Editorial

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In his contribution, 'Uses of Social Theory in Comparative Religious Studies: Assessing Chidester's Sociological Analysis of "Wild Religion" in Post-apartheid South Africa' Johan Strijdom starts off by identifying the theoretical perspectives Chidester used in his book. In analysing 'sociality' (the formation of inclusive or exclusionary collective identities), 'materiality' (the desire for material objects, sensory experiences and gendered bodily performances of rituals) and 'exchange' (communist or capitalist economic exchanges in rituals of gift-giving and expenditure) as three aspects of religion within local and global contexts, David Chidester has used the social theories of Durkheim, Bataille, W.E.B. du Bois, Weber, Marx-Adorno-Horkheimer, Benjamin and others. The purpose of the article is to assess what we have gained from Chidester's use of social categories such as 'sociality' and 'exchange' to analyse unconventional or 'wild' forms of religion in post-apartheid South Africa within a global context. On the basis of his sociological analysis of Freedom Park and the 2010 FIFA World Cup as forms of 'wild religion', Strijdom in conclusion argue for the legitimacy and relevance of using etic vis-à-vis emic categories to afford a critical understanding of African religious realities within a global context.

In his contribution, Samuel J. Ngale focuses his research on 'Civil Religious Dynamics in José Craveirinha's Aestheticised Nationalism'. It is about the way in which Craveirinha's aesthetic representation in *Karingana-Ua-Karingana*, *Xigubo* and *Cela 1*, helped gather a shared repertoire near the will (longings, desires, wishes) of many Mozambicans – the organic civil

religion, into a coherent political project – the instrumental civil religion. That is, how an eschatological symbolism in Craveirinha's poems created an aesthetic platform for the emergence of a Mozambican civil religion, known as Moçambicanidade. Jose Craveirinha is known to be the godfather of poets and short story writers in Mozambique, a towering figure in the literary world who, in life, dreamed of and projected an image of a just and modern southeast African nation at the end of twentieth century. In key poems of *Karingana-Ua-Karingana*, *Xigubo* and *Cela 1* he evoked old Nguni warriors and larger-than-life figures, such as Maguiguana and Mahazul; and Bantu deities and spirits, such as Jambul, and Ngungunhane the Nguni emperor. He summoned the powers of mother Africa, brother Zambezi; he also painted images of young men melting in the sounds of Xipalapala and bare chested young Negroes raising their arms to the light of sister moon and dancing the war dance of ancient tribes of the river. There are plenty of drumbeats, war songs dances in circles around the fire. He uses thus, teleological and eschatological imagery and symbolism to construct an ideal group (communal in Anderson's meaning of the word, tribal or national) identity to which, he wants to be part of, and names it Moçambique.

Auwais Rafudeen's article is titled 'The Study of Religion as Passionate Engagement: The Visionary Sensibility of Talal Asad'. For him, Asad locates the key features of the secular perspective as residing in representation, quantification and the autonomy of the individual. These features are inscribed in the way the secular, and a religious studies implicated by this secular, approaches religion. But in analysing these features, Asad uncovers alternate ways of approaching religion, ways that do not categorize religion within a broader secular project, but engage its manifestations as sense-driven, passionate, transforming forms of life. These ways, he believes, have implications for the notions of 'theory' and 'method' in religious studies.

Muhammed Haron's 'Ahmad Deedat: The Making of a Transnational Religious Figure' shows how Ahmad Deedat is one of South Africa's well known Muslim missionaries whose contributions towards Christian-Muslim relations have been duly acknowledged by friend and foe alike. Even though Deedat's method was not approved by many Muslims, his labours in doing mission in- and outside South Africa cannot be ignored. Even though Deedat might not be regarded as a champion of Christian-Muslim dialogue in South Africa he obliquely pushed Christian and Muslims in that direction. In order

to develop his argument he draws on Goolam Vahed's *Ahmad Deedat: The Man and His Mission* (Durban: IPCI, 2013). He uses this source as a platform to throw more light on Deedat as a transnational figure. Apart from providing a synoptic overview of Vahed's text's rich contents and pointing out its merits/ demerits, it veers off into looking closely at those events and individuals/ organizations that played a part in influencing Deedat. In addition it evaluates the exclusivist approach that he determinedly adopted to counter Christian mission between the 1940s and the 1990s. In the processes of doing this the essay attempts to assess Deedat's legacy.

Garth Mason's 'Is *Samsāra* Actually the Same as *Nirvāṇa*? A Critical Examination of Nāgārjuna's Provocative Understanding of Emptiness' traces a recent trend in interpreting Nāgārjuna's claim that *samsāra* is the same as *nirvāṇa*. It aims to highlight the identity of dependent origination and emptiness in Nāgārjuna's writings. Although this trend is correct in foregrounding the identity claim in this central Mahāyāna thinker's philosophy, the complexity of the claim requires that it be questioned. In this article he explores various possible ways of interpreting Nāgārjuna's claim that a broad all-encompassing understanding of emptiness leads to a clear appreciation of all things. For example, some theorists place his assertion within a textual context and others place it in a historical context, while others again explore the logic of the statement. This article examines three possible interpretative models of what Nāgārjuna could mean by the interaction between conventional and ultimate knowledge:

Model One – The Identity Model. Conventional knowledge is identical to ultimate knowledge;

Model Two – The Equivalence Model. There is an equivalent relationship between conventional knowledge and ultimate knowledge; and

Model Three – The Nihilistic Model. Both conventional and ultimate knowledge are fundamentally indiscernible and therefore devoid of meaning.

By comparing the strengths and viability of the three models, he contributes to a better understanding of Nāgārjuna's provocative claim that a clear understanding of things is attainable through apprehension of emptiness.

Further, he posits that the best possible model for understanding this claim is the equivalence model. But that does not suggest that the other two models do not offer useful ideas in the interpretation of Nāgārjuna's claim. It is, therefore, important to consider the contribution of each model.

In their 'On Top of Which Mountain does One Stand to Judge Religion? Debates from a Zimbabwean Context', Ezra Chitando, Tapiwa P. Mapuranga and Nisbert T. Taringa point out that one of the most prominent characteristics of the phenomenology of religion is that the scholar of religion must desist from judging the phenomena under study. They argue that the scholar of religion is encouraged to refrain from passing judgement on the truth or ethical status of the phenomena under investigation. Instead, the scholar must concern her/ himself with accurate descriptions. While for phenomenology of religion such a stance represents victory against reductionism of various types, it has come under fierce criticism. Critics charge that there are some situations that clearly call for judging religious phenomena. In response, phenomenologists of religion raise the fundamental question: on top of which mountain does one stand to judge religion? This article interacts with this fundamental question in a Zimbabwean context. In the first section, it outlines the phenomenological preoccupation with descriptive accuracy and adopting a non-judgemental approach to the study of religion. In the second section it highlights criticisms that have been levelled against such a stance. In the third section it describes contentious religious phenomena in the African Apostolic Church of Johane Marange in Zimbabwe. In the fourth section it identifies and critiques the different 'mountains' that scholars may climb as they seek to judge controversial religious phenomena in Zimbabwe. The article breaks new ground by testing the possibility of going beyond phenomenology with reference to contentious religious practices in Zimbabwe.

In his 'Refusing to be Co-opted? Church Organizations and Recon-ciliation in Zimbabwe with Special Reference to the Christian Alliance of Zimbabwe 2005 – 2013', Sylvester Dombo primarily focuses his research on the Christian Alliance of Zimbabwe 2005 - 2013. Zimbabwe, throughout its history, has had a culture of violence and impunity which has resulted in massive displacements of people, murder, physical and traumatic memories of the past. In all the epochs of violence, it is worth noting that some church organizations were vocal and castigated the politicians whilst others were either indifferent or had been 'co-opted' by the political parties. By 2008, the

Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) had lost its hegemony to the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and in 2009 a government of national unity was formed at the instigation of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU) after witnessing unprecedented violence against the people during the 2008 elections. When the unity government was formed in 2009, an Organ of National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration was also formed to try and bring Zimbabweans together for healing and reconciliation. In his research, he investigates why some church organizations have criticized political violence and participated in national healing and reconciliation while others are either co-opted by the political parties or have remained neutral. This article focuses on the role played by the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance (ZCA) in the national healing program prior to and after the formation of the unity government. The ZCA has been lobbying politicians to campaign peacefully, while at the same time housing and counseling the victims of political violence among other activities. The ZCA's role is being contrasted to that of Reverend Obadiah Musindo's Destiny for Africa Network (DFAN) which is pro-ZANU-PF and campaigns for Mugabe, whom the church likens to the biblical Moses. It also attacks those churches that criticize ZANU-PF's violence. The research was premised on primary data to obtain a voice from the churches concerned and the politicians on what role they see the church playing in politics and reconciliation in the country.

In her 'Peace in the Land of Upright People: Religion and Violence in Burkina Faso' Amy Hart states that despite its desperate poverty and geographical position in a region wrought with religious and political violence, Burkina Faso has avoided displays of religious intolerance. Instead, she argues, it has upheld a reputation as an extremely open, welcoming and tolerant society, which has been maintained despite a lack of religious homogeneity in the country. In her she explains how Burkina Faso has remained regionally unique in its approach towards religion by studying the country's social, cultural/ ethnic, and religious climate, as well as the present socio-religious interrelations within the family and community settings. After looking at several hypotheses, some unique factors seem determinant, including the geographical diversity of ethnic and religious groups across Burkina Faso, leading to a high contact setting between groups of various beliefs and ethnicities. This diversity, combined with the interdependent lifestyle lived by the majority of Burkina Faso's citizens, have led to a peace-

fostering emphasis on community harmony over doctrinal certainty.

Departing from the view that 'We are the same but different', Meron Zeleke focused his research on 'Accounts of Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Adherents of Islamic Sufi Saints'. He argues that the construction of ethnic and religious identity is often described in academic works as being closely linked to the notion of othering (Jensen 2011). He also notes that Lister (2004:102) points to the signification of othering in identity formation mentioning, '… othering helps to define the self and to affirm identity'. Jensen (2009) in a similar manner describes that the notion is a quintessential one for understanding the power structures as well as the historic symbolic meanings of conditioning identity formation with variation in agency of different actors. In the political environment of post-1991 Ethiopia where ethnic federalism has made ethnicity the main organizing principle in forming, framing, and contesting different identity and resource claims in the country, the growing ethno-religious tensions in different parts of the country are often described as disputes arising from differences (Asnake 2013). Differences in religious ideologies, in political opinions, clash of interest in claims of political entitlements, in rights questions and more factors are identified as being the catalyst for inter-religious and inter group disputes in the country (IPSS 2012). On the other hand, faith institutions in some parts of Ethiopia are hosting people across ethnic and religious boundaries, a practice that at least contradicts the dominant thesis of the escalation of social bordering and conflictual relations in the country. Since the examining of the gap between local realities and macro-level representation by political actors and scholars is beyond the scope of this article, he rather explores and explains the social construction of religious boundary in contemporary Ethiopia by addressing how religious otherness is claimed or constructed at the local level. The article presents the emic accounts on defining and redefining religious boundaries and analysing the local perceptions and definitions of what a religious boundary is and what crossing the boundary entails.

Midas H. Chawane's article is titled 'The Rastafarian Movement in South Africa: A Religion or Way of Life?' He departs from the premise that Rastafarians object to the classification of their movement as a religion. Their objection is based on the belief that the movement is more a way of life than a religion. This is in spite of the fact that the movement is grounded on religious principles which makes non-Rastafarians to view it as a religion. In

order to understand the nature of the movement, it is important to define the concept religion in general and as understood by Rastafarians themselves he argues. By looking at some religious movements, and how the Rastafarian movement is both similar and different to them, this article argues that it is its religious character that makes the movement sustainable. Thus, this article looks at the principles underlying other religious movements such as Judaism, Christianity, African Traditional Religion, Black/ African, and Liberation Theologies against those of the Rastafarian movement.

In her 'Mapping an Interoceanic Landscape: Dube and Gandhi in Early 20th Century Durban, South Africa' Rachel Matteau Matsha focuses her research on Dube and Gandhi. In her argument, she departs from the view that the African and Indian continents share a long history of connection via the Indian Ocean. Traders, missionaries, settlers, migrants, slaves, explorers, to name but a few travellers, navigated across the region and each in their own ways left their trace in history. This intercontinental and regional population movement intensified with the advent of industrialization, and technological means easing interoceanic traveling. The activities taking place in the Indian Ocean public sphere inevitably created intellectual circuits in their midst, by the same token highlighting the presence and importance of non-western sources of globalization (Hofmeyr 2007: 3). From a South African perspective, the idea of non-western globalization emanating from the southernmost tip of Africa involves not only the entire continent and the broader Indian Ocean region, but also the Atlantic Ocean, and more precisely the Black Atlantic. This is discussed in this article. Due to its geographical position, located between two oceans but also simultaneously situated in two oceanic regions, South Africa can be seen as a site where alternative discourses emerged, leading to the creation of 'alternative modernities'.

The article by Jonathan Kangwa and Sarojini Nadar focuses on ecological Justice and is called 'Demythologising for Ecological Justice: An African Eco-Feminist Reading of Genesis 1 -3'. Feminist scholars have shown that a persuasive and instrumental means of creating and maintaining gender hierarchy among communities who regard the bible as a sacred text is to draw on myths of origin imbuing it with patriarchal symbolic language. Eco-feminist scholars are also increasingly making the link between this patriarchal language and the domination of the earth, and the subsequent destruction of the earth's resources. This article proposes to theoretically and methodologically advance the eco-feminist shifts in biblical scholarship by

adding an African feminist dimension to the hermeneutic. These shifts are illustrated through an African eco-feminist reading of Genesis 1-3 by combining a key analytical category of demythologization proposed by Rudolf Bultmann. The article suggests that Genesis 1-3 consists of four different myths of origin knitted together by the narrator, and reads these four myths through the lenses of African creation myths and beliefs, thereby suggesting a more ecologically and gender just hermeneutic.

In his 'The New Apostolic Reformation and Christian Zionism', Irvin Chetty focuses his research on one of the new religious movements in South Africa, viz. the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR). Within the NAR, the primacy of the apostle should be noted, who also functions in the role of a teacher, by 'accurately' decoding God's divine blueprint for this season.The NAR of the South often align themselves in vintage 'Berean' style as people who 'searched the scriptures daily' (Acts 17: 11). Their actual practice reveals the important role of the charismatic founder/ leader in determining the interpretation. This role is evident in the perpetuation of the Pentecostal/ Charismatic support of Christian Zionism. Christian Zionism grounds itself on the interpretation that God has an on-going special relationship with the Jewish people apart from the Church. Jews have a divine right to possess the land of Palestine. According to Christian Zionists, however, this divine right extends beyond the promise to Abraham and becomes a command to every Christian believer to unreservedly support the modern nation-state of Israel. For his research, he conducted a pilot study in 2012 to explore, inter alia, NAR views on the Kairos Palestine document. This study attempts to build on that research. A qualitative methodology was chosen with the use of a focus group of key leaders of a NAR formation.While this study did not receive a decisive response from these NAR adherents, they had begun to study the Bible on this issue, in earnest. This, in itself, is a promising starting point. As one of its stated NAR mandates, is to influence the governmental/ political mountain, perhaps the NAR of the South may yet make a more biblical grounded response to Christian Zionism.

In her contribution, 'Method and Theory in Religious Studies: Retrospect and Future Prospects', Morny Joy says that there is a distinct possibility that, in the twenty-first century, Religious Studies as a discipline could come into its own. Its multidisciplinary orientation, if handled with due critical awareness as to its own former grandiose ambitions and present

entanglements, could provide insight into the various problems that beset contemporary existence. Religious Studies has been involved in a number of internal debates that have sapped its energies and prevented it from advancing theoretically in ways that would help it address these problems. In her article she surveys some of the developments that have taken place in other disciplines that could be of benefit in helping Religious Studies take its place as a discipline that is relevant for the twenty-first century.

This is followed by a response from Danie Goosen and a response by Morny Joy.

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