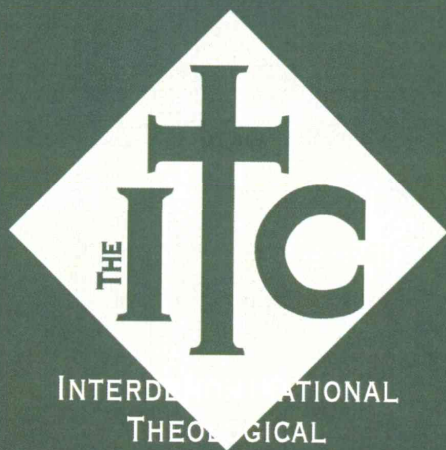


**JOURNAL OF THE
INTERDENOMINATIONAL
THEOLOGICAL CENTER**



INTERDENOMINATIONAL
THEOLOGICAL
CENTER

*Sankofa:
Inaugurating the Eighth President of the ITC*

Volume 37 Issues 1 and 2, 2011

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The Editor *JITC*
Interdenominational Theological Center
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EDITORIAL

In This Issue

The editor regrets the long time our subscribers have had to wait to receive Volume 37 of the *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center*. This volume consists of the Spring and Fall 2011 issues. Publishing of this volume was delayed due to circumstances beyond our control. Henceforth, we expect timely printing and distribution of the journal beginning with Volume 38 issues 1 and 2 due to be distributed at the end of October, 2012.

The first article of this journal is the presentation given by the Reverend Doctor Ronald Edward Peters on the occasion of his inauguration as the eighth president of the ITC, in April 2012. Peters remembers the segregation of the past and the role that the Black institutions played in the education of Blacks during those times. But as we reach 2011, it is clear that times have changed; today more than eighty-percent of all Black students receive theological education from historically White theological institutions. This drastic change has raised a myth that the twenty-first century has ushered in a “post-racial society” evidenced clearly by the election of a Black president, Mr. Barak Obama. Some then ask the question, “Have historically Black schools and colleges not outlived their usefulness?” Peters feels that, drawing on their rich legacy, these institutions still have a great deal to contribute. He therefore suggests that *Sankofa*, a mythical bird that flies forward while its head is tilted backward with an egg in its mouth, is an inspiring symbol for us. We “must look back to our heritage as we fly forward toward that spiritual and physical ecological Hope where the earth and all its inhabitants will no longer experience homelessness; no longer lose their homes to foreclosure while big global corporations that make huge profits pay no taxes.”

Speaking at one of the forums held to celebrate the inauguration of President Peters, Katie Canon suggests two components that should characterize our theological mission in the twenty-first century. First, as intellectual-faith-practitioners, we must “carve out epistemological space so that we chronicle intergenerational and multigenerational life paths to God.” Second, theological educators must grasp the innermost, nitty-gritty essentials of the canon within the canon. Theological educators can only do this if they broaden their religious imagination through paradigms of

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cross-cultural and intergenerational interactions. Moreover, educators must train the next generation of religious leaders by decoding, deciphering, and translating “that which is present and available, but is not readily assessable or recognizable.”

In line with the *Sankofa* theme, several articles focus on the African/Black perspective on theological and biblical interpretation.

Mark Ellingsen’s article examines the method of decision-making practiced by the Africans, Quakers and the Early Church, one which is not based on the Robert’s Rules of Order. The Quakers, for example, regard decision-making as a form of worship in which everyone is expected to be quiet until moved by God to speak. Therefore, Ellingsen suggests that “... like the African ancestors [also], we could trust the elders to raise issues and only interact with the Amen and dance only when the Spirit truly moves us to achieve consensus on a case” after the elders pronounce the unanimous decision; thereby concluding the lengthy decision-making process.

Dorothy Akoto’s article corroborates Ellingsen’s argument. Her thesis is that Westerners have not fully understood the power of African proverbs. Proverbs are pithy axioms embracing truths that have stood the test of time. Short and memorable, they catch people’s attention and communicate effectively. African proverbs are not dichotomized into secular or sacred categories, but have universal and timeless appeal. The Biblical Book of Proverbs communicates its wisdom in a similar way.

As he looks back, Temba Mafico gives an overview of early missionary activities in Africa and postulates reasons why these efforts achieved limited success in spreading the Gospel there in the past. One of Mafico’s main arguments is that, because the physical, tangible connection of the people to the land was so important in their religion, Africans could not fully embrace a faith such as Christianity that was based on abstract concepts. Furthermore, with regard to land, the fact that the missionary church identified itself with the colonialists who had seized their land was another crucial reason for Africans’ rejection of the missionaries and their Christian religion. It is therefore no surprise that now that the Africans have reclaimed their land from the colonialists, the church is growing much faster than in any other continent in the world.

John Horder notes that some eighty-six percent of the world’s populations adhere to some form of religion. Even the ‘non-religious’ fourteen

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percent of the people are theistic; they believe in a supreme being, but are considered non-religious because they do not adhere to any religious tradition. This leads Horder to argue that religion will not go away in spite of predictions by philosophers like Nietzsche, who stated that God was dead. Religion fills a niche in the human psyche that nothing else can satisfy. It raises the type of questions about meaning, purpose and destiny for which other human pursuits fail to provide adequate answers.

Neill Elliott is concerned with a controversy relating to the Hebrew Bible. His article explores the similarities between the Exodus narrative and the Isis–Osiris–Horus myth. He points out that, while prominent scholars (Frank Cross and others after him) have focused primarily on the Ugaritic texts as the source of the Hebrew epic that led to the biblical canon, the possibility of a link between the Israelite epic and Egyptian (African) lore, which has received less attention from scholars, should no longer be overlooked.

Wilma Bailey endeavors to clarify the biblical motif of the barren woman who later bears a prominent child. Focusing on the biblical figure of Rebekah, her study observes that given a later age for the onset of menarche in ancient times, Rebekah was probably a child when she married Isaac, a forty-year old man. This argument assumes that she was considered barren only because she was a child when Isaac married her and, as a result, could not yet conceive. *[The editor would like to add that marriage tradition in other parts of Africa allowed a man to deposit a token of the dowry to a pregnant woman proposing to marry the child should the baby be a girl. But the man, though legally married to the girl, would not be allowed sexual intercourse until she was of marriageable age. In other words, she remained barren for many years after marriage.]*

Temba L.J. Mafico
Editor

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