Engaging Youth Worldviews in Africa: A Practical Theology in Light of John 4

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Abstract

This essay problematizes worldview engagement in Africa from a Kenyan context. The author suggests that robust youth engagement must straddle the traditional/animistic, modern, atheistic, and postmodern worldviews. The essay approaches the study using a practical theological methodology, which deepens the interplay of theory and praxis. In particular, the essay is grounded in Osmer's approach which asks four questions. The first question is the descriptive-empirical question, "what is happening," that explores the state of African youth ministry; the second question is the interpretive question, "why is this happening," which unpacks worldview issues in the lives of young people; the third question is the normative question, "what ought to be happening," and will engage Johannine Christology in John 4. The fourth question is the pragmatic question, which asks, "how can we apply this," and offers recommendations for youth ministry practice and higher education.

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1. Introduction

The state of youth ministry in Africa is showing a promising trend. There is a growing need and uptake of professional youth workers and pastors. Research in the area of youth ministry has also matched this upward trend, with Aziz, Nel, and Davis (2017) exploring the need for policy in the area of professionalizing youth work in the church. Weber (2017) has also called for the decolonization of youth ministry in Africa given its unique context. Nel (2015) has explored the need for "remixing" in light of inter-cultural realities of youth work, and Cloete (2019) has explored the nexus of technology in religious engagement of young people. In the East African context, Chiroma and Muriithi (2019) have explored how youth ministry education can be incorporated in higher education institutions, given

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the youth demographics that color the continent of Africa. Building on the work of western scholars in the area of youth work such as Root, Dean, and Yaconelli, the aforementioned scholars approach youth ministry realities from a practical theological, intercultural, and missiological perspective in light of African realities.

A neglected area of research is youth worldviews and the complexities they raise for ministry engagement. The youth demographic in Africa is broad, with African youth defined by racial and ethnic diversities, socio-economic and political tensions, as well as protracted cultural issues. On the one hand, the presence of African traditional worldviews is a critical factor in the religious expressions of African youth. On the other hand, skepticism and postmodernism are part of urban and cosmopolitan cities in Africa. This can be attributed to the reality of globalization, and the interconnection of the world through digital media that increases the flow of ideas. The rise of humanist skeptics and atheist societies in Africa has not been uncommon. Thus, practical youth ministry must increasingly respond to the questions around the interrelationship of faith and science, the uniqueness of Christ in light of world religions, and biblical-critical hermeneutics. Apologetics is thus a crucial asset of ministry to young people as well as the education of ministers within African seminaries and universities as I have argued elsewhere (Ndereba 2021a).

Worldview engagement by necessity involves the practice of apologetics. The field and practice of apologetics has been envisaged as the intellectual justification of the Christian faith in light of various worldview systems. Craig (2008, 15) defines apologetics as a branch of theology concerned with "the rational justification of truth claims of the Christian faith … primarily a theoretical discipline, though it has practical application." Frame (1994) defines apologetics as "the discipline that teaches Christians how to give a reason for their hope." Baucham (2015, 20) defines it as "knowing what we believe and why we believe it and being able to communicate that to others effectively." All these definitions take the intellectual aspect seriously. More recently, Gould (2019, 18) has proposed that a viable missionary encounter with today's post-Christian West implies the engagement of cultural apologetics. He defines cultural apologetics as the establishment of "a Christian voice, conscience and imagination in a culture so that Christianity can be viewed as true and satisfying" (Gould 2019, 21). Offering a more positive account for cultural apologetics compared to what Craig (2008, 65) suggests, Gould (2019, 21) helps us to consider the importance of cultural context in doing apologetics. However, the question of the worldview challenges that are present in the African context create a lacuna in apologetic methodology. The question of biblical models for worldview is second engagement. In other words, which biblical models are most beneficial for engaging different worldview contexts, particularly models that engage the mind, the heart, and the will in a holistic way? This essay bridges the gap by exploring the worldview challenges in the continent and offering a holistic model through exegeting the Johannine Christology emanating from John 4. This is part of what bridging the cognitive and affective aspects in youth apologetics entails (Ndereba 2021b).

2. The Worldview Challenge

The research context explores youth ministry within the African continent. Thus, an exploration of various worldviews that pose a challenge to gospel ministry must be considered. Worldviews can be described as follows:

- Assumptions or presuppositions we hold about reality (Sire 2004, 22)
- Foundational and comprehensive beliefs about the world, which are embodied in a story (Goheen and Bartholomew 2008)
- Interconnected systems of beliefs (DeWitt 2018, 7)
- Framework of thought (Chemorion 2014, 2).

Therefore, the concept of worldview implies the comprehensive beliefs that reveal what people value and that affects how they live. Within the African cultural context, several worldviews define the lives of young people.

2.1 Traditional/animistic worldview

Despite the fact that we live in the twenty-first century, our African traditional religions (ATR) and worldviews still play a critical role in African societies.[1] Although ATR can be described as theistic, they also have animistic elements which are centered around the influence of the spirit world upon ordinary life experiences (Chemorion 2014, 10). From our songs, proverbs, narratives, and lived experiences, the influence of the spirit world is central to the African. Mugambi (1989, 61) and other early African scholars seem to reject the collapsing of the African worldview into animism, based on the fact that African religions have a robust view of God. For example, Mugambi (1989, 61) references the work of John Mbiti's *Concepts of God* which studied nearly three hundred African communities and concluded the understanding of God as transcendent, immanent, omnipresent, and omnipotent. However, some scholars have critiqued this view that equates African concepts of God with biblical theism on the grounds of a skewed theological methodology—according to Han and Beyers (2017, 9), some of the early African scholars such as Mbiti began from "anthropological, phenomenological-comparative research on what the African peoples say about God," rather than biblical revelation. The point is that despite the contestations in terminology, African worldview or "religious heritage" has elements of animistic worldviews.

More recently, Turaki (2020) has offered a comprehensive biblical-theological framework for engaging concepts within ATR. Such concepts include witchcraft, good and evil, spirit beings, mystical powers, and covenants. The strength of the African worldview is that it offers a thin boundary between the visible and the invisible, which could lead to a more holistic view of life. However, the extreme and animistic view distorts the doctrine of God, hinders human responsibility, and perverts the reality of everyday life by unnecessarily placing responsibility on malevolent spirits. This is the reason African Christians have dabbled in witchcraft practices, for instance. Thus, within African Christianity, there is much that can be done in developing a biblical worldview in light of the issues raised by the animistic worldview.

A local example in practical ministry in Kenya will suffice. Recently there have been pushes within various circles to return to some traditional African rituals and practices. For instance, among the Agĩkuyu of Kenya, older men have been urged to give goats to the council of elders (*mbũri cia kĩama*) which was a ritualistic practice anchored on blood covenants.[2]

1 I am aware that there are many contentions on the definition of ATR. For instance, the Kenyan philosopher of religion Mugambi (1989, 141) differentiates between religion as used in traditional African societies and as a marker of world religions such as Christianity and Islam. The latter are rather institutions whereas religion in the African sense was intertwined with all of life. He prefers the use of the term "religious heritage" which views religion holistically within the socio-cultural makeup of a culture or society.

2 This statement arises from anecdotal evidence from a Gĩkuyu elder and practical church ministry experience among the Agĩkuyu.

In my view, such practices distort the covenantal underpinnings that are grounded in the person and work of Jesus Christ (Ndereba 2021c). In my involvement in teenage mentorship programs, I have learnt that younger men and boys are being initiated into the council of elders (*kĩama kia athuri*), with consequential cultural practices that bring them into bondage rather than the freedom of Christ. The Presbyterian Church of East Africa presented a report to its 22nd General Assembly of 2018, encouraging both a gracious response to those who were members of the council of elders as well as a repudiation of practices that weaken its Christian witness.[3]

2.2 Modern worldview

The second worldview is the modern worldview. The modern worldview is rooted in the European enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This period of transformation was founded on transitions from agrarian to industrial societies, as well as feudalism to capitalism (Chemorion 2014, 27). The modern worldview is characterized by intellectual self-examination, critical rationalization, and scientific thinking (Berger 2014, 5). It arose as a response to the premodern way of life and is represented by figures like Descartes, Newton, Locke, and Kant. Berger (2014, 5–6) deftly locates it in the rapid urbanization that has come to define the world, the advance of the Industrial Revolution (and now the fourth industrial revolution), and the existence of capitalistic systems, all of which lead to increasing individuation as people now have to make choices within a pluralistic context. Erickson (2009, 74) further observes that the heart of the ideas of modernity include:

- Foundationalism—certain foundations exist to enable us to explore knowledge.
- Knowledge—knowledge is seen as the solution to the world's problems.
- Objectivity—one can maintain objective neutrality outside the hindrances of presuppositions.
- Agency of the knower—each individual person has the agency to explore reality by themselves.
- Rationality—Reality can be reduced to logical connections between various phenomena.

Some scholars, like Mudimbe (1988, 1), viewed the colonial process in Africa as a project of modernity. In his own words, the purpose of colonialism was to "organize and transform non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs." Mudimbe explores how the conversation on development is misleading, as it is heavily based on the epistemological assumptions of the modern worldview which can be summarized as dichotomous thinking:

> [T]radition versus modern, oral versus written and printed, agrarian and customary communities versus urban and industrialized civilization, subsistence economies versus highly productive economies. (Mudimbe 1988, 4)

Thus, scholars such as Gifford (2015) have traced the modern worldview within African economics, philosophy, religion, art, culture, and language. This worldview can be seen in how the contemporary adult society in Kenya views the issues of development, fashion, and education. In apologetic engagement with the urban populations in African cities, it will be critical

3 Report to the Office of the 22nd General Assembly on the Practice of the "Mbũri Cia Kĩama," June 27, 2018.

to understand the underpinning of the modernist worldview from within a biblical worldview and framework.

2.3 Atheistic worldview

The third worldview is the atheistic worldview. Atheistic worldviews have thrived on the wings of modernity. With the tools of rationalization as well as the scientific advancements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, atheism has proposed that "God is dead." The atheistic worldview thrives on secularism and scientific materialism—namely, that reality exists without reference to a supernatural being and that matter is all that there is. Berger (2014, 133) differentiates between enlightenment atheism and militant atheism in the Chinese context: while the former is more philosophical, the latter is more political. Van Wyk (2014, 3) summarizes the various strands of atheism as follows:

- Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) viewed the idea of God as wish fulfilment and a projection of the human mind.
- Karl Marx (1818–1883) argued that religion is the opium of the people.
- Friedrich Nietzsche (1840–1900) declared triumphantly that the "metaphysical" God is dead.
- Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) considered religious faith in God an illusion and a projection of infantile desires.

Within the twenty-first century, the New Atheist Movement in the Western world has been notable. The "four horsemen"—Dennett, Dawkins, Harris, and Hitchens—have been influential figures in the movement that has crossed physical boundaries and settled within the African continent, partly due to the ubiquity of new media.[4] In the contemporary context, there are active Atheist societies in key African cities such as Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, Nairobi, and Lagos.[5] Having been engaged in apologetics ministry in the city of Nairobi, it is clear that there is a need for apologetics engagement among adherents of this growing worldview in the continent.

2.4 Postmodern Worldview

Postmodernity is presented as the fourth worldview construct. Postmodernity arose as a critique of modernity. Grenz (1996, 39) traces it to the 1979 report by Jean-Francois Lyotard to the Conseil des Universités of the government of Quebec (Canada). Grenz (1996, 40) notes its fluid nature by saying that "it defies definitive description." Whereas modernity was founded on certainty in epistemology, postmodernity maintains a subjectivist stance. In addition, Chemorion (2014, 31) observes that whereas modernity was based on intellectual thought, postmodernity is founded upon emotional feelings.

Within the global context, postmodernity has taken on two faces. The first is the contemporary concept of the "psychologized self" and the

4 Apart from a huge following on social media through their talks and lectures, their books have been influential for African Atheists. See, e.g., Daniel Dennett's (1995) *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life;* Richard Dawkins's (2006) *The God Delusion;* Sam Harris's (2004) *The End of Faith;* and the late Christopher Hitchens's (2007) *God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything.*

5 A helpful academic research project on atheism in Africa is Patrick Brian Segaren Pillay (2017), "The Emergence of Atheism in Post-colonial South Africa," PhD Thesis (UKZN). https://ukzn-dspace.ukzn.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10413/16449/Pillay_Patrick%20Brian%20Segaren_2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y. Other popular writings on the same include: Chika Oduah (2018), "Nigeria's Undercover Atheists: In Their Words," Aljazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/9/18/nigerias-undercover-atheists-in-their-words; and Kevin Muriithi (2020) "African Atheism Rising," The Gospel Coalition Africa. https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/article/african-atheism-rising/

second, the development of "critical theory" as a substantive method of engaging reality. The concept of the "psychologized self" can be understood as the result of the movement from an individualistic self, as the basis of enlightenment thought, to a conceptualization of self that is dependent on one's feelings in view of the multicultural complexities of our time (Yin 2018, 195). Trueman (2020) explores how the contemporary understanding of "the self" has affected the current understanding of hybridity in sexuality. This contemporary situation, according to Trueman (2020, 36), is founded upon modernist thought and its critiques, particularly from the works of Taylor, Rieff, and MacIntyre. Whereas the postmodern view pushes for agency of the individual leading to a fragmentation of identity (Yin 2018, 212; Blackman 2005, 8), Yin argues that it is necessary to appreciate the fabric of communality without sacrificing human diversity (Yin 2018, 212).

The second strand of postmodernity is what has been called "critical theory." Arising from the Frankfurt School of the early 1900s, it grew as a critique of the sociological theories of the day (Bronner 2013, 16). In contemporary life, this thinking has taken a deconstructive approach to "the traditional" theories underpinning conceptualizations of religion, theology, sexuality, gender, and race, among others. The core ideas of critical theory in modern parlance can be summarized as follows (Shenvi and Sawyer 2020):

- Social binary—where society is divided into "oppressor" and "oppressed" groups. Within society these include whites versus blacks, rich versus poor, heterosexuals versus LGBTIQAA+, west versus south, among others.
- Hegemonic power—contemporary critical theory advances the idea that the oppressor groups maintain their status quo largely because of the power they hold as a result of their position of authority.
- Lived experiences—oppressed groups are the only ones who are able to explain the problems they face on a day-to-day basis. Truth, especially when it has to do with contentious issues such as racism, sexism, and homophobia, can only be defined by oppressed groups.
- Social justice—the call for oppressed people to pursue liberation of social ills through affecting systemic change and calling oppressor groups to account for their past and present failures in being complicit.

Contemporary critical theory may be helpful on various fronts. First, it rightly considers the problems of systemic or structural "sins." Second, it calls us to appreciate the inherent dignity of all people because of the *imago dei*, and third, it pushes for transformative action within society. However, if viewed as a worldview that only pursues systemic change outside the wisdom of God's revelation, then its assumptions can be found to be at fault. For example, without the biblical concepts of God, creation, sin, reconciliation, and eschatology, systemic change may be unguided, unfruitful, and without any *telos*. Further, by stressing the "social binaries" within society, the posture may be more divisive rather than seeking reconciliation through the gospel of Christ. Within the Kenyan context, the following societal pushes reveal the mounting pressure of postmodern thought as it relates to sexuality, ethnicity, and human rights issues:

- Repeal 162—this was a movement beginning in 2016 that challenged the constitutional standing on gay and lesbian rights and issues. It was championed by the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC), Partnership to Inspire, Transform and Connect the HIV response (PITCH) program,

alongside the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya and the Nyanza, Rift Valley, and Western Kenya LGBTIQ Coalition.[6]

- The Reproductive Healthcare Bill 2019—sponsored by Senator Susan Kihika, this bill seeks to open up the space for normalizing sexual expression among teenagers, creating an ethical dilemma for healthcare professionals who are anti-abortionist, and encouraging family planning methodologies that seem to be at odds with biblical worldview and ethics.[7]
- Political agenda in ethnical diatribe and Kenya's 2022 elections—For a long time, politicians have used the ethnicity debate for their political agenda. The conversation round the presidential elections in 2022 are now pegged on "a few tribes versus most Kenyans" and "hustlers versus dynasty" discourse. While there is much that can be said concerning these issues, at heart, they are making use of social binaries to pit the oppressed versus oppressor groups without focusing on the core issues. Clearly, Christian engagement in the public square must offer a holistic and biblical perspective on these critical issues in the society.

Postmodernism therefore challenges the biblical worldview in the areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. Although postmodernism has a few benefits on how we conceive reality and relate with one another, by and large, our engagement with it must be biblically sensitive as well as practically wise. This paper explores the Johannine Christology of John 4 as an example of how to strike this balance, as we encounter different worldviews in our apologetic engagement. The mandate of apologetics is not only to give a reason for our hope, but also to do so with gentleness (1 Pet 3:15). Jesus's interaction with the Samaritan woman gives us a good example of how to do this.

3. The Exegesis of John 4

3.1 Introduction

This section contains an exegetical account of John 4, which is the basis of the normative question in practical theology, "what ought to happen?" Since theology is grounded in biblical revelation, healthy theology must look at Scripture. John's Gospel and the Christology that is derived from it offer a good starting place. First, the non-Christian background of the gospel offers a helpful bridge to the contemporary African context, especially within urban African cities. New Testament scholars are largely in agreement on the Greco-Roman and Hellenistic background of John's audience (Barret 1978, 27; Bruce 1983, 29; Carson 1991, 25; Köstenberger 2004, 2). Second, the evangelistic thrust of the Gospel of John commends itself to the task of youth engagement. Stott (2001, 37) observes that John's purpose from 20:30–31 is gospel-centered. The apostle John carefully records the "signs" of Jesus, to convince his readers to believe in Jesus so that they might receive eternal life. This evangelistic thrust must never be lost in apologetics engagement. Apologetics serve the purpose of reducing the intellectual walls that prevent people from beholding Jesus Christ. The engagement between Jesus and the Samaritan woman illustrates how this can be done practically. Last, the Christological emphasis that runs through the gospel commends itself as a theological goldmine. Carson (1991, 95), for instance,

6 National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission https://www.nglhrc.com/; Partnership to Inspire, Transform and Connect the HIV response https://frontlineaids.org/our-work-includes/pitch/; the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya https://www.galck.org/; the Nyanza, Rift Valley and Western Kenya LGBTIQ Coalition https://www.facebook.com/nyarwek/.
7 The Reproductive Health Bill 2019 http://kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/bills/2019/ReproductiveHealthcareBill_2019.PDF

observes how the person of Jesus Christ lies at the heart of the gospel—particularly the "I am" statements and the Christological titles "Son of Man," "Son of God," and "Lamb of God," to name some. Since Christology is at the heart of the Christian faith, exploring this theme from John's Gospel is a helpful strategy for apologetics engagement in Africa.

3.2 An analysis of John 4:1–45

3.2.1 The context

In terms of the literary context, our passage is sandwiched between John 3 and John 4:46–54 as well as John 5. John 3 retells Jesus's teaching on regeneration to Nicodemus and the central message of salvation for "the world" (3:16). It also contains John's understanding of his ministry as pointing to Jesus Christ, the one "who comes from above" (3:31), and his promise to give the Spirit "without measure" (3:34, quoting Ezek 4:11, 16). John 4:46–54 records the healing (second sign) of the official's son by Jesus because of his believing in his word, "your son will live." Clearly, as with the purpose of John's Gospel, the works (or signs) of Jesus Christ vindicate his divinity.

In terms of the historical context, the setting of the passage has to do with the interaction of Jesus with the Pharisees. In fact, the passage tells us that there is a growing hatred from the Pharisee camp and comparison with the ministry of John. There is an allusion to the importance of Samaria and the well identified as Jacob's well (4:6). Given the geographical context of Sychar (Samaria), Jesus is showing that he is not only the Jewish fulfillment of Old Testament promises but also the Messiah of the Gentile world (4:26, Carson 1991, 215).With regard to the canonical context, Jacob's well symbolizes a place of interest for the Jewish people (Gen 33:19; 48:22; Josh 24:32). Mention of the "living water" (4:10, 13–14) looks back to the Old Testament teaching that first, God's people had forsaken him, "the fountain of living waters" (Jer 2:13, 17:13), by digging their own cisterns. Second, that God will offer his people living waters so that they will never thirst again (Isa 49:10; John 4:14, 7:38; Rev 7:16), thereby pointing to the restoration that God promises in Christ through the Spirit to all nations ("whoever" or "everyone" 4:13, 14) and finally to the eternal rest at the end of time. As Bruce (1983, 104) notes, this "running water aptly illustrated the fresh and perennial supply of God's grace, as it does in these words of Jesus."

3.2.2. The structure

In analyzing the structure of biblical narratives, scholars consider rhetorical devices, characters, conflicts, narrative settings, and points of view (Resseguie 2013). Although plot analysis is a viable method of approaching narratives in literary studies, there are some ambiguities regarding the definition and function of "plot" within the narrative (Morgan 2013). Yet, since this particular narrative in John 4 occurs within a wider canonical context, much more needs to be considered. Mburu (2019, 66) has offered the four-legged stool approach in the art and science of interpretation—that is the literary context, the theological context, the historical-cultural context, as well as African parallels. The following section considers a simple plot analysis and then integrates the varied contexts of the passage.

- The *setting*: Jesus at Sychar (Samaria) near Jacob's well at noon (4:1–6).
- The *conflict*: The Samaritan woman's initial opposition to Jesus's request for a drink (4:9) "how is it that you a Jew, ask for a drink from me a woman of Samaria."

- The *rising conflict*: moves from gender and cultural conflict (4:9), to material conflict ("how will you draw the water?" 4:11), to spiritual conflict ("I have no husband" 4:16), to religious conflict ("our fathers worshipped in this mountain" 4:20).
- The *climax*: Jesus's self-revelation as the Messiah who was to come (4:26).
- The *resolution*: The woman believes and witnesses to the Samaritans "come see a man" (4:29, 39, 42).
- The *New Setting*: Cana of Galilee (4:46).

3.2.3 The theological themes

This passage shows how Jesus engages with one viewed by the wider culture as an "outsider." This is helpful for engagement with young Africans who espouse different worldviews as earlier mentioned, including African traditional/animism, modernism, atheism, and postmodernism. John 4 is a primer on the practical approach to worldview engagement. Rather than Jesus critiquing the Samaritan woman's religion, or attacking her lifestyle, Jesus engages her deep presuppositions and finally offers her himself as the Messiah of God. The following implications emerge from this passage:

- *Jesus Christ is the reconciler*—In the series of dialogues in this passage, the Samaritan woman raises various objections to Jesus's conversation. These include gender barriers (4:9—"how is it that you … [ask] me a woman of Samaria"); cultural barriers (4:9—"how is it that you a Jew ask for a drink from me … a Samaritan"); materialistic barriers (4:11—"you have nothing to draw the water with"); spiritual barriers (4:17—"I have no husband," showing her hiding of her secret lifestyle), and religious barriers (4:20—"our fathers worshipped on this mountain"). Jesus is able to move beyond these socio-cultural, religious, and spiritual barriers by emphasizing that true worship of God is in spirit and in truth (4:24) for all who look to Christ. Once the barriers are broken, the woman is able to behold the Messiah for who he is (4:26).
- *The humanity of Jesus*—This passage reveals several aspects that point to the humanity of Jesus. The passage records that Jesus was weary (4:6), he requests a drink (4:7), and starts a conversation with an unexpected individual. Although this passage also points to the deity of Jesus Christ, the humanity of Jesus is evidently what enables him to engage with the Samaritan woman. Paul elsewhere notes that the humiliation of Jesus (Phil 2:6 ff.) is foundational to the Christian faith. Here we see Jesus interacting with a sinner and an outcast before he defends his message in light of the Samaritan religion and worldview.
- *Defending the faith*—Within a contemporary global and even hospitable African culture, tolerating other beliefs that are contrary to the Christian faith has softened the task of defending the faith. In this passage, Jesus defends the core tenets of the biblical faith when he compares Samaritan and Jewish religions with the gospel message. Christian engagement in the public square will often take both the "offensive and defensive" approaches in apologetics (Taylor 2006, 13, 14), even while doing so in the spirit of love and grace.
- *The Deity of Jesus*—The issue of Christology is what separated the Jews from the Christians. The issue of Christology is what separates traditionalists and skeptics from Christian believers today. Although the Jews were expecting a messianic ruler, the Samaritans were expecting a "Taheb" modeled after Deuteronomy 18:18—a teacher like Moses who would speak the very words of God (Bailey 2008, 214). To the Greco-Romans who saw their

Caesars, like Augustus, as the *soter* (savior), Jesus was actually the true Savior of the World. "I AM" is the exact phrase that is used in the Greek Old Testament to translate the Hebrew self-revelation of God to the Israelites, particularly to Moses in the burning bush (Bailey 2008, 211). The other "I AM[s]" in John further explore the doctrine of Christology and its implication for Christian theology and life. Jesus's self-revelation as "I am he" (also in 6:35; 9:37; 20:31) is always climactic and points to the heart of the gospel (Ridderbos 1997, 165).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This essay has presented the necessity of worldview engagement for holistic ministry to Africa's critical youth demographic. While apologetics has served as a helpful tool in doing this, the African context has been absent in the scholarly conversation. This essay has highlighted that gap and also explored a biblical model by exegeting Jesus's engagement with the Samaritan woman in John 4. By utilizing Johannine Christology in this particular passage, as well as in the wider canon, this essay has explored various theological implications from the passage. Considering the worldview challenge in which Africa finds itself, and the Christology that emerges from John 4, the following are points of application for theological education and Christian ministry:

(1) *Theological education as worldview education and transformation*: Theological education is not only a familiarization of theological facts but of individual transformation. Teachers and students must view theology not merely as ordinary education but as the transformative life experience of those who think about God and live *coram deo*—before the face of God. Theological education should help students to see how worldview affects not only them, but also their congregations and communities, and offer them the tools to wisely engage their contexts.

(2) *Discipleship in the church*: Discipleship in the church has often been viewed from a programmatic lens, whereby congregants jump from one program to another. While there is a need for this, discipleship by and large is the transformation into Christlikeness in the company of other disciples. Thus, it is both a Christ-centered and lifelong interaction between followers of Jesus Christ.

(3) *Youth Ministry*: Church leaders must consider the unique cultural moment facing young people and envision ministry as pointing them to Christ while answering their deepest questions and needs. Given the worldview challenge that has been offered in this paper, youth ministry must be geared towards offering Christ as the "living water" for all who are thirsting at the cisterns of traditionalism, modernity, atheism, and postmodernity. Youth ministry must therefore incorporate a biblical worldview approach to all its forms, including catechizing, preaching, fellowshipping, and pastoral care. In the area of counseling young people, a good number of the issues are undergirded by faulty belief systems. Given the complexities of youth sexuality and pornography for example, young people must be offered Christ as the satisfaction to their deepest longings and his grace as the power to deal with sin, shame, and guilt.

(4) *Practical or Public Theology*: The voice of theologians is needed in the public square. This can happen in the form of public engagement, writing opinion articles for newspapers, or social media engagement through podcasting, vlogging (video blogging), and blogging. Rather than theologians only writing academic papers for a limited audience, our work must be a work of translation into the day-to-day realities of African life and society. That way, our theology can affect the lives of people and bring the transformation that we long for and that we have received in Christ.

Theology, therefore, must be practical in nature. This paper has shown how such a practical theological approach is necessary today, in view of the worldview challenge in contemporary Africa and the Christological center of our faith.

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