submitting to the law of God and His Church for the sake of future happiness, or to escape future

punishment which they disbelieve”. (338.43 *Viator*, '*Chishawasha after thirteen years*', *Zambesi Miss. Rec. (1906-9)*, III, (32), 68.

« *J. Loubiere*, '*Christian villages*', *Zambesi Miss. Rec. (1918-21)*, VI, (91), 370.

45 *F. Richartz*, '*Twelve years' progress at Chishawasha*', *Zambesi Miss. Rec. (1902-5)*, II, (23),

In Southern Mashonaland, the Jesuits encountered the most stubborn Resistance to Christianity among the older karanga;

. According to **O'Neil**, “these older Karanga had no high thoughts, no wish to be lifted up out of their 'degraded state', and 'absolutely no desire that their children should be educated, still less that they should embrace Christianity. The missionary therefore has no hope of doing anything with the children. The adults at Gokomere mission near Fort Victoria are even worse 'they are hopeless pagans, and nearly all the fathers have sold their daughters even small children in marriage to some heathen'

So the encounter between the early missionaries and the locals wasn't at all easy. And because their philosophy of missions was Eurocentric, their methodology was fundamentally flawed and here's why.

The solution for these early missionaries was to remove the African converts from their villages and relocate them into Christian villages. In Zimbabwe the two most prominent of these Christian settlements were chishawasha and Epworth, which up to date I have learnt that the land on which these now high density suburbs are located is still owned by the Methodist and roman catholic churches respectively.

When the missionaries took the African converts out of the villages, they failed to resolve for the villagers how the gospel could take care of the cultural issues back in the village where his kin was. If there was a ngozi avenging spirit in the family. The African converts tended to go back to the village and help

the family to take care of the problem as best they knew how, via appeasing their ancestral spirits. Then he would return to the Christian life.

This syncretic worldview seemed to be embedded in the congregations of which I speak of. For the early Shona and Ndebele converts may have come about as a result of trying to remove the African from all that was African so that he could receive the gospel. This is what Hiebert (1985:184) means when he says “the suppressing of old cultural ways without addressing them, results in these practices merely going underground”

There is a common element which surrounds the small missionary planted churches if one cares to observe keenly. Is that they are still viewed by the African convert in the same lens as did their early predecessors, as offering a Jesus that could not speak into the real issues in African culture.

The result of this paradigm that separates Christianity and African life have been devastating on Zimbabwean ecclesiology. On the other hand the influence of some strands of African theology and attempts to create an African identity within Christianity have also had adverse results for Zimbabwean Baptist churches.

For these present day Baptists, there were many factors evident and responsible for their strangeness, but by far the most insidious of them, I identified, was that at some point there was an attempt to over contextualize the gospel in such a way that African cultural traditions and religious beliefs were misrepresented and baptized to fit into Christianity, this was evident even in their theology. Which displayed traits of dualism, animism and universalism. This also seems to be the same axis on which African initiated churches in Zimbabwe operate.

And so the one of the biggest problems in the African Christian church in Zimbabwe is syncretism.

3. SYNCRETISM

Why do our congregations flock to the traditional healers and the mega church prosperity Gospel? Let me give some historical background to shed light into the reasons why the ecclesiology in prosperity churches is attractive to Zimbabweans.

(Excerpt from “Selah”)

“Understanding African culture and religion can help us to understand the way of the African church today. Without that basic understanding the things that are now shaping the way church is done in Zimbabwe will always be a mystery to us...”

In Zimbabwean traditional religion, it was not the privilege of everyone to approach the god. A medium, a witch doctor or some clan leader would do so and the rest of the people would know the will of this god through a single person. This person would perform the rites and duties needed and would have a secret higher knowledge. So, in order to get favour from this god people would come to the person of power, pay a goat or some price and the one would petition the god for the many. This medium was regarded as having great powers to perform miracles and affect the supernatural world.

A witch doctor for example was a healer and seer. You could not come to him empty handed, otherwise your petitions could not be passed on to the spirits. Naturally because, society was wrought with many woes the sacrifices kept coming, this usually meant, that whoever these go between were, they became the wealthiest and most influential people in their communities.

This is similar of course to how Israel related to God in the Old Testament, and how Christ became our last priest and go between. But I have observed another dynamic caused by this history that has not necessarily created a point of harmony between African traditional religions and the gospel, a dynamic that has also not served the purpose of preparing the

indigenous people to receive the gospel as some early African theologians may have viewed these similarities to do.

If we look at the churches in Zimbabwe that teach health, wealth and prosperity and the ones that are African initiated apostolic sects, where some of our converts have gone, we may realize that our efforts to take them out of the cultural setting into these Christian bubbles did not take care of the religious beliefs that were and are still embedded in their hearts. In some African churches the ecclesiology resembles early African animism. So the Shona traditions that may have served as a “praeparateo evangelica” as others have hoped they may, neither did so nor gave the African church a more biblical ecclesiology.

Because of this rooted worldview, Zimbabweans find it easy to follow a “prophet” or “apostle” or man of god, because it has always been the way African traditional religion approached deities, through a man of power. People find it easy to bring things to this one because again in African traditional religion if you did not bring anything for the witchdoctor your petitions could not be heard. People find it easy to idolize and even worship the one person because it was not foreign for a human to ascend into being deity, (ancestral spirit).

When one went to the witch doctor, the witchdoctor always gave them an object, a token to be used in completion of one’s deliverance or success for whatever they had been seeking. It could be water, a stone, some oil to rub, or some other sacred object. Zimbabwean Christians have made the retail of “holy” merchandise a huge success and I strongly believe not because of a shallow exegesis of James’ text. But because this sort of practice is and has been our way of reaching out to the spiritual for centuries. African religion so cunningly fused into the new age mega church, with biblical embellishments, but a dog with a new collar is still the same dog. Selah. This kind of Christianity does not look like biblical Christianity any more than the African religious

practices that predate Christianity do. And that, is syncretism in a very subtle but deadly way. Selah.

African tradition and religion has always held the man of power with great reverence. An almost worship like reverence. Christianity on the other hand gives us a great God who lowers Himself even to the point of becoming a man, suffering and dying on a shameful cross, by choice! He radically changed the world by His teaching. He taught His disciples that if they wanted to be the greatest they had to make themselves the least (Luke 9:48). He said things like this (in my own words) “you see guys the kings of the gentiles rule over and have authority over their people, but you guys, will not be like them because the greatest among you must be like the lesser, he that is chief among you must be the one serving”.

The Jesus of the bible does not look anything like the all-powerful mega church prophet. He was indeed powerful yes, but His way is nothing like ours. His government, His Kingdom was manifested very differently from the kings of His day. Physically, he was touchable, reachable. Nothing prevented Jesus from being a totally vulnerable human being, and because of this as they took Him and nailed Him on a cross.

So again, in my opinion one of the down points of the modern African theology movement, and perhaps specifically the liberation theology side of it is its shaky juxtaposition of salvation from Gods wrath which we deserve and salvation from colonialism and oppression which we didn't deserve. These two paradigms become strange bedfellows in the pursuit of presenting the gospel in Africa.

Was it because we showed Jesus films in villages and summed it up by a 5 minute prayer to salvation, without adequate biblical discipleship to follow up? Did this give Shona and Ndebele people the idea that the church, like its Jesus was good yes, but still powerless to save them from the real issues that they grapple with in life. The Baptist missionary was known for helping in other

ways like teaching about the life of Jesus, giving food aid and education, but when there was a “chidhoma or Kapondiwa” killing people in the family, everybody was generally convinced that going to the Baptist mission won't help. You have to go back to the village, where the man of power took on these spiritual evils head on until they were solved. Then you return to rev John at the Baptist mission and sing hymns from the reformation era.

By virtue of the results, it would seem my brothers, that Africanising the gospel to date, for these people in my country, has played no significant part in correcting this misconception of Jesus Christ as a powerless saviour in the African context. African theology and its theologians hold the burden of bridging the gap between culture and the gospel.

This bridge isn't one that can only be built by finding points of similarity from the African story and wedding them with the gospel to make the African feel more at home. No this bridge needs also to be built by confronting the African with the cost of following Christ and the radical nature of the gospel to upset all his worldviews and God forbid not! Not to turn the African into not a better African but a brand new Christian, who also happens to be African?

Origen, Augustin, Tertullian, Paul, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Basil the Great! What strikes us most to remember these men is not where they came from but the way Christ used them regardless of where they came from! It is my prayer that after African theologians have come and gone that even though as Africans we have had our brush with fight against the suppression of our identity, that despite that we may be known in similar regard, not only for having been African but for having been Christ like! That what strikes people when they interact with African churches is not that they are African in every regard but that they are biblical and share in the distinct and universal identity that all Baptist churches around the world are known by.

I hope that we here can begin to feel the burden and to ask these questions seriously, I also hope that whatever the prevailing trends may be in your

context, this discussion may intersect with all of us at the different points that hold up our collective burden for Baptist witness in Africa.

Many African Christians in Zimbabwe are members of a small local church, many of those churches we have planted, but many of the people in these churches are not biblically literate.

4. SYNTHESIZING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE GOSPEL AND AFRICAN CULTURE

The question then needs to be asked: if the move to radically contextualize the gospel for African communities satisfied the longing for African identity and freedom from western cultural dominance (which I agree was necessary). After all was said and done were we able to produce a robust biblical theology in Africa, one that is not only authentically African, but also truly biblical?

The achievements of African intellectual endeavor have been extraordinary since independence, in multiple fields including theology. Africans have thrown off external dominance and asserted Africa's own perspectives successfully. Yet as we move on into a new century there is still a gaping chasm between African ecclesiology and biblical theology and the change in Africa's post-independence circumstances brings with it a need for change in its intellectual requirements. The quest for authenticity and self-reliance is now proving to be an anemic driving force for the current and future needs of the African church.

Africa did indeed have to reclaim its identity and cultural heritage, and the modern mission movement has done immensely well to enculturate and contextualize, I have encountered and worked with many western missionaries who have gone above and beyond their duty to be afro sensitive, and without hesitation have immersed themselves in African culture in order to reach the many they were called to love. These men and women, and I have no doubt like

many of you here, I applaud. It is such an honor to serve alongside you and all the glory we give back to God.

But the current form of African ecclesiology tells us something we need to take heed of. That perhaps the Marxist critique of African theology was not without point. (That the agenda of African theologizing if not aided by critical reflection on how to cope with an already pervasive and ever-changing modernity within contemporary Africa, will cease to become relevant to building the future of African communities)

Can African theology surmount its own limitations and restructure for the requirements of a new era? If African theology cannot speak into the current ideological preoccupations of this modern Africa, like its euro centric predecessor failed to do, then in its current form may cease to be authentically African and relevant in that respect.

As an illustration May I refer to the development of systematic theology during the patristic era in the then Hellenized world. Patristic theologians concerned themselves with confronting the ideology of neo Platonism which was dominant in that culture. The philosophy and ideas of neo Platonism were so prevalent in the Greco roman world that many faithful theologians could not avoid interacting with them. In fact many of their conversations were framed in terms of neo Platonic beliefs.

The great ecumenical councils of the early church, such as Constantinople and Chalcedon expressed biblical beliefs with neo Platonist perspectives. Leading theologians of the day such as Clement Origen and Augustine also expressed themselves in terms that were familiar to neo Platonists. Faithful Christian theologians in the patristic period did not allow their attention to neo Platonism to supplant their basic commitment to the true gospel. They held strongly to biblical truth. The dominant religious and cultural beliefs of the day gave patristic theology its form of expression but did not deviate it from the core truths of the gospel.

As we would expect over the years this form of expression and emphasis did not remain the same. Scholastic theology then developed with forms and expressions that spoke into the dominant ideas of people like Aristotle and the philosophies of logic. The early reformers focused on a more protestant theology. All these developments were pushed forward by always re-evaluating the matrix on which to build a relevant theology for the context.

Some of my African brothers may disagree with me, largely so because Africa has a plethora of contexts that have come up as a result of many different factors and experiences. But I put it forward today. That the motivations behind the birth and growth of African theology during the 1960s, which spoke in terms of identity, selfhood, indigenization and liberation were indeed appropriate to speak into the current ideological pre occupations of the African continent in that day. But I don't believe Africa still has the same philosophical pre occupations and I don't believe that African theologizing has stayed committed to maintaining a biblical precedent in all the areas it has affected.

As for the paradigms African theology has chosen to operate on so far. I say it has neglected many key focuses. I dare say if we cannot admit that African theology to date has not summarized the full story of Africans, we are indeed guilty with the rest of the world for perpetrating the single story narrative of Africa as articulated by Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie. The story of Africa isn't only the one of colonization, struggle and the reclaiming of traditional heritage. There are other stories. Some now with more pertinent consequences to the work we have all committed to do in Africa for the kingdom of God. What are the current philosophical and ideological pre occupations of Africa today and how are they shaping how Africans do church?

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion we must visit the subject matter again. How do we develop a missiological methodology that is relevant for the Africa we are currently serving in?

If African theology is to remain relevant to the advancement of the kingdom of God in Africa, it will need to take heed to responsible criticism of its more characteristic limitations.

Those limitations can be structured into two substantive judgements

- That African theology has tended to misconstrue its foundational question
- That African theology has only then generally attended to answering only half of the question it has framed.

The defining matrix in which a valid African theology is to be constructed and against which of its achievements it should be measured. Is neither Africa's intellectual quest, nor Africa's cultural context. Nor Africa's traditional religions.

As crucial as all these may be, and as Tienou and other scholars have proposed. The nature of the enterprise requires that the defining matrix should be the present Christian community of Africa. Modern day Africa has a full range of needs and expectations and preoccupations, including quite importantly the issues that have been raised by African theology to date. But we are discovering that there are others as well, some of more considerable consequence to the future of African ecclesiology.

- Secular humanism
- Prosperity teaching
- Corruption and the fight Democracy
- Human rights
- Moral relativism

- Universalism
- Feminism
- Liberalism
- LGBT rights
- Urbanization

To the extent that African theology developed its task to correlate the gospel with African culture, or with the preoccupations of the educated African of the 1960s it has functioned from an inadequate axis. Its parameters should be constructed to encompass the life of the contemporary African Christian community as that community seeks to fulfil its calling under God within its context.

The task to synthesize the gospel with its African context was crucial indeed, but should always have been seen as half of the question pertaining to African Christian existence. As other African evangelicals and theologians have argued: it is not enough to ask how Christianity may become more authentically African, but it needs to be asked how can African Christianity may become more authentically Christian?

And I believe it is by attempting to work out this question, that we can then develop the framework from which to build a valid African theology, and attempt to design contextualized missiological methodology in a way that can produce a robust theology that is truly African, relevant and truly biblical.

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