

Africa platform for New Testament scholars

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This is the first year that *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* publishes the special collection *Africa platform for New Testament scholars*. The aim of this special collection is to facilitate the publication of academic articles in the field of the New Testament and related literature, authored by scholars from Africa. Annually, New Testament scholars from Africa are invited to participate in the collection by submitting articles that have contextual issues as focus. This year, more than 20 articles were submitted, of which 10 were published after the peer review process.

As can be seen from the discussion of the articles that were published in this year's collection, the focus indeed was on contextual issues. Anuli Okoli and Lawrence Okwuosa, in their article 'The role of Christianity in gender issues and development in Nigeria', discuss the Christian church, gender issues and development in Nigeria. They argue that the causes and effects of gender domination in the developmental process of Nigeria are an issue that the church needs to pay particular attention to and eradicate because it goes contrary to the person of Christ, his mission and the church that evolved from his teachings, death and resurrection. Recognition of what the church already is doing in this regard is given, and the hindrances to the church's effort to tackle this anomaly are highlighted. The article finally advocates that the empowerment of women in the church should be enshrined in the life and constitution of the church as one of its priorities.

Ishanesu Gusha, in his contribution, takes a closer look at Romans 13:1–7 and its appropriation to the new dispensation of the Second Republic of Zimbabwe. He argues that the text does not directly speak about the church–state relationship but rather should be understood in its context in Paul's time. To appropriate the text to the Second Republic requires to delineate whether the governing authorities of the Second Republic are doing the will of God or whether they are terrorising people into obedience. Gusha also concludes that the text does not forbid people from resisting illegitimate and brutal governments and does not demand passive citizenship.

Louis Ndekha, in a contribution entitled 'Praising the poor and blaming the rich: A panegyric reading of Luke 6:20–49 in Malawi context', uses the Graeco-Roman panegyric, whose function was to inculcate commonly held values, as a framework for the reading of the Sermon. It argued that when read in its original context as a Graeco-Roman panegyric, the Sermon's radical stance on poverty and riches had significant implications for African and Malawian socio-economic realities. It brought into light the complicated relationships between the poor and rich both amongst Luke's original audience and the contemporary Malawian context. The panegyric reading of the Sermon also had a significant bearing on the application of the *ubuntu* philosophy in socio-economic inter-relationships in Malawi. The article posited that the socio-economic inequalities in Malawi caused by corrupt, cronyism and nepotism not only challenge the majority Christian status of the nation but also the foundations of the African values of *ubuntu*. As a panegyric, the Sermon therefore challenges Malawian Christians to rethink their values and the relationship between the rich and the poor.

Peace Ngwoke and Ezichi Ituma's contribution entitled 'Ethno-religious conflict and sustainable development in Nigeria' examines the extent to which ethno-religious conflicts have affected sustainable development in Nigeria, ascertaining the major causes of these conflicts and seeks solutions to address the root causes. The conclusion reached is that religious intolerance amongst Nigerians from different religious groups is the result of the misinterpretation of religious teachings of the leaders of terrorist groups to their followers and that ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria affect sustainable development as they lead to loss of lives and destruction of property, amongst others.

Note: Special Collection entitled Africa Platform for NT Scholars, sub-edited by Ernest van Eck (UP).

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In another contextual study, Sheila Chamburuka investigates the applicability of the Matthean Jesus' ethics in the context of peacebuilding in Zimbabwe in the period 2018–2019. The article explores the factors that led to the removal of former President Mugabe from the office, describes the events that took place from 2018 to 2019 and alleges that torture, brutality and political killings of people continue to resurface even during the leadership of the new President Emmerson Mnangagwa. Faced with these challenges, the article gives an analysis of the relevance and applicability of Jesus' ethics as presented by Matthew in a bid to bring national healing, peace and reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

In a contribution that focuses on Didache 1:4b ('if anyone takes something from you that is yours, do not ask it back'), Prince Peters argues that Christians in Nigeria wrongly interpreted this 1st-century document as advocating non-violence and non-retaliation. Using Didache 1:4b as a tool of pacifism, the church in Nigeria pacified Christians, resulting in the inability to defend Christianity in the face of extermination and annihilation. The article suggests a proactive measure in the defence of Christians' lives and property in Nigeria by asking that the principle of self-defence should be adopted. Related to this topic, in a contribution entitled 'Understanding persecution in Matthew 10:16–23 and its implication in the Nigerian church', Peters focuses on internal (*intra muros*) persecution. He argues that the internal conflict in the Jewish religious settings of Matthew was strictly between Rabbinic Jews and Messianic Jews (as predicted in Mt 10:16–23). This conflict is reflected in today's Christianity in the form of various intra-denominational attacks in Nigeria and is one of the reasons as to why rival religions do not find Christianity as a credible religion. He concludes by emphasising the need for tolerance amongst various denominational sects in Nigeria.

In the contribution 'A biblical approach to the reduction of child poverty in Anambra state, Nigeria', Uzonna Echeta grapples with the ever-increasing number of impoverished children in Nigeria because of economic recession and poor security situations that lead to displacement and death of their parents. She indicates that child poverty is multidimensional, evidenced in lack of safe drinking water, adequate nutrition, shelter, decent sanitation, medical advice or health services (immunisations) and education. The article further highlights the laudable efforts of the United Nations

International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and Anambra government to relieve child poverty, and maintains that multiple strategies can help in solving this problem. To complement these efforts, the enforcement of biblical principles about children's rights would reduce child poverty and erase wrong sociocultural notions about children.

Mary Obiorah, in her contribution, discusses (from a sub-Saharan African and Catholic background) the challenges of full participation of laity in the mission of the church. She argues that the church shares in Christ's mission of bringing all to the knowledge of God and to salvation, and that all its members are called to this intrinsic mission bequeathed to the entire church. The lay faithful form the greatest number of the members and their functions are important in this mission, but experience various challenges in participating fully in the church's mission. However, they are beset by numerous setbacks that constitute untold challenges for the church. Obiorah concludes by recommending ways of enhancing the contributions of the laity in carrying out their mission in the world.

The final contribution to the collection is that of Phillemon Chamburuka, entitled 'A socio-historical analysis of Lukan and Johannine pneumatological conceptions', which consists of a socio-historical analysis of Lukan and Johannine pneumatological traditions, focusing on the relationship between the Lukan Pentecost (Ac 2:1–13) and the so-called Johannine Pentecost (Jn 20:22). Chamburuka grapples with the reasons as to why the fourth Evangelist conception of the bestowing of the Holy Spirit (Paraclete) in John 20:22 is different from the Lukan Pentecost in Acts 2:1–13, and concludes that the Lukan and Johannine pneumatological traditions are distinct traditions that were developed to suit the interests and concerns of their respective communities, as well as the thematic interests of the third and fourth evangelists.

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Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this editorial.