

I.D. Mothoagae

Prof. I.D. Mothoagae,
Department of Gender and
Sexuality Studies, University of
South Africa.

E-mail: mothodi@unisa.ac.za

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9644-0371>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38140/at.vi.7751>

ISSN: 1015-8758 (Print)

ISSN: 2309-9089 (Online)

Acta Theologica 2023
Supp 36:i-iii

Date received:

2 November 2023

Date published:

30 November 2023

Editorial

The articles published in this *Acta Theologica Supplementum* 36 were put through a rigorous double-blind peer-review process in accordance with the required academic standard set for this journal and that of the Department of Higher Education and Training. The authors in this *Supplementum* critically engage the topic of the transmission and reception of biblical discourse in Africa from diverse frames of reference, by applying various interpretational lenses. These hermeneutical lenses function as theoretical tools to analyse and grapple with the question of the strategies used by Western missionaries. The reception and transmission of the Bible in Africa was not an innocent enterprise. For this reason, African biblical scholars, particularly those applying their hermeneutical lenses as theoretical tools, and scholars within the social sciences have argued that the Christian corpus of literature that was translated and composed during “Christianisation”, “colonisation”, and “civilisation”, using the strategies of conversion and assimilation of the “wretched”, are by their very nature colonial products.

The guest editor identified the cover of this *Supplementum* as demonstrating how biblical discourse functioned during the transmission and reception of Western colonial Christianity. A closer analysis of the 19th-century missionary literary genre provides the missionary rhetoric of the time. How Western missionaries, performed epistemic violence and politics of erasure, in their performance of biblical discourse. As agents of the empire, missionary societies perceived the role of the West as that of being ordained, with a divine mandate to spread Western colonial Christianity and drop a cultural bomb on those whom they perceived to be heathen and descendants of Ham (the wretched)



Published by the UFS

<http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/at>

© Creative Commons

With Attribution (CC-BY)



in Fanonian terms. This cultural bomb created a double consciousness on the neophytes. The Christianisation of Black individuals resulted in the colonisation of the spaces they occupied. Furthermore, it reordered these spaces, creating a binary between the sacred and the profane, leading to a state of bireligiosity and biculturality. Kedebe (2004:36) frames the notion of self-endorsement by the West to “convert”, “civilise”, and “colonize” as the “rise of arrogance in Europe”. He argues that Europe’s arrogance in their crusade of evangelisation and conversion of the “Other”, an attitude based on the notion of evolutionism, “prevented the method of conversion to Christianity from being consonant with Christian love” (Kedebe 2004:36). Similarly, Wa Thiong’o (1981:16) argues that it was not simply conversion for its own sake, rather

[t]he biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance [of the colonised] is the cultural bomb. The effect of a bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves.

The various layers of biblical discourse functioned as technology of power, epistemic privilege, and normalisation of the Western Christian norms, informed by the regime of truth. Informed by the notion of epistemic violence, erosion, indoctrination and transmogrification of the familiar to the unfamiliar, a state of disorientation. Thus, the written word became not only a form of communication, but rather a tool of identity deconstruction and reconstruction, and morphing of the indigenous concepts into biblical concepts. Similarly, through memoirs, biographies, letters, journals, and sermons, the missionaries engaged in biblical discourse, using biblical imagery to construct a particular image of the “damnés” in the mind of the reader and listener. Such a strategy by the missionaries has led flight from the Black self. These texts functioned and continue to function as discursive acts within the Christian communities as forms of a discourse on a primary narrative imported from Europe and exported to Africa. This necessitates an enquiry into the colonialist agenda of which these texts are products, for the purposes not only of performing subversion and exposing the strategies of the importers of these texts, but also of decolonising and moving beyond their decolonisation, in order to de-link with the sole purpose of learning to unlearn, in order to relearn, moving from universality to pluriversality of knowledge. These articles engage with the notion of biblical discourse from various perspectives. As such they draw attention to the need for theological and biblical sciences to decolonise, and to perform textual and theological cleansing in order to critically engage with the social and epistemic location of the Global South.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

KEBEDE, M.

2004. *Africa's quest for a philosophy of decolonization*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

WA THIONG'O, N.

1981. *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.