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Review

Manomi, Dogara I, Four-Legged Stool or Three-Stone Cooking Stove? In: M.R. Gunda, K. Gies, E.Chitando, J. Hock and L. Janneck (eds.), *Going the Extra Mile: Reflections on Biblical Studies in Africa and the Contributions of Joachim Kügler*. University of Bamberg Press, Bamberg, 2024, pp. 67-96. ISBN 9783989890121.

Reviewed by Melesse K. Woldetsadik¹

This review focuses on a particular contribution to *Going the Extra Mile*, the forty-second volume in the University of Bamberg's Bible in Africa series: Dogara I. Manomi's chapter on African biblical hermeneutics. In his critique of Elizabeth W. Mburu's seminal *African Hermeneutics* (Carlise: Hippo Books, 2019), Manomi, a lecturer at the Theological College of Northern Nigeria, introduces a three-stone cooking stove model as an alternative to Mburu's four-legged stool. Manomi outlines three essential tasks within African hermeneutics: the analytical, the performative, and the transformative. He puts cultural analysis under the analytical task. For Manomi, cultural analysis is not as significant as it is for Mburu.

Manomi posits that studying the Bible in Africa requires an evangelical presupposition. This aligns with Mburu's approach to the biblical text through a hermeneutic of trust and accountability to the text and the African context. It honours the author's intended meaning while allowing for diverse applications. It recognises the Bible's transformative power amid its complex history of colonialism and patriarchy to address Africa's situation while remaining faithful to the text's meaning.

¹ Melesse K. Woldetsadik (PhD, Columbia International University) is pastor at Beta Selam Evangelical Church, Huntersville NC, USA.

Manomi aptly acknowledges Mburu's four-legged stool model as important for understanding African biblical hermeneutics, particularly in addressing the gap between spiritual beliefs and the realities of everyday life in Africa. He concurs with Mburu that the disconnect stems from the uncritical adoption of Western interpretations, which frequently overlook local contexts. In response to this dichotomy, Mburu advocates a hermeneutical approach rooted in African communities' lived experiences and cultural backgrounds, making biblical interpretation more pertinent to their daily lives.

Manomi, however, argues that his model is a better metaphor than Mburu's four-legged stool, as it emphasises communal participation in biblical interpretation and the critical role of interpreters in providing relevant insights. He likens the collaborative nature of the cooking stove—where firewood pieces converge to cook a meal—to the eight specific interpretative tasks that yield a comprehensive biblical interpretation: cultural analysis, textual analysis, synthetic analysis, appropriative analysis, performance of Scripture, performance education, identification and description of transformation, and identifying interpretation.

Interestingly, both Manomi and Mburu approach their discussions from an African perspective, yet they employ different hermeneutical methods. Mburu contends that her approach enhances the understanding of biblical texts by drawing parallels between African contexts and biblical narratives. Manomi contends that drawing such parallels before undertaking a hermeneutical process to determine the texts' meaning is premature. He argues that a thorough literary analysis should precede the theological context to avoid hasty conclusions. Manomi also critiques Mburu's method for relying on unexamined assumptions and prioritising broader contexts at the expense of specific passages. He argues that African readers tend to focus on particular sections rather than overarching themes. Consequently, Manomi advocates for a theological approach that aligns more closely with specific biblical texts.

Manomi, however, praises Mburu's view that while each text has a singular intended meaning, it can be applied in various ways today, and her differentiating between culture-bound truths, like the prohibition in Deuteronomy 22:11 (Do not wear cloths of wool and linen woven together), and universal truths, such as those in Exodus 20:1–17 (the Ten

Commandments). Manomi then introduces the hermeneutical method he calls "exegethics," which merges "exegesis" and "ethics" to highlight the ethical dimensions of biblical texts. This method involves three tasks: the analytical (cultural, textual, synthetic, and appropriative analysis), the performative (scriptural performance and evaluation), and the transformative (identifying transformation and assessing interpretive risks).

Manomi's approach provides a comprehensive overview through a hermeneutical lens, analysing existential and theological themes in the African context. His analysis encompasses historical-critical, linguistic, and theological issues, integrating both biblical and African perspectives. He connects analytical with performative aspects, exploring the impact of interpreted texts on individuals and society. Manomi highlights the dynamic role of Scripture in worship and religious practices, noting the positive and negative effects of Bible interpretation in various African contexts that shape spiritual experiences.

In conclusion, Manomi presents vital critiques regarding Mburu's hermeneutics, specifically challenging her sequencing and ordering of the hermeneutical process, specifically beginning with parallels between the African and biblical contexts, which he believes detracts from its effectiveness. He then introduces his multifaceted approach, which emphasises the cultural and performative dimensions of biblical interpretation. Furthermore, he emphasises the importance of understanding African traditional religion in the development of African biblical ethics. Manomi suggest adopting a more pragmatic approach to lessen the negative impact of social location, in contrast with Mburu's methodology, which seems to privilege social location. Manomi's shift aims to mitigate or qualify the influence of one's social location in biblical interpretation.

Unfortunately, Manomi does not sufficiently clarify his approach to transformative tasks. First, how can interpretation negatively impact the message if it aligns with the author's intended meaning? It is crucial to recognise that, regardless of cultural context, the Word of God possesses a definitive meaning that promotes godliness, even though its applications may differ. Second, the outcomes of this approach, as he asserts, are evaluated in terms of qualitative and quantitative growth within the church. However,

evangelical efforts are a gradual process that evolve and may not be readily evident within a single season. Yet, overall, Manomi provides a robust hermeneutical methodology grounded in the African context, offering a valuable contribution to the ongoing discourse.