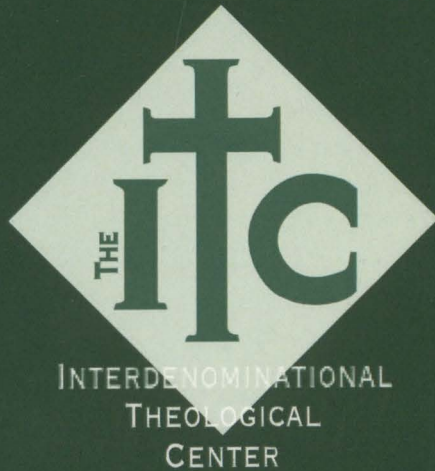


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FROM AN AFRICA PERSPECTIVE*

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CENTER

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Editorial

This Journal issue focuses on the African research perspective of the Bible. The articles are intended to provoke a debate between western and African scholars concerning the western misconception of Africa and African contribution to scholarship.

A group of scholars of the University of Botswana, Africa, have collaborated on an article entitled, "*botho/ubuntu*, Community-building and Gender Constructions in Botswana." Writing about *botho/ubuntu* ethic and spirituality, they have shown how it might build community and empower members of the community to live dignified lives. They have observed that the "... role of women is central to the practices of *botho/ubuntu* spirituality, since it is rooted in welcoming, affirming and respecting the Other." Their study has revealed that community, in most African tribal communities is comprised of the living, the divine beings and the environment. They see an interconnectedness between the people and the animal world; which explains the principle of totemism.

In the second article, Professor Musa Dube, also of the University of Botswana, address the subtle prejudice that unfolds when a westerner writes, even impartially, about Africa and its people. Under the topic: "Refusing to Read: Precious Ramotswa Meets Rahab for a Cup of Bush Tea," Dube explains why she has refused to read the popular series: *The Number 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* written by McCall Smith. In a well articulated narrative, Dube shows how when westerners write about Africa, they consciously or unconsciously include many derogatory words or phrases that are very disturbing to an African reader. Because the novels fit the western stereotypical depiction of Africa, it is not surprising they are so popular in the West but not in Africa. The bone of contention, in her own words is this, "...when African writers tell their own story, they hardly receive the same attention on the global stage of knowledge production. This article "seeks to begin detective work on Alexander McCall Smith's narratives, from a postcolonial feminist perspective."

Dr. Temba Mafico's article "The African View of the Biblical Covenant" presents another way of looking at western selective research. His main argument is that western scholars have not shown interest in investigating the possible impact

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that the Africans might have made on the Israelite religio-culture. They should now pay attention to the research that African biblical scholars are doing on linking some aspects of the Israelites' religio-culture to Africa. Focusing on the covenant idea, Mafico argues that while textual evidence corroborates that the Israelites borrowed the idea of the covenant from the Hittites, Assyrians, Babylonians and several other nations, western scholars should now include the oral tradition of the African people because of the many similarities that exist between Israelites and the African religio-cultural lives.

Dr. Mark Ellingsen in an article, "Ancient African Insights about Creation and Nature Which Relate to Modern Physics: Augustine and Dionysius of Alexandria," discusses the writings of these two early North African fathers whose insights on Creation and Nature is insightful. He points out that much attention has been directed to Augustine's input but not to Dionysius' views. Thus, his article focuses on Dionysius' who, by "implication offers very modern-sounding insights about how God created and regulates matter, gets the atoms to function as a circular choir. He speaks of God as impassable, immutable and energetic!" Ellingsen also connects Dionysius' idea of God being energy to the Big Bang Theory, "which posits that the energy from the Big Bang continues expanding." He further suggests that "Dionysius of Alexandria has much to say about Creation and nature that relates to modern Physics."

The final article, "Doctor of Ministry Education: Becoming Transformed in the Middle of the Leadership Journey" by Dr. Marsha Snulligan Haney, continues to highlight the rebooted DMin program that was introduced at ITC in the Fall 2016. It has attracted 43 students who are enthusiastic about their dissertation research projects. The students comprise three cohorts: (1) The Black Church, Social and Environmental Justice; (2) Disconnected Youth and Public Response and (3) Pastoral Professionalism and Spiritual Care.

Temba Mafico
Editor