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BOOK REVIEW

Adamo, D.T. (2001). *Reading and interpreting the bible in African indigenous churches*. Eugene. OR; Wipf and Stock. ISBN 1-57910-700-1 Pp. iv–120

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David Tuesday Adamo is Professor of biblical and religious studies and former dean of the Faculty of Arts at Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria. In this outstanding book, Adam endeavors to resolve the African identity crisis engendered by western missionaries when they brought Christianity in an African soil. He honestly presents and discusses the ways in which African Indigenous Churches have managed to use the main tenets of African Traditional Religion (ATR) in their interpretation of the Bible within Christianity as their effort to make Christianity African. In doing that, Adamo shows in this book the way in which human needs here on earth, mostly neglected by western missionaries in their interpretation of the Bible but well-conceived by ATR, are important aspects towards understanding the biblical message.

His book is arranged into several chapters, each having its own theme. Chapter one is a basic introduction of the book; it explains how the interpretation of the Bible in the African continent started. According to Adamo, Africa was the starting point of Biblical interpretation at the University of Alexandria in Africa located in Egypt. Biblical scholars presented North Africa as if it were a part of Europe. The early biblical scholars at the University of Alexandria were seen as Western scholars and not African. But, in reality, they were pure African that were born and grew in Africa. Therefore, this book indicates that the early African biblical interpretation is the foundation of western interpretations. It is also the foundation of our Afrocentric approaches to biblical studies. It attempts to enhance our sense of worth as persons, as people among groups that try to make sense of their Christian and cultural values.

Chapter two discusses the main outline of the African worldview as a useful background to the understanding of the nature practice and model of interpretation of the Bible in African indigenous churches.

The Yoruba people of Nigeria were used as a case study in this chapter and the medicine used by the Yoruba people whose indigenous religious system is born out of the experience with God handed down from one generation to another. Also, they believe that their destination cannot be changed; but through their faith destiny can change. In this chapter, African medicine is classified as herbal medicine, ritual medicine, and mythical medicine. Therefore, according to this chapter, words are not only for communication with human beings, but also with the Divine being.

Chapter three provides a brief survey of African indigenous churches; it explains the different names of African churches and why such churches were given those names. Based on this chapter, it seems that there are many churches in Nigeria, in almost every street such as the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) formed by Joseph Ayo Babalola, the Nigerian Apostolic Church (NAC) later dropped and changed to United Apostolic Church (UAC) and spread outside Nigeria. People in the (UAC) believe in Jesus Christ as the medicine of all diseases. The Churubiam and Seraphim Churches which were formed by Moses Orimolad in 1925 and the church of the Lord (Oladura) (1902) was formed by Ifakoya D. Oshaffar after the miracle and God's vision to him. Therefore, African churches were given those names because of their emphasis on the power of prayer.

African indigenous churches have the similar characteristics;- the way of reading and interpreting Bibles in the African indigenous churches are not still foreign; they preach the messages which criticized the foreign Western culture. This chapter discusses that the characteristics of African indigenous churches are an emphasis on divine healing, prayer, spirituality, evangelism, revival, flexible worship services, and power in word.. Hence, African

indigenous churches have similar characteristics even in reading and interpreting Bible.

Chapter four focuses more on culture, the Bible and Christianity; it also tells us that the aim of interpreting the Bible in an Africa context is not only to understand the Bible and God in our African experience and culture, but also with the hope to break the hermeneutical hegemony and ideology strongly held by Eurocentric biblical scholars. Africa hermeneutics means an approach to biblical interpretation that makes African social cultural subject context a subject of interpretation. Thus, hermeneutics must have a faith in God who is all-powerful; and an interpreter can be any one, not only a biblical scholar.

Chapter five discusses the way African indigenous churches read and interpret the bible therapeutically. It discusses how the Bible is used to solve health problems in societies where not everybody has access to modern orthodox medicine. In orthodox healing methods, if a patient did not know to read, someone had to read for him/her. Therefore, the indigenous therapeutic method that hardly involved knowledge of reading and writing was considered not only barbaric but an abomination to Christianity.

Chapter six concerns reading and interpreting the Bible for protection in life; it seems that every person in the world has an enemy; it can be a known or an unknown enemy. In African indigenous tradition, there is a way used to protect children, young person and adults from enemies. And those enemies can be living or non-living things, In this chapter the author shows some ways of obtaining protection against enemies in African societies; he points out to the medicine for protection in the Yoruba community called *sokuro*. This is the medicine hung-up to prevent death. So, this chapter clearly indicates the way African worldview and traditional culture have been used in conjunction with the Bible for the purpose of protection against all kinds of evils that plague humankind.

Chapter seven is a demonstration of how African indigenous churches read and interpret the Bible as a means of achieving success in human life. The chapter discusses various means of enhancing success in African indigenous traditions. One of the important issues used in African indigenous people as an attempt to enhance success is the use of medicine called '*awure*' in Yoruba language of Nigeria in- order to succeed both in African indigenous tradition and in the Bible; through such protection, we have to succeed in examinations, succeed in securing employments also in securing relationships of loving women or men.

Chapter eight is the evaluation of the basic understanding of the African indigenous biblical hermeneutics; the main essence of names, power of prayer, faith, and God's power of this hermeneutics is emphasized. Therefore The African culture, customs, tradition, arts, metaphors and images are necessary prerequisites for interpretation for African to feel at home with the gospel.

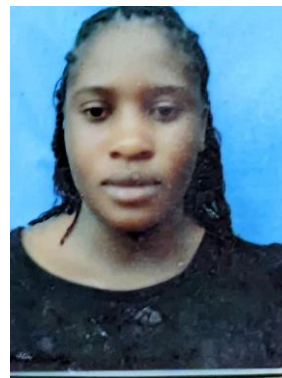
Chapter nine is the conclusion of this book; it reiterates that the method of Biblical interpretation is not really strange among African American readers and interpreters. When Africans were taken to the new world, they read the Bible liberatively for healing, protection, and success. It was also read and interpreted for deliverance from oppression of slavery masters. Moreover, this chapter

discusses the way which can be used by west and the rest part of the world to interpret Bible to render assistance from the divine.

This book has succeeded in telling readers many things about reading and interpretation of the Bible in the African indigenous churches. It has told us about the Bible being first translated into the African culture in the first college called Alexandria in Egypt, interpreting the Bible in the medical field, reading and interpreting it for self-defense in life and reading and interpreting it for success in life, apart from other important aspects. Hence, Adamo has greatly succeeded to resolve the identity crisis engendered by Eurocentric interpretations in Africa. Through the interpretations of indigenous churches in various aspects, Adamo has demonstrated the possibility of making the Bible an African book of hope.

Along with all the good things that this book has discussed, it also has some weaknesses. It used only the Yoruba tribe found in Nigeria to illustrate its point while are different other races found in Africa that could have been used as well. Moreover, this book hardly explains how to read and interpret the Bible in the African community in regard to spiritual matters. The content and the main message of the book could be well-communicated if the author used the different communities found in Africa to explain how they read and interpret the Bible in their cultures, and also explain how African indigenous churches read and interpret the Bible in spiritual matters. Despite these meager weaknesses the book is a very useful resource. It can be used by African indigenous churches to conduct biblical studies; moreover, it can be used by biblical scholars in their conversations about the role of African Indigenous Churches towards the development of African Christian Theology.

Reviewer's Biography



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was born at Isuto village, Mbeya District, Mbeya Region in Tanzania. She completed primary education at Isuto Primary School (2007—2013), Ordinary Level Secondary education at Isuto Secondary School (2014—2017), and Advanced Level Secondary education at Mbalizi High School (2018—2020) in Mbeya, region. Currently, she is a Second Year student of Bachelor of Divinity degree at Teofilo Kisanji University in Mbeya Tanzania.