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# Contextualized Theological Education in Transformative Evangelism

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## Abstract

Theological Education, since Africans began to engage with it in the mid-20th Century, has been a major movement in the religious consciousness and reality of Africans. John S. Mbiti once lamented how he couldn't acquire Theological Education in the mid-1950s; albeit, by the 1980s, this narrative changed to the extent that it became possible for [anyone interested] to start and complete their theological training at any level (Diploma to Doctoral Degrees) in Africa. The scene is much different today – Africa has over the years produced erudite biblical scholars, theologians, and Christian philosophers that have contributed [and are contributing] immensely in both academic and ecclesial contexts. Today, there are different [and even more critical] issues in the African Theological Educational scene than there have been in the early days. In this light, this paper discusses Contextualized Theological Education in Transformative Evangelism and argues that contextualized Theological Education is concerned with local problems that press hard on Africans regarding their engagements in the social niches. Through historical methodology, the paper explores the concept of Theological Education as a general Christian phenomenon, surveys the early church's engagement with Theological Education, then narrows down to the history of Theological Education in Africa. These, the paper contends, are foundational to discussing a contextualized Theological Education in Africa. Consequently, it demonstrates how Theological Education connects to evangelism, and how evangelism fits in a Christian philosophy of transformation through knowledge – the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The paper drives home its point by proposing; "A

Transformative Theology" – an idea that is rooted in the knowledge of Christ in Theological Education, which causes transformation as an act of God's children expanding the frontiers of God's kingdom on earth.

## Introduction

Theological Education is important to the church. Beyond being a scheme – a system, for raising men (and women) who would take over leadership roles in the church, and ensure the sustenance of the institution – the church, Theological Education is supposedly, the ideal teaching ministry of the church. This implies that the church should ensure that every member becomes a theological student. By being a theological student, what is being communicated is that each church member, should be able to effectively and clearly, articulate her/his faith anywhere, and anytime. The statement being a theological student, should not be understood stringently as referring only to those who attend seminaries and divinity schools in order to secure theological knowledge; but the emphasis is, as stated initially, for each Christian to truly know their faith. This faith which has a long history should be understood as both spiritually, and intellectually relevant to the life of the community of faith – the body of believers. Without such an approach to faith, the church becomes numb and irrelevant to everyday life; both to church members, and also to the world, to whom the church is called to be salt and light (cf. Matt. 5:12-16). When only a group of experts are able to adequately communicate, interact with, engage, and converse with the world, it implies that only these few are called to be true followers of Jesus Christ. Being Jesus' followers entails intentional representation, and representation means one is putting forth an idea, an agenda. To put forth such, there must be a knowing of it, to begin with.

The current paper seeks to discuss Theological Education and how this, in its contextualized state, is a catalyst for evangelism especially the type that transforms. Also, the expression "Theological Education" is quite broad and should be closely defined, at least for the sake of how the current paper uses it. Theological simply refers to any discourse that makes reference to God, and any form of religious talk. The expression does not necessarily determine which God, or to put it in another way, which religion. Even if it can be established that some religions do not have theological education as they do not have

institutions and colleges for teaching/debating their religious ideas, this probably being because they do not discuss theology the same way others do, on an ideological basis, they have one form of theological education or the other. This could be discovered in their worship, and their traditions of passing down -lly refers to Christianity, that is, Theological Education within a Christian perspective. However, before the discourse accelerates fully, it is important to make some brief comments regarding; why Theological Education is referred to as "Contextual(ized)."

## Contextualization

Contextualization is, in a general sense, the discussion of how something is being made relevant to a particular situation or place; it is the process of making sense of ideas that would otherwise be referred to as new or unfamiliar to a particular space. To add to this, it can further be understood as taking a universal idea, and applying it to a local situation. Following the logic therein, why should (Christian) Theological Education be contextualized, and in what context is it being contextualized? The context discussed here is Africa. And the reason why this should be contextualized is primarily because of the nature of Theological Education in general (or any form of Education at all). This nature is one that presents Theological Education as a universal phenomenon, yet, demands every and any place that it is taken to, to make sense of its universality within a given locality. In the presentation that follows, some of the nuances that touch on contextualization, evangelism in Africa, and the history of Theological Education, will be visited and discussed. But before such discussions, more can be mentioned on contextualization.

Richard J. Gehman says: "Contextualization! A crown jewel in the hands of the missiologist? Or is contextualization fool's gold which has the appearance of value but brings disappointment to the prospector?" (Gehman, 1999, p. 3). This view of contextualization carries in it, a subtle suspicion leaning towards the one who seeks to contextualize. A typical example of this type of suspicion is the colonial/missionary enterprise in Africa. As the later part of Gehman's question puts it; "… which has the appearance of value but brings disappointment to the prospector," (Gehman, 1999,

p. 3). Since this paper is not one that discusses the debates on colonial/missionary exploits of Africa, no further can be stated on the above-mentioned suspicion, but to move further into the discourse of contextualization. After stating that Contextualization means many things to many people, Gehman observes: "For some, contextualization brings new hope of liberation from the tyranny of theological imperialism. The Theological Education Fund sees contextualization as the answer to renewal" (Gehman, 1999).

Furthermore, within the context of this paper then, for there to be a transformative theological education for Africa, there needs to be a completely contextualized theological engagement, one that observes the existential realities of Africans and strives intellectually hard to meet. While discussing contextualization, Paul Bower briefly cites two important thinkers in African theological thinking (John Mbiti and Haruna Kato) although, they did not always agree ideologically. John Mbiti once asserts, it belongs to the very nature of Christianity to be subject to localization. Otherwise, its universality becomes meaningless.' The biblical mandate to universalization, to bringing the faith everywhere, is therefore a mandate to universal localization ... or, put otherwise, to contextualization.

So far as I can discover, it would seem that Kato was the very first person to introduce publicly to the global evangelical world the word 'contextualization'. Today that word is everywhere used, even perhaps over-used. But it was still a barely minted neologism, not yet in the dictionaries, when Kato featured the word and affirmed the concept in his plenary address at the historic Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974 (Bower, 2007). This is simply further emphasizing the need to have a thoroughly relevant theological methodology when sharing the gospel when training the younger generation theologically. The relevance of a universally significant gospel is in its subjection to localization as stated by Mbiti above.

This paper proceeds in the following order: (1) the first section discusses a general history of Theological Education this gives a brief overview of what Theological Education has been since the inception of Christianity, into what it has become at the current time. It does not claim to be detailed in any form, nor does it claim to exhaust all the matters that have gone to form the history of what is known today as

Theological Education, in this stead, it highlights certain epochal discourses and interprets how these have impacted and influenced what is today discussed and practiced as Theological Education. Thus, this is but a simple intellectual historical overview. (2) The second section discusses the history of Theological Education in Africa; this gives tangible consideration to Theological Education, starting from what is understood as Post-Colonial Africa. This section discusses the history of Theological Education in Africa within the context that relates to Colonialism and its impact on Africans and their subsequent intellectual pursuits. (3) The third section explores the meaning of what this study terms a Contextualized Theological Education. It is a simple discourse that establishes its thesis upon the two previous sections. And finally, (4) discusses; "A Contextualized Theological Education, Evangelism, and Their Connection" which is an attempt toward "A Transformative Theology." The section connects the historical narratives that have been presented so far and then draws a conclusion to the study.

A General History of Theological Education and the relevance of history in a study like this cannot be overemphasized. In order to faithfully propose an evangelism pattern that is firmly grounded in a contextualized Theological Education, it is worthwhile to state the different relevant histories of Theological Education over the years and how this is playing out in our current theological scene. Christian Theology is fundamentally a philosophical ideology that serves its best in the public space. As I (Luka, 2021; Cf. Moltmann, 1999) argued, "the goal of public theology is the transformative progress of the society from where it presently is to where it should be, according to God's standard. In other words, the goal of public theology is the same as the goal of Christian theology." The transformation the world seeks dwell within the precepts of its maker, God. The earlier the world realizes (and embraces) this, the better its systems will become. As González L. Justo puts it, "… the study of the history of theological education particularly of theological education in the wider sense, is one of the best tools we can use for guidance into the future" (Justo, 2015). Further on the history of theological education in Africa, Bower writes; When a history of evangelical theological education in modern Africa comes to be written, it will doubtless take as one defining moment the founding in 1976 of the Accrediting

Council for Theological Education in Africa, ACTEA. That would not be the only defining moment in such a history, but easily it has proven to be among the most consequential in the last half century. For it was with the emergence of ACTEA that evangelical theological education in Africa first gained that sense of common identity, that sense of community, of shared values and purpose, that has so bonded and energized the movement ... to a degree that we almost take for granted today, (Bower, 2007). What this section does is to discuss (and give an overview) of the history of Theological Education from the days of the early church, and how this history gradually transits into the modern time, this history presentation takes note of specific epochal movements and how these have had their different impacts on the church today [within the context of Theological Education). In this light, the paper presents a brief working (contextual) definition for Theological Education.

Theological Education is not simply a religious (internal) logical speculation of who God is, and how he wants his creation to know about him. It is a holistic approach to understanding the world and how its maker wants to interact with this world. Yes, Theological Education deals with curriculum on ministry, discipleship, homiletics, etc., however, this is not all it is. This form of education is also (and chiefly so), concerned with how humanity copes in the world often discussed under the category of Public Theology. In a nutshell, Public Theology is applied Theological Education. Theological Education can further be discussed as rigorous training for those who intend to serve in one post of leadership or the other in the church. Again, throughout this paper, Theological Education will be discussed within the context of; (1) ministerial training, both ecclesiastical and academic context, (2) the public interaction of the church with the world, this being influenced by the first, an adequate Theological Education that equips the saints to be salt and light.

## Theological Education and the Early Church

Starting from the early church, the presentation here discusses how Theological Education has been in theory and practice since the early days of the church; nonetheless, it is important to note that the presentation will not cause ideas to take on other meaning than what

they are known to be in the early church. For instance, the early church may not necessarily see herself as taking part in Theological Education at periods where the focus was simply to articulate her beliefs and form her Creeds. This, however, does not mean that what the current (modern) church might consider as Theological Education cannot trace its roots to one idea or the other from the early church. While hinting at possible foundations within the early church, Justo succinctly says:

> There is no doubt that the years of Jesus's public ministry were a time during which his immediate followers were preparing for ministry. Later on, when Peter suggests that somebody be chosen to fill the vacancy left by Judas (Acts 1:15-26), he sets requirements for that post. (Interestingly, one of these requirements is that the candidate must have been with Jesus since the very beginning of his ministry to the very end, and this is a requirement that very few among the eleven fill.) So, they cast lots in order to elect this new person , not a method many would recommend today! Later the congregation in Jerusalem chooses seven, but we are not told what training or formation the seven may have had. Furthermore, the seven are supposed to be administering the aid to the widows, but at least two of them, Stephen and Phillip end up preaching. Still later Paul chooses Timothy, who has received some training from his mother and grandmother. The Pastoral Epistles mention some of the characteristics that bishops and deacons must have, but there is no word about how they are to be trained or taught (Justo, 2015).

This is a viable hint at a possible ministerial training requirement in the early church. Although, there is no particular mention of an institutional pattern through which the ministers of the early church were trained, there is, nonetheless, a particular hint at how that being tutored through one form or the other is necessary [and was a common practice among the early church members, for instance; "And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26, KJV). This is an

instance where one observes the church's focus on competence despite the person's passion/zeal.

Justo further notes; "Even after the period of the New Testament, we are told little about ministerial training, although there is much we may infer. First, there is no doubt that in order to lead worship one had to be able to read. Christian worship on Sunday mornings, which usually lasted several hours, had two parts, the Service of the Word and the Service of the Table," (Justo, 2015). In order to lead in the latter, "… it was necessary to know at least something about the history of Israel and the work of God in the gospel, particularly since the person presiding had to lead in the great Eucharistic prayer, in which God was thanked for all the divine mercies, not only in the present but also from the very beginning of creation" (Justo, 2015).

Furthermore, due to the literacy rate in the ancient Greco-Roman world, and considering how the early church priced the knowledge [both to know Christ, and understanding how to interact socially/culturally within this new metaphysical reality], they placed high premium on those who would lead them to understand the literatures of their day. "The literacy index…" as Michael D. Waggoner writes: "… in the Greco-Roman cities which was where Christianity first made headway was low, as might be expected. It is estimated that in the Latin-speaking provinces, the index of literacy was between 5 and 10 percent," (Waggoner, *et al*., 2018).

Following Waggoner *et al*., (2018) observation alongside the mainstream scholarly consensus, "… there are also indications that most people in the church were women, or men belonging to the lower echelons of society. Except in the very high levels of society, few Greco-Roman women knew how to read. Among slaves and artisans, who did not need to read and in any case would have little use for literacy, illiteracy was common" (Waggoner *et al*., 2018).

## Jesus and Theological Training: An Example

While some persons come to Jesus asking to become his disciples (Matt. 8:19, 21), it is still Jesus' call which is decisive (Matt. 8:22). Generally, he is the one who issues the invitation. This follows a clear pattern: as he moves around, he sees those be called summons them,

and is followed by them. Jesus addresses this call to a wide range of ordinary people as they are going about their daily lives, not while they are in the synagogue or temple. He reaches out beyond the conventional social and religious boundaries of his day, including social outcasts (e.g., lepers: Mark 14:3) and marginal groups (e.g., women: cf. Luke 8:1-3). According to Robert Banks, "***akolouthein***", the Greek word translated as, 'follow' can have either a literal or figurative meaning. In either cases, it has the sense of following him (Jesus) in his wanderings and sharing with him his uncertain and perilous destiny," (Robert Banks, 1999). This "calling" is not only a continuing part of Jesus' original message (Mark 2:14; 10:21, 28-32, 32; Matt 8:19-22 and pars.), but a distinctive element within it.

Taking the initiative in this way was not characteristic of other contemporary Jewish figures, and highlights both Jesus' authority and his expectations concerning obedience. Furthermore,

> The Service of the Word required not only the reading of scripture but also its interpretation. Those who had some secular studies, especially in the field of rhetoric, were particularly able to perform these functions, since a goodly part of rhetorical studies was devoted to the interpretation of ancient Greek and Roman poets and other authors (Justo, 2015).

The principles of interpretation that would apply to those classical texts in the field of rhetoric were also useful for the interpretation of biblical passages during the Service of the Word. "This is why many of the allegorical interpretations of scripture that theologians of the time were prompt to offer, although very strange from our point of view, were perfectly acceptable for those who heard or read them" (Waggoner *et al,* 2018).

To conclude on the church's earliest epoch and Theological Education within that context, it is worthwhile to note, "… the church had no school where it could teach people how to read, much less the principles to be applied in the interpretation of ancient texts. Therefore, it is legitimate to assert that most bishops had learned these matters in pagan schools … because these interpreters were doing

with the Bible similar to what secular orators of the time did with Homer or Hesiod (Waggoner *et al*, 2018).

## Theological Education from the Medieval Age to the Modern Church

Gehman (1999) writes: "The intellectual awakening of the twelfth century led to the creation of conglomerations of students and professors that would eventually be called universities." These were the heirs that continued the traditions created by monastic and cathedral schools, as may be clearly seen in the history of the University of Paris, the most famous of the early universities, particularly in the field of theology. "One of many factors that had earlier attracted students to the Abbey of Saint Victor was the manner in which that school joined the use of reason with mystical contemplation, a joining that would be the ideal, not often achieved, of the theological faculties in the University of Paris as well as others" (Waggoner *et al*, 2018).

"The history itself…", writes Bower (2007): "first of the Abbey of Saint Victor and then of the University of Paris, is a sign of the dual origin of universities, born both out of monastic schools and out of cathedral schools. William of Champeaux had taught in the Cathedral School of Notre Dame in Paris." Bower (2007) notes further: "There he clashed with Abelard, who was prone to show his exceptional intellect by belittling his professors. Defeated, or at least discouraged, William abandoned the Cathedral School and settled in Saint Victor, whose school became a rival of the one at the Cathedral." Following this historical narration, it suffices to say, given the fame of that school, and of other teachers, in a few generations, there were more students on the western bank of the Seine, Waggoner *et al* (2018) also affirms this and concludes; "there were likely, more students on such areas as the western bank … in and around Saint Victor than in the Cathedral School of Notre Dame, even though the latter was still growing."

## A History of Theological Education in Africa

This section gives sketches of the histories intended to be presented. In *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa*, edited by Isabel

Apawo Phiri and Dietrich Werner, in the first foreword, John S. Mbiti presents a personal testament about his experience with Theological Education in Africa. Mbiti narrates:

> In the mid-1950s, when I wanted to study Theology, it was impossible to do so anywhere in Africa. There were no Faculties, Seminaries, Colleges, or other Institutions of higher learning, where I could take Theological Education, to become a priest/pastor. I was excluded from even applying to the few suitable places available. South Africa would have had places, but the demonic Apartheid raged in full force. Egypt and Ethiopia would have had places, but I was not an Orthodox candidate. The few Catholic Seminaries would have had a place, but I was not a Catholic, nor did I envisage being a celibate priest. In Eastern Africa, there were a few "Divinity Schools," but I could not be accepted there, because I was more academically qualified than the most of (or all) their teachers, since I had just obtained a B.A. degree from London University, through its Makerere University College in Uganda (Mbiti in Phiri and Werner, 2013, p. 14).

He further narrates how due to the seeming problem he observed, he tried to propose his own solutions and bring a postcolonial Africa into the global theological scene:

> In my dissertation I indicated that, one of the intentions of my study was "to raise the question regarding Christian Theology in Africa." That was in 1963.The few of us African theologians (in the making), were just beginning to stammer about "Theologia Africana," "African Theology," or "Christian Theology in Africa." We were shy about the name, but we knew there was something to be named and done in that direction. Critics of the name and the idea popped up like mushrooms in both the West and in Africa itself. Similarly, when in 1971 I proposed to introduce "Course 550, African Theology" at Makerere University, there was resistance from some academics, arguing that no such a course was offered anywhere in Africa or the world. But it got into the University catalogue, and three female and eight male students registered for it. We had great fun exploring this pioneer topic (Mbiti in Phiri and Werner, 2013, p. 15).

Mbiti here, in his personal story, helps set the context to how Theological Education began in postcolonial Africa, of course, he is rightly in the position to make these comments and narrate these stories seeing his legacy in current African philosophical and theological thinking. This narration by Mbiti shows how the context was (at least briefly) when Theological Education began in Africa. This, contrasted with the current state of things quickly shows how far Africa has gone fostering and advancing Theological Education even in a global scene with its limitations of course. The following section briefly presents the nature of Theological Education in modern Africa and how this can help in understanding (even if in part) the current trajectories in African Theological Educational scene.

## Theological Education in African Institutions of Higher Learning: Insights from James Kombo

James Kombo presents a history of Theological Education from about the same epoch as presented by Mbiti (2013), but Kombo's emphasis is different and more detailed than Mbiti's due to the nature of his article – he sought to present the trajectories of Theological Education in African Universities and other institutions of higher learning. Kombo states:

> From the 1950s, the church, both Protestant and Catholic, burdened with the exclusion of theology from Africa's mainstream academia responded by creating separate non-accredited but autonomous denominational as well as interdenominational ministerial formation institutions (Kombo 2015; Mbiti, 2013).

He continues:

> These institutions became the safe homes which would house theology for many decades to come. Some of the theological colleges in East Africa which would play a major role in the church's ministerial formation from the 1960s to the 1980s include Scott Theological College (Africa Inland Church, Kenya), St Paul's United Theological College (uniting the Anglicans and the Protestants, Kenya), Kenya Highlands Bible College (Africa Gospel Church, Kenya), Bishop Tucker Theological College (Church of Uganda, Uganda), and

> Lutheran Theological College, Makumira (Lutheran Church, Tanzania), (Kombo, 2015).

These institutions were established because there was a need for Africans to take part in the ongoing theological discussions happening. Since most of Africa had embraced Christianity, it would be out of place that Africans could not expound their faith (now Christianity) on their own. At the "… beginning of the 1980s, the need for graduate level theological training was increasingly being felt, particularly in Kenya, which at the time had transformed not only into a haven of peace but had also become a major gateway into the larger East African region" (Kombo, 2015). This period saw both the inception and the consequent rise into prominence of such graduate theological schools as Nairobi International School of Theology (NIST, now Africa Leadership University, "… by Campus Crusade for Christ … Nairobi Graduate School of Theology (NGST, now Africa International University by Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar – AEAM), and the Catholic Higher Institute of Eastern Africa (CHIEA, now Catholic University of Eastern Africa) ..." (Kombo, 2015). Kombo captures an overview pattern of these institutions. Here I reproduce his thought at length below:

> Whereas for about three decades these seminaries became the safe environments within which theology in Africa would blossom, certain disturbing trends also emerged.
>
> 1) Theology became synonymous with ministerial formation and therefore its benefits were understood to be confined primarily to the church, its institutions and the believing community.
>
> 2) The theological colleges had loyalty to their denominational and confessional foundations, often headquarters of missions and conciliar movements abroad, thus they exhibited extreme caution on matters of academic freedom. This had to be the case because, although mission church gained their autonomy in the 1960s and the 1970s, missions remained the prime movers of theological colleges.
>
> 3) There was also a seeming lack of concentration when theology in Africa allowed itself to stray from what would have been the African theological agenda and got sucked into

> the endless debates fielding different western interests: the liberals, womanists-feminists, liberationists, evangelicals and so on.
>
> 4) Internal debates among local theologians degenerated into unwholesome, gruesome and often fiery tirades fielding groupings representing discussants who had moved out of the mainstream academia to the church seminaries on the one hand and their counterparts, the ecumenicals, who remained in citadels of learning in the public universities on the other hand.
>
> 5) Theology and religious studies were played against each other and each got compartmentalized into respective competing domains, consequently both theology and religious studies are adjudged to have no contact with each other whatsoever (Kombo, 2015).

What Kombo outlines as part of the history of the development of theological institutions and theological discourse in Africa still carries on even in today's theological engagements in African institutions, and also, having leading African scholars engaged globally and locally. Students in theological seminaries get involved in these high-end theological debates/dialogue, carrying with them the technicalities and sophistication in these discourses. Added to this, they are being mentored by their theological faculties.

## A Contextualized Theological Education: What Does it Mean?

In this section, having considered in brief the nature of Theological Education in Africa, comments are made as to why the Theological Education discussed here is referred to as "contextual" – education is one that detaches its essence from the tight grip of Western categories and seeks to provide knowledge that focuses its liberating facets on solving issues that are essentially African, and this, in a thoroughly intellectual and yet, practical way. This education type is one formed and organized through and through by Africans. As Kombo stated above, these schools were primarily formed for solving African needs: these needs were human, however, uniquely African. To put it simply, a contextualized Theological Education is one that is suited to meet needs wherever it is taken and adapted.

## A Contextualized Theological Education, Evangelism, and Their Connection: Towards a Transformative Theology and Concluding Remarks

The most part of this study has been devoted to discussing the different histories of Theological Education and how these have impacted the church today. The discourse of transformative evangelism is featured in this last session – due to the wealth of time and space dedicated to understanding the different aspects of Theological Education, the comments made here are brief, yet, succinct. Evangelism has traditionally been understood as sharing the good news and expecting people (those the good news was shared with) to give their lives to Christ so that their eternity is secured. This is not simply where this message should be left. There is more to the message even as Jesus told his disciples; that they should teach as they make disciples. Yes, the souls of men are crucial, albeit, as N.T. Wright will always emphasize, "… heaven is important, but it is not the end of the world for those in Christ…" (Wright, 2014, p. 12). Theological Education and Evangelism are connected closely. This study proposes that for evangelism to be effective, there is need for thoroughly biblical Theological Education, one that is fully Christocentric and is primarily concerned with the holistic development of those preached to.

Now, back to the talk on Evangelism; the salvation of souls is often interwoven with their hearing of the good news. This good news, Paul says; "… is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek," (Rom 1:16, KJV). The gospel being God's power to save, cannot be reduced to just the salvation of souls – to be clear, Paul within that context uses salvation in quite a broad sense, aside from saving them (Jews and Gentiles) from their sins, God saves them into becoming his people. So, the alienation that the Gentiles were under does not count anymore, and the limitations the Jews had in their relationship with God does not hinder them anymore. Paul uses salvation in such a holistic manner, of course, the narration above is just but a summary of everything Paul calls the attention of his readers to. The question then is, what practical implication does this have on a Christian today; and as we shall see later, what does this entail within the context of Theological

Education? The response is what the rest of this section seeks to do; to define/describe evangelism within the category of education [a theological one]. Theological education as stated in this paper so far, is that form of education that exists to transform society. It is the base for Public Theology. As Ferris, Lillis, and Enlow, Jr (2018, p. 3) robustly states, there is, "A change in focus from evangelism to disciple-making, a change in church life from congregation of individuals to community of spiritual brothers and sisters, a change from witness as event to witness as lifestyle."

## Evangelism as Education: A Transformative Theology

In this context then, to evangelize is to educate. This education covers the person as a whole. Jesus' instructions in Matthew 28:20 features teaching as part of what the disciples should do as they spread the good news. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." This call is unto every Christian, not just some experts with higher learning. Spirituality is not taken out of the picture by making emphasis on teaching; but through spiritual principles, an individual can be holistically relevant. As Ferris, Lillis, and Enlow, Jr (2018, p. 39) note keenly, "Ministry education should go beyond producing knowledgeable graduates … to transformation in the lives and minds of learners." This is the task of any form of Theological Education. To inspire and uplift men and women for every good work, even as the apostle Paul encourages Titus; "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men," (Titus 3:8, KJV). The effect of good works, Ferris, Lillis, and Enlow, Jr (2018,p. 66) pointedly declare, would result in, "*shalom,* life as he [God] intends. In a *shalom* community people 'learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, (and) plead the widow's cause (Isa. 1:17; cf. Amos 5:24; Micah 6:8)."

The person that prospers first works on her/his mind, the mind needs to be renewed before a person can speak of true prosperity, prosperity should not be reduced to the acquisition of material things and gaining a name and affluence in the world, it should be understood as the all-encompassing stability and wealth that a person acquires by

having a bright mind, a stable sense of morality as defined by God, a manifestation of the fruits of the Spirit and sound sense of compassion for humanity and the entirety of God's creation. As Paul admonished the church at Rome: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom 12:2, KJV). The prosperous man/woman knows and understands the will of God; such a man/woman operates within the definition of what God affirms and such person further abhors what God abhors. Furthermore, this narration does not suggest that the one who follows in all these precepts prospers in such a manner that does not consist of material things, but that these precepts are the foundations upon which these material things (prosperity) are built. Without these precepts, any material prosperity can be difficult to maintain.

At this juncture, it is important to introduce what the study tags Transformative Theology. This theology is one that is established firmly upon the principle of the kingdom of God hermeneutics, this hermeneutical stance interprets the Bible within the grid of the Kingdom of God; that is, the story in the entire Bible is one that focuses upon the idea of the whole of creation being God's kingdom. This is a hermeneutical stance that speaks volumes to human prosperity, and this is within the definition of prosperity according to God's word. The base for this is fundamentally the knowledge of God, the knowledge of Christ. Transformative Theology is the manifestation of God's kingdom in the public space through precepts learned through a solid Theological knowledge. As Moltmann (1999, p. 1) and Turbi (2021, p. 198) are convinced, "There is no Christian identity without public relevance, and no public relevance without theology's Christian identity." This paper has thus, introduced a line of thinking that establishes the Scriptures as the final authority and that aside from being the authority, it is the strong ideological text upon which the church will transform society. Christianity is the light of the world and in order for the world to see and benefit from this light, the church needs to shine this light bright enough. And this can be achieved through the church's theological knowledge and the foundation for this knowledge is the Scriptures.

This leads automatically to a point of convergence in which I shall consider the discourse of two scholars. In a relatively recent engagement with *Theology and Development in Africa*, Stan Chu Ilo and Idara Otu discuss some important points and interacted with current trends and literatures that are specifically concerned with how theological ideology can interface with matters of economics, culture and engagement of religious ideas in public.

Central to development in the African continent is how Africans can find abundant life in present history. It is at the core of the anthropological crisis and the movement of history in Africa. This offers the third typology of an African theology of development, which responds to this yearning of Africans for life-in-plenitude through sharing in the community of life. The hermeneutic of abundant life explores a vision that supports human and cosmic flourishing in a mutually enhancing way, through which life is accessible to all creation. Jesus is the source of abundant life. The fullness of life that Jesus gives is articulated in chapter 10 of John's Gospel. Jesus says: "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10, ESV). Jesus is the Good Shepherd, who provides pasture for all to have the fullness of life. Through his paschal mystery, Jesus offers new life to all peoples, a life that richly flows from his oneness with God" (Stan Chu Ilo & Idara, 2020).

Africans share in this fullness of life, and they continually desire and search for green pastures to unite their life with Christ. An African theology of development beams a searchlight in this spiritual longing of Africans for an abundant life through Christ in light of the existential exigencies of the continent. For the African, humanity fits into the fabric of the totality of creation, and the individual is in union with others and connected to nature. The identity of the individual is not without reference to other persons and not in isolation from creation either. This is captured in the African concept of Ubuntu (the intrinsic relatedness of all things): we are through other people; I am related therefore I am; I am loved therefore I exist; I exist in order to participate in community, and I am nothing if I am not in community and friendship with others – nature and humans (living, dead, and unborn) (Stan Chu Ilo & Idara, 2020). Building upon the biblical and cultural warrants for abundant life, an African theology envisions

development as biocentric, with emphasis on participation, sharing, communion, and communication with all persons and creation. This creates the grounds for the joys and sorrows of Africans to flow into a single stream of the story. Development then is not accessed by a select class (Stan Chu Ilo & Idara, 2020).

## Concluding Remarks

This paper argues that contextualized theological education in transformative evangelism provides a springboard for in-class and out-of-class interaction – that encourages learners to integrate God's truth into their fundamental perspectives, core values, relational patterns, and habits of life, thereby opening themselves to God's transforming power (Ferris, Lillis, and Enlow, Jr, 2018, p.42). It is obvious that a grounded theology of development must be hewn from local processes and alternate sites of hope and renewal in Africa. The theological anthropology of this proposition is not simply the projection of human representation of God as its foundation, but seeing in the faces of the poor and their lives and struggles the phenomenology of the human representation of God. It also means paying greater attention to the contradictions and complexities of history, requiring greater effort in seeing where God is present in the midst of God's people, not simply as claims and counterclaims, promises of future blessing and devotions, but as a new way of being which rejects everything opposed to the priorities and practices of the poor man of Galilee.

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