An Integrated Approach to Theological Contextualization in Africa

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Introduction

Contextualization, the quest to establish localized or situational meaning of metanarratives, has seemingly given rise to new practices and ideologies in Africa. Some see it as a means of making the "gospel" significant in "foreign lands."[1] Others see it as a means of escaping from theological imposition.[2] For some, it is a means of "indigenization."[3] The consequences of the seemingly vague nature of the term "contextualization" has global effect.[4] In present-day Africa, many forms of biblical hermeneutics are done in the name of contextualization. Also, new forms of worship and styles of preaching have emerged on the pretext that they flow from theological contextualization. Further, the line separating Africanization and theological contextualization blurs the differences between them.[5] Given the promises that contextualization holds for spreading the message of Christianity on the global front, I agree with Shoki Coe and Aharon Sapsezian that "contextualization of the Gospel is a missiological necessity."[6] While agreeing to the need for contextualization, I also believe that clarity in the meaning and nature of the term can be of immense significance to glocal and intercultural Christian missions.

Though some recent studies in theology focus on the theme of theological contextualization in Africa, specific studies on

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the ethos of theological contextualization in Africa is desirable. The relevance of such study will be the offering of an avenue to describe the nature of theological contextualization in Africa. Also, such studies will provide a means by which theologians can compare manifestations of theological contextualization in Africa from pre-colonial through colonial times to post-colonial times with its biblical antecedent. This article is a historical review on theological contextualization in Africa done from the perspective of contemporary theology of missions applied to glocal and intercultural ministries.

Through the historical review approach, I argue that theological contextualization in Africa may assume different forms throughout historical periodization, but its objective must always have been the same as it was in biblical times. I begin by reviewing conceptions of theological contextualization with a focus on biblical foundations. This is followed by a description of the various ways in which theological contextualization has manifested in Africa from pre-colonial times through the twenty-first century. Next, I will outline some effects of theological contextualization in Africa and draw some implications from this study that will significantly impugn the theology of missions in Africa. I will conclude the study on the notion that while theological contextualization seeks to make the message of Christianity meaningful within the comprehensive worldview of the African milieu, with a focus on the local language and symbolism of the culture of the prospects, theological contextualization in Africa does not promote any understanding and practice of Scripture that contradict the message of Christianity in the name of the culture of recipients.

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1. Rhodian G. Munyenyembe, *Christianity and Socio-cultural Issues: The Charismatic Movement and Contextualization in Malawi* (Malawi: Mzuni Press, 2011), 40.

2. Victor I. Ezigbo, *Re-imagining African Christologies: Conversing with the Interpretations and Appropriations of Jesus in Contemporary African Theology* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 302.

3. Ken Christoph Miyamoto, *God's Mission in Asia: A Comparative and Contextual Study of This-Worldly Holiness and the Theology of Missio Dei in M. M. Thomas and C. S. Song* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2007), 13.

4. J. O. Buswell III, "Contextualization: Is it only a New Word for Indigenization," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (1978), 87.

5. Bruce Fleming, *Contextualization of Theology* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1980), 78.

6. Shoki Coe and Aharon Sapsezian, *Ministry in Context: The Third Mandate Program of the Theological Education Fund* (London: Theological Education Fund, WCC, 1972), 30.

Meaning and origin of theological contextualization

In Christian theology, the term "theological contextualization" represents the search for the meaning of the Christian message in thought, behavioral, and feeling patterns that resonate with familiar symbolisms found in the comprehensive worldview of the recipient's cultural milieu. In its original parlance, Emile Durkheim used the term "contextualization" to stress the fact that religious beliefs and practices are inseparable from the culture of a given people.[7] Later, anthropologists used the term "contextualization" as a tool to indicate the fact that culture consists of parts that are interrelated in the growth of the "culture" in focus.[8] The development of the concept of contextualization by anthropologists such as G. Linwood Barney afforded Christian missionaries the tool to spread the message of Christianity. Significantly, the term was adopted by the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches in 1971. Subsequent usage of the term in 1972 by the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches emphasized the relevance of social and economic elements of culture in comprehending the message of Christianity.

Dyrness and Kärkkäinen indicate six implications of contextualization. These are: proclamation of the Christian "faith" in familiar communication cues; a means to encourage recipients to theologize themselves; "a critical avenue" for receiving and possessing the message of Christianity by recipients; inseparable connection between "local churches" and "local theologies;" endorsement of "biblical role of culture and Christian agents;" and "true discipleship."[9] In this paper, theological contextualization means the effort to seek localized or situational understanding and application of the Christian metanarrative within the comprehensive worldview of the recipients in ways that maintain unflinching fidelity to the Christian message as deposited in the Bible.[10]

Models of theological contextualization

The crux of contextualization is the smooth communication and interaction between the message of Christianity and different cultures. While the message of Christianity refers to the self-revelation of God as far as concerns God's will, purpose, and relationship for humanity, culture describes a patterned manner by which a recognizable group of people think, behave, and feel from one

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generation to another.[11] The concept of contextualization enables the message of Christianity to be effectively communicated and accepted by individuals and groups of people whose "culture" is different from that of the communicator.[12] To aid the Christian communicator to effectively articulate the message of Christianity in different cultures, Stephen Bevans has suggested a six-fold model: the anthropological model, translation model, praxis model, synthetic model, semiotic model, and transcendental model.

The *anthropological model*, otherwise referred to as "indigenization,"[13] focuses on both the "identity" and the "experience" of recipients of the message of Christianity. It is based on two main assumptions. First, it proposes that humanity is basically valuable and good. Second, it presupposes that God's self-revelation exists in every culture. Accordingly, the task of the theologian is the discovery of the aspects of God's self-revelation woven into the very fabric of culture. Thus the theologian does not preoccupy himself or herself with bringing Christianity to different cultures. Rather, the main dilemma of the theologian is how to pay attention to elements of the culture in order to unravel God's self-revelation as incorporated in the culture of the recipients of the message of Christianity.

The *translation model* stresses the need to communicate the unchanging message of Christianity in different cultures in a manner that ensures the "dynamic or functional equivalence."[14] The basic assumption of this model is that the original authors of scriptures intended the messages to be comprehended in forms that were easily grasped by their original audiences. For this reason, any attempt to articulate the message of Christianity, contained

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7. cited in Max L. Stackhouse, *Apologia: Contextualization, Globalization, and Mission in Theological Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 111.

8. G. L. Barney, "The Challenge of Anthropology to Current Missiology," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1981): 173.

9. Op. Cit., 193–194.

10. David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 200. Cf. Musasiwa, "Contextualization," 66 and Matthew Cook, Rob Haskell, Ruth Julian, and Natee Tanchanpongs, eds., *Local Theology for the Global Church: Principles for an Evangelical Approach to Contextualization* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2010), 169.

11. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5.

12. Kyoung P. Kim, An Analysis of Dissertations on Church Growth Published During the Past Five Years (2004–2008) (Unpublished DMin. Thesis Project: Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 44.

13. Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology,* rev. and expanded (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 55.

14. Stephen B. Bevans, "Models of Contextual Theology," *Missiology: An International Review*, vol. xiii, no. 2 (1985): 190.

in the writings of these authors, ought not to be communicated in "unintelligible or misleading forms."[15] As a corollary of this assumption, practitioners of this model have proposed that the message of Christianity, often referred to as the "gospel core" or the "kernel of the gospel" is enshrouded "in a disposable, nonessential cultural husk."[16] This gospel core cannot be boxed in any particular contextualizing cue or convention dictated by particular cultures. Instead, the message of Christianity universally finds "expression" in "local and contextual forms" within the "language and culture" of any recipient.[17] Perhaps this is the reason why this model has been termed "translatability."[18] Consequently, the main task of the theologian is to find meaningful ways of expressing the Christian *supraculture* in different cultures, which do not compromise the content of the "never-changing word of God."[19]

The *praxis model* emphasizes social change as a function of the articulation of the message of Christianity within different cultures. It is rooted in the notion that God's self-revelation constitutes God's "ongoing action in history" to save humanity from corrupt human beings and institutions.[20] For Virginia Fabella, the praxis model acts on God's self-revelation as the means of altering the "future."[21] For this purpose, some refer to this model as the "liberation model."[22] In light of this, the task of the theologian is to discover, "through analysis," present manifestations of God's action within the culture and recommend such actions of God as a means of joining God through "reflective action."[23]

The *synthetic model* focuses on the quality that is achieved through interaction. It is based on the pretext that effective proclamation of the message of Christianity occurs only through dialogue or conversation between the elements of the message of Christianity with aspects of culture. In other words, the message of Christianity is "incomplete" in isolation.[24] It only becomes complete upon interaction with different cultures. For this reason, conversation between the message of Christianity and culture is not only necessary but is vital for the completion of both the message of Christianity and the culture in focus. Thus the primary task of the theologian is to make meaning out of a combination of God's self-revelation, both now and in the past, in both the

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The *semiotic model* highlights the need to be attentive to the symbolisms of a given culture. Like the synthetic model, the semiotic model is based upon the assumption that sustained conversation with the past and present contextualizing cues of a given culture will advance true articulation of the message of Christianity. By "listening to the local culture" and being attentive to the same, the message of Christianity becomes integral to the culture in focus.[25] In light of this, all that is required from the theologian is attentiveness to the contextualizing cues of the culture of recipients in an attempt to discover familiar symbolisms around which the theologian can articulate the message of Christianity.

The *transcendental model* stresses the subjective encounter with the self-revelation of God. It starts with the theologian reflecting on himself or herself as a "cultural and religious subject."[26] Through such personal reflections, the theologian is vested with genuine conception of the message of Christianity which he or she articulates in a given culture. The transcendental model is based upon two key presuppositions. First, one grasps the message of Christianity only by means of a personal encounter with God's self-revelation. This encounter is enhanced by the biblical records and endorsed by similar encounters by individuals with shared culture. Second, human beings arrive at truth or objective statements by means of "basic operations" that cannot be monopolized by one culture or historical period.[27] Accordingly, the theologian's task is to experience the self-revelation of God. Once he or she encounters God's self-revelation, the theologian can effectively communicate it to others.

Biblical foundation of theological contextualization

Though the term contextualization finds no explicit biblical antecedents, it is adequately implicit in scripture. Within the biblical narrative, the term describes the interaction between God's self-revelation and the comprehensive sphere of human life, especially those that concern humanity's relationship with self,

15. Charles. H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979), 271.

16. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 40.

17. Samuel Escobar, "The United Bible Societies and World Mission," *International Journal of Missionary Research*, vol. 30, no. 2 (2006): 78. Cf. Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture. American Society of Missiology Series*, no. 13 (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989), 53.

18. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture,* 51.

19. Fleming, *Contextualization of Theology*, 62.

20. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 192. Cf. Leslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (London: SPCK, 1986), 6.

21. Virginia Fabella, ed., *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1980), 4.

22. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology,* 78.

23. Bevans, "Models of Contextual Theology," 192.

24. Ibid., 194.

25. Ibid., 197.

26. Ibid., 198.

27. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 231–232.

others, and God.[28] It has always described humanity's application of God's self-revelation within the context of creation. Beginning in the Garden of Eden, humanity had a duty to carry out God's mandate. This divine mandate invested in humanity the right to exercise authority over all creation in God's stead (Gen 1:26-28). God's way of dealing with humanity reveals another means of theological contextualization. In God's dealing with Abraham, for example, it is observed that God called Abraham "out" of his culture, yet constantly revealed himself to Abraham in a manner that Abraham understood (Gen 12). It is needless to point out that Abraham's patterned manner of thought, behavior, and emotional expressions were already patterned by his Chaldee background. Also, God's self-revelation to Nebuchadnezzar implies theological contextualization. Nebuchadnezzar, an avowed pagan, understood the coded message contained in his forgotten-image-dream after Daniel reminded him and subsequently interpreted the meaning of his dream to him (Dan 2). These instances, along with several others in the Bible, demonstrate God's usage of contextualization cues to enhance human comprehension of God's salvific message.

The Christ-event, represented in the theological concept of incarnation, indicates another means by which the Bible implies the contextualization of God's self-revelation (John 1:14; Heb 1, 2). The concept of incarnation portrays the condescension of God to humanity's dire situation (Gal 4:4, 5). In the loathsome state of humanity, Christ demonstrated all the characteristics of the nature of humanity in its original splendor (Phil 2:5). Most importantly, the concept of incarnation speaks to the core of theological contextualization—reaching out to people of different social biographies and social historical settings with the unchanging self-revelation of God by means and expressions familiar to recipients (Rom 5:8). Christ's personal approaches to Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10) and the woman at Jacob's well (John 4) strongly attest to this. Christ's charge for global evangelization should be understood in this context (Matt 28:19–20; John 17:18–21).

The significance of theological contextualization manifested in the operations of the early Christian church. Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the believers on the Day of Pentecost, God ensured that his self-revelation will be understood by all people in their familiar languages (Acts 2:8–11). Also, the inclusion of the deacons in the management of the early church reveals another dimension of theological contextualization (Acts 6:1–7). The inclusion of non-Jews in the management of the early church portrays another important aspect of theological contextualization—recipients respond positively to God's self-revelation communicated by individuals with whom they can align in terms of familiar expressions about reality. Further, Peter's vision and interaction with Cornelius serves to reveal that using one's culture as an absolute and universal vehicle to communicate God's self-revelation to recipients of varying cultures is both ineffective and ungodly (Acts 10:34; 15:1–34).

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Apostle Paul presents one of the most realistic models of theological contextualization.[29] His style of evangelization varied from place to place and from culture to culture (Acts 16). His versatility in articulating God's self-revelation through words and actions familiar to recipients is simply breath-taking.[30] He described his model as "being all things to all people" for the sake of the gospel (1 Cor 9:19–23). However, Paul did not compromise the unchanging revelation of God (Acts 2:21, 27; 1 Cor 11:1, 23; 15:3). Rather than accommodating the gospel to recipients' culture, Paul used familiar expressions and thought patterns in the recipients' culture to proclaim the gospel.[31] In his encounter with the Athenians in the Areopagus, for example, Paul mentioned aspects of the Athenian culture to point his audience to the fact that their culture contained reminders of God, the Creator (Acts 17: 22–23). Evidently, he used quotations by some Athenian poets, Epimenides, Menander, and Aratus, to illustrate familiar thought concerning universal humanness under the Sovereign God (Acts 27:26–28). His purpose was to connect with his hearers. Once this connection was achieved, Paul presented the unfamiliar aspects of God's self-revelation to his Athenian audience (Acts 17:24, 30-31). Paul's model of theological contextualization illustrates another important aspect of the concept: the missionary does not bring Christ to recipients of varying cultures; instead, the missionaries familiarize themselves with the culture of their audience for the purpose of unveiling aspects of their culture that point to God's self-revelation. Once this link is established, the unchanging aspects of the gospel can be communicated without obstruction (2 Tim 3:14–17).

Manifestations of theological contextualization in Africa

Made up of fifty-six countries, the continent of Africa is marked

28. Richard W. Engle, "Contextualization in Missions: A Biblical and Theological Appraisal," *Grace Theological Journal*, vol. 4, no. 1 (1983): 91.

29. Arthur F. *Glasser,* with Charles. E. Van Engen, Dean S. Gilliland, and Shawn B. Redford*, Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God's Mission in the Bible (*Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 290–291.

30. Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss, and Timothy C. Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues (*Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 274–275.

31. Scott A. Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey (*Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 62.

by varying cultures and languages.[32] It is recorded that the efforts of Mark, the evangelist, in establishing the Alexandrian Church in AD 43 marked the first interaction between Christianity and Africa.[33] By the second century of the Common Era, the Alexandrian Church expanded to include the church of Maghreb.[34] This growth extended into the third century of the Common Era until it was curtailed in the third and early part of the fourth centuries of the Common Era by the persecution of Christians launched by Septimus Severus, Decius, Valerian, Diocletian, Maximus Daia, and Galarius.[35] By the time these persecutions ended, the development of African Christianity shifted from North Africa to East Africa. In East Africa, Atse Ezana made Christianity the official religion of the Aksum kingdom, after Frumentius introduced the members of the Aksum kingdom to Christianity.[36] Today Christianity is common in the continent of Africa. Though the percentage of Christians among the populace of North Africa is in the minority, there is a huge Christian presence in the Western, Eastern, Central, and Southern parts of the continent.[37]

Beginning from pre-colonial days to colonial and postcolonial and to the present day, Christianity in Africa shows the effects of several approaches of contextualization. Foreign missionaries in pre-colonial Africa (1415–1919) perceived the culture of the African as "tabula rasa."[38] From this outlook, they regarded all aspects of the African culture as evil and counter to the effective proclamation of the message of Christianity.[39] As a result, they sought to separate their converts from their socio-cultural contexts. They taught these converts new languages and cues of expression, and foreign songs (hymnologies).[40] This method colored Christianity as the religion of the foreigner.

Foreign missionaries in colonial Africa (1920–1959) crystallized the "tabula rasa" contextualizing approach. They regarded the African culture as backward and unproductive. In light of this, missionaries used evangelization as a tool to liberate the African recipient of the gospel. Christianity became a means of modernization and socio-economic vitality. This implied that converts had to renounce the indigenous lifestyle before they could be accepted

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in the Christian fold.[41] Converts were compelled to adopt new "Christian" names in addition to learning the Western missionary's way of life.[42] This approach reduced the indigenous culture almost to nothingness.[43] Achille Mbembe has observed that this approach only produced converts who joined the Christian faith for utilitarian reasons.[44] The converts saw the church as a means of satisfying their ends. Thus, they conformed to the westernized Christian lifestyle outwardly, but inwardly they retained the indigenous beliefs and practices about the Creator. This attitude has been described as *dual allegiance*.

The independence of the African continent from imperialism in the twentieth century of the Common Era marked a new era of Christian missions in Africa. African Christianity severed ties from Western cultural elements.[45] Local missionaries replaced their foreign counterparts. These local missionaries reversed the "tabula rasa" approach to evangelization.[46] They de-emphasized Western Christian chauvinism and replaced it with the view that the African culture was inherently good.[47] Some spearheaded the change of names from "Christian" names to indigenous names. In some places, local dresses replaced the Western style of dressing. The worship and belief system of Christianity in post-colonial times (1960-date) included indigenous belief system, prayer, and songs. The present need of the African was emphasized so much so that the African culture dictated those aspects of Christianity that needed to be proclaimed.

32. Chris Oxlade, *Introducing Africa* (Oxford: Raintree, 2014), 22.

33. Jeffrey D. Bingham, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Early Christian Thought* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 173.

34. Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 918.

35. Elias K. Bongmba, ed., *Routledge Companion to Christianity in Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 48.

36. Solomon A. Getahun and Wudu T. Kassu, *Culture and Customs of Ethiopia* (California: Greenwood, 2014), 6.

37. Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim, eds., *Witnessing to Christ Today* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010), 189.

38. J. P. Ociti, *African Indigenous Education* (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1973), 105.

39. Arthur M. K. Bagunywa, *Critical issues in African Education: A Case Study of Uganda* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1980), xi.

40. Vernon E. Light, *Transforming the Church in Africa: A New Contextually Relevant Discipleship Model* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2012), x.

41. Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Orbis Books, 1995), 192–193.

42. Sung K. Park, *Christian Spirituality in Africa: Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Perspectives from Kenya* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 98.

43. Uche, L. Ugwueze, *African Culture, Identity and Aesthetics: The Igbo Example* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2011), 88.

44. Timothy D. Stabell, "Rethinking Contextualization in Africa," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology,* vol. 24, no. 2 (2005): 169.

45. Jesse N. K. Mugambi, ed., *Critiques of Christianity in African Literature: With Particular Reference to the East African Context* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Limited, 1992), 145.

46. Lamin O. Sanneh, *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 157.

47. David O. Ogungbile and Akintunde E. Akinade, eds., *Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity* (Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited, 2010), xxi.

Today, Africa presents a type of Christianity that is as varied as the many cultures on the continent. In recent times, Christianity in Africa shows traces of a relativist version of Christianity, indigenized Christianity, un-mixed Christianity, syncretic Christianity, and dual allegiance. As indicated before, the relativist version of Christianity has created a form of Christianity that strictly differs from one culture and socio-geographical setting to another. *Indigenized Christianity* describes a form of Christianity in Africa in which the indigenous culture determines the meaning and implication of Christian texts and documents. In other words, the indigenous ways of perceiving and responding to reality become the lenses through which aspects of Christianity are accepted or rejected.[48] *Un-mixed Christianity* describes pockets of Christianity in Africa that retain the type of Christianity bequeathed to the African converts by the foreign missionaries through the evangelistic approach of "tabula rasa." Though this form of Christianity is located in Africa, major aspects of its belief system and practices are still regarded as strange or incompatible with the indigenous way of life.[49] In *syncretic* Christianity, adherents borrow religious resources from non-Christian religious frameworks and incorporate them in their current belief system and practices.[50] *Dual allegiance* describes the tendency of Christian converts in Africa to outwardly profess belief in Christianity but retain indigenous ways of perceiving and responding to reality inwardly.[51] These usually abandon the Christian way of life for the indigenous ways of solving religious and physical problems in the event of the inefficiency of the former method.

Rather than searching for aspects of recipients' culture that could connect them to the missionaries, as in the biblical examples, pre-colonial and colonial approaches of evangelization saw no mutual grounds for smooth interaction between recipients' cultures and the Christian culture. Post-colonial approaches to evangelism deviate from the non-compromise stance the biblical examples maintain at the instance of communicating the Christian message to foreign cultures. Unlike the biblical examples, post-colonial approaches to evangelization continue to interpret the Christian message through the lens of the African culture. This reality urgently calls for a change in approach toward consolidating Christian beliefs and practices in Africa.

An integrated approach

In consolidating genuine Christianity in Africa, I propose an

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48. Messay Kebede, *Africa's Quest for a Philosophy of Decolonization* (Amsterdam: Rodopi B. V., 2004), 45.

49. Brian P. Levack, ed., *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology: Witchcraft in the Modern World*, vol. 6 (New York: Routledge, 2001), 123.

50. Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart, eds., *Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 43.

51. Eunjin Park, *"White" Americans in "Black" Africa: Black and White American Methodist Missionaries in Liberia, 1820–1875* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 173.

The discovery of God's self-revelation within their culture, heretofore unknown, enables recipients to incorporate the Christian culture into their existing culture. Recipients maintain the new Christian lifestyle simply because they express ownership of it.

integrated approach. This approach combines Bevans' six models into a five-fold approach involving procedures flexibly and periodically emphasized according to their relevance to the effective articulation of the unchanging God's self-revelation in Africa. Respect for recipient culture must always be the starting point. Such a positive view of the culture of another, suggested by Bevans' anthropological model and semiotic model, compels a phenomenological familiarity with the culture of recipients with the view of discovering aspects of God's self-revelation deposited in the culture. Also, missionaries ought to express the content of God's self-revelation in a manner that is intelligible to recipients. This will mean that missionaries identify essential elements of God's self-revelation and communicate them in forms that can easily be grasped by recipients. If missionaries have familiarized themselves well with recipients' cultures, this procedure, suggested by Bevans' translation model, should be easy to achieve. This model dictates that the gospel core contained in scripture, hymns, and other Christian documents expressed in foreign forms and styles of expression must find indigenous expression.

Bevans' praxis model anticipates interaction between the indigenous African culture and the Christian *supraculture*. In the incorporation of God's self-revelation into indigenous culture, the missionary presents an alternative perspective on reality. Recipients gain the option of evaluating their "old" lifestyles through the lens of the "new" Christian lifestyle. Here, recipients voluntarily choose between the "old" ways and the "new" ways. Recipients' acceptance of the latter sets in focus Bevans' synthetic model. The application of this model enables recipients of God's self-revelation to accept the Christian way of life as a natural complement of the indigenous lifestyle. The discovery of God's self-revelation within their culture, heretofore unknown, enables recipients to incorporate the Christian culture into their existing culture. Recipients maintain the new Christian lifestyle simply because they express ownership of it. With this ownership, God is regarded as a constant companion of African Christians in whatever circumstance they find themselves. At the last stage of the integrated approach, African Christians are encouraged to live the Christian lifestyle by the promises of God both in the here-and-now and the here-after. Represented

by Bevans' transcendental model, African Christians pursue the Christian way of life in there here-and-now as an anticipation of the blessed hope in the here-after. At this stage, African Christians are duly equipped to nurture other converts in the Christian faith and practice.

Conclusion and implication

The integrated approach of theological contextualization offers procedures that ensure that missionaries will both introduce people to the Christian message and nurture these converts in the Christian way of life. In following this procedure, missionaries must maintain a gradual but flexible progression from one stage to the next. Since culture involves past and present social biographies of its members, interacting with people's culture needs time and relentless efforts. Failure to acknowledge this in evangelization of other cultures may lead to a *relativist* version of Christianity, *indigenized Christianity*, *un-mixed Christianity*, *syncretic Christianity*, and *dual allegiance*. The integrated approach avoids all these extremities. Its five-fold procedure will ensure that recipients of God's self-revelation own the Christian message and utilize it as normative standard for their daily life within their culture.

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