

EDITOR'S NOTE

ENGAGING AFRICAN REALITIES IN THEOLOGISING

In recent times, Cross-disciplinary research seems to have taken the central stage in scientific enquiries as conversations and collaboration among researchers in various disciplines intensify and yield fruits that provide a richer understanding of 'reality'. For this reason, new ways of conducting research are continually evolving. One of the fertile grounds is the cooperation between Social Science and the Arts, specifically theology, in understanding the sacred and the secular. This has led to the move from observing reality through a single lens to a 'synoptic' approach. One such endeavour is the use of ethnographic methodologies in theologising - theology founded on the experiences of people in concrete contexts.

Ghana Journal of Theology and Religion from its inception has championed theological research and publication of innovative research that bears on the intersectionality of religion, culture and anthropology. This present volume is a collection of papers that treat the theme: 'Engaging African Realities'. Four of the articles are reports from a Nagel 2021 project dedicated to the theme. The authors engage the socio-religious realities in the film industry in Nigeria to discuss how indigenous resources, adequately employed, can serve as data for religious studies and theology.

The first paper by **Francis O. Falako** entitled *Semiotic Dimensions of Filmic Projections of African Socio-Cultural Realities in Selected Mount Zion Films* discusses audience perception of the attitude of Evangelical films to African culture in two Mount Zion films. The findings reveal convergences as well as divergences between African and Biblical worldviews, and how sometimes African realities are negatively portrayed in these films. The study recommends a balanced appreciation of African culture in producing evangelical films and videos.

Oluwatoyin Olokodana-James in her paper entitled, *Traditional Rites, Values and Taboo in African Evangelical Films* argues that traditional rites, history, totems, and taboos in many African movies are not merely alternate or auxiliary filmic elements. These often reveal

Africa's holistic culture regardless of the auteur's perspective. Examining the presentation of some identified traditional rites in Christian movies in Nigeria, the study notes that Christian movies sometimes downplay the significance of African culture. The author suggests that to promote true Christianity through films, African culture, value systems, and history should be properly engaged.

Akinnawayowa Akin-Otiko uses Mount Zion Movie Ministry (MZMM) a Christian-based movie entertainment industry in South-west Nigeria as a case to discuss religious signifiers in the entertainment infrastructure. This study explores how MZMM has affected Christian perception of sacrifices to divinities in African Indigenous religions. It draws the attention of professionals and teachers to the way religiously marked arrangements mutually facilitate and transform broader landscapes of action and relation.

In their paper entitled *The Nigerian Film Industry and Culture Relocation: A Translation of the Modes and Forms in Music and Dance Culture*, **Florence Ewomazino Nweke and Oluwatoyin Olokodana-James** examine how the Nigerian film industry, encompassing both Nollywood secular and Evangelical film divisions, has showcased the historical and contemporary culture of Nigeria, reflected cultural transitions while it preserves the socio-cultural realities of its people. The study examines how the industry navigates these transitions, maintaining its connection to diverse worldviews and global integration through music (signature tunes and soundtracks) and dance practices.

Saheed A. Ashafa, Yetunde A. Akinawo and Kabir O. Paramole argue that one way to strengthen unity in a multi-religious nation like Nigeria is for faith communities to collectively demonstrate the teachings of their scriptures on peaceful co-existence and the well-being of the people. Furthermore, they explore the viability of almsgiving as a tool for social welfare through interfaith collaboration. It argues that appropriate synergy among religious actors could lead to a successful implementation of social welfare development projects that will impact the well-being of the Nigerian populace.

The last paper by **Saheed Adewale Badmus and Rashidat Omotayo Raji** discuss women's leadership, which remains controversial in the Muslim world, by engaging the thoughts of Amina Wadud, a prominent advocate of the leadership of women in public Islamic rituals, on

the deliverance of Khutbah and the leading of Salah. Appealing to the Holy Qur'an and Hadiths, they noted the non-definite proofs of the prohibition of women leading a community or congregation of men. This lacuna forms the basis of Amina's thoughts. The authors, however, conclude by encouraging Muslims to hold onto the practices of 'Traditional Islam' and not to philosophise against Islamic practices.

We thank our contributors to this volume and all our readers. We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a fruitful New Year 2025!

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