

Editorial

“If demography is destiny, then Christianity’s future lies in Africa.”¹ This was the headline of a report by the Pew Research Centre on the shift of the center of Christianity from Europe and North America to sub-Saharan Africa. Recent research also shows that the Global South is the world’s new source of Christian missionaries. Through reverse evangelism, or the reverse-mission agenda, Africans are taking the gospel to Europe and the United States, the former centers of global evangelism. Today, some African-founded churches in the Global North are even reaching out with new missions to the African homelands of their members’ parents, in what we might term *double reverse mission*.

“If demography is destiny, then Christianity’s future lies in Africa.” The question we must ask ourselves is this: What kind of Christianity? What kind of church do we want to leave as a legacy to future generations? If indeed Christianity’s future lies in Africa, how do we ensure that we remain connected to the global church? This is a question that the editors of this special edition have asked themselves repeatedly as they wrestle with the challenges of this evolving phenomenon.

Fast forward to November 2021 when we attended the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) meeting that was held in Fort Worth, Texas. In addition to our increasing concerns about the health of the church in Africa, it had become evident to us that majority world voices were not well represented in the membership of this society. This was confirmed at a

luncheon that was held (ironically) for minorities. We felt that this did not bode well for the health of the global church, whose center, as research had shown, had moved to the Global South. At the luncheon, we realized that we were faced with a unique opportunity to bring African voices into the global theological conversation that was already going on. The motivation for the African Biblical Studies (ABS) session was threefold. First, we wanted to promote evangelical African biblical scholars on the global platform. Second, we realized there was a need to encourage African biblical scholars to engage scholars from other parts of the world and become involved in the theological discourse already taking place. And third, we realized that we could contribute uniquely Africentric methods and perspectives on Scripture. After discussions with the ETS leadership, the African Biblical Studies consultation was “born.” The aim of the consultation is “to promote Africentric biblical scholarship that highlights the voices of African Old Testament and New Testament scholars who are sensitive to the African context and faithful to the Scriptures.”² We are grateful to the leadership of ETS for giving us this opportunity to share our thoughts with brothers and sisters from other parts of the world. We hope that what we started will provide a forum for scholars to impact the global church positively, as we use our scholarship for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ and his church.

¹ McClendon, David. 2017. “Sub-Saharan Africa will be home to growing shares of the world’s Christians and Muslims.” *Pew Research Centre*, April 19, 2017. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/04/19/sub-saharan-africa-will-be-home-to-growing-shares-of-the-worlds-christians-and-muslims/>.

² Evangelical Theological Society. n.d. “African Biblical Studies.” https://www.etsjets.org/puc/african_studies.

This *Conspectus* special edition is dedicated to papers presented at the launch of the ABS session. It presents four book reviews and the responses from the authors. The papers are as follows:

- Misheck Nyirenda (United Bible Societies, Zambia) reviews the book *Kony as Moses: Old Testament Texts and Motifs in the Early Years of the Lord's Resistance Army, Uganda* by Helen Nambalirwa Nkabala (Makerere University, Uganda).
- Batanayi Manyika (South African Theological Seminary [SATS], South Africa) reviews *Against Principalities and Powers: Spiritual Beings in Relation to Communal Identity and the Moral Discourse of Ephesians* by Daniel Darko (Taylor University, IN).
- Yacouba Sanon (Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de l'Alliance Chrétienne [FATEAC], Cote d'Ivoire) reviews *Reading Jeremiah in Africa: Biblical Essays in Sociopolitical Imagination* by Bungishabaku Katho (Shalom University of Bunia, DRC).
- Sofanit Abebe (Oak Hill College, UK) reviews *Favor and Gratitude: Reading Galatians in Its Greco-Roman Context* by Ferdinand Okorie (Catholic Theological Union, Chicago).

We thank the *Conspectus* Editor, Dr. Cornelia van Deventer, the Editorial Team, the Review Board, the Editorial Board, and the Seminary for inviting us to publish in this special edition. We also thank the reviewers and the authors for their insightful contributions.

It is the hope of the editors of this special edition that this showcasing of some African scholars will be a motivation for others to engage in the local and global theological conversation, enhance academia in Africa, and encourage Africentric ways of re-reading the biblical text.

In Christ,
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