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Addressing Contemporary Challenges in African Missions: An Apologetic Approach

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Abstract

In recent times, the conversation in Africa's religious circles has attempted to invalidate the Christian faith, raising concerns in the hearts of believers whose knowledge of faith is shallow. Through various platforms such as social media and traditional broadcasting channels, skeptics and agnostics have publicly discredited the finished work of Christ, challenging believers to provide answers to questions regarding their faith. This has discouraged many believers, and many more might still be discouraged. There is, therefore, a need for ministers and ministries around the world to seek ways of inculcating sound biblical knowledge in believers and enhancing their commitment to fulfilling the Great Commission. This study demonstrates the relevance of apologetics in achieving the twin objectives of enhanced faith-based knowledge and increased commitment to the Great Commission. In conducting the research, the study employed a systematic literature review method, drawing on research literature from theological, missiological, biblical, and philosophical fields to analyse the significance of apologetics in the context of the current challenges that African missions face. The sources used in the study include the Scripture as a primary source, along with peer-reviewed journals and academic monographs. The study highlighted some dominant issues in mission and ways to enhance believers' knowledge through the inclusion and adaptation of apologetics in church and ministry settings, thereby helping believers to be more rooted, better able to defend their faith and more

equipped to effectively communicate Christ. The literature indicates that believers are broadly aware of the concept of apologetics, but its acceptance and usage remain at the nascent stage. However, it was established that the appropriate use of apologetics would significantly enhance believers' confidence when reaching the lost.

Introduction

In the world today, there is a decline in the depth of knowledge and faith among Christians of different ages and denominations. As the biblical warnings concerning the age of knowledge and the rise of the Antichrist at the end time find increasing fulfilment (Daniel 12:4; Matthew 24:4–14), Christians are being swept away by diverse winds of doctrine and by the rise of diverse religions that attack the Christian faith and present it as unfounded. Scripture warns that, if vigilance is not maintained, even the elect may be deceived (Hosea 4:6; 1 Timothy 4:1; Mark 13:20–23). Christians in this end time are not merely to hold on to their faith, but must cultivate strong resistance against the prejudice that arises from the diverse worldviews and misunderstandings surrounding the faith.

In Africa, and especially in Nigeria, African traditional religion (ATR), Islam, and secularism have been the major challenges to the Christian faith. In addition, diverse beliefs and practices of the Western world have infiltrated the African religious sphere, instigating provocative questions for young and old alike on the reasons for faith in God. Compounding this challenge, the use of indoctrination is often absent, producing an unsatisfactory and passive outlook in the hearts of Christians. Many remain in faith with a facade and emptiness, thereby easily becoming pluralistic, secretly seeking help outside of the church. This calls for urgent attention: how can believers move from merely imposing the truth to establishing reasoned foundations for that truth? As 1 Peter 3:15 enjoins believers, they should be ready to explain and defend their faith.

This study searches for answers to questions of faith, seeking to help believers go beyond mere belief to adding evidence to their faith. The following questions are addressed in this work: What are the basic aspects of apologetics in terms of discipleship and evangelism stated in the existing literature? What

challenges for missions in Africa does the literature mention on a consistent basis? What recommendations do the existing literature give regarding the practical implementation of apologetics in the process of training churches and ministries? This paper contends that the decline of belief in Africa, whether owing to Islamic apologetic teachings, traditional African religion, secularism, or inconsistency in the principles of prosperity gospel, should be counteracted by practical steps. Indoctrination alone will not be of use, but should be complemented by well-organised and structured training in the field of apologetics.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Cowan's two-purpose model of apologetics[1]—the purposes of apologetics is (1) to strengthen the faith of the believers already in the church, and (2) to help those outside to enter the church—and on Geisler's observation that Jesus was an apologist.[2] He presented evidence, not just statements, for his claims. Thus, the study considers apologetics to be not a specialist academic sub-discipline limited to trained philosophers, but a pastoral tool that is useful for two audiences: the doubting insider and the challenging outsider. This matters immensely for the African situation considering that, as will be noted below, the African has already accepted the existence of a spiritual world. Therefore, the apologetic task in Africa is not so much proof for the existence of God, as is the case in Western apologetic traditions, but rather distinguishing between different explanations of the spiritual world, such as Christianity, Islam, and ATR, to determine their truthfulness and sufficiency. The subsections under contemporary issues in missions are analysed in light of Cowan's two purposes. Is the necessary response primarily aimed at instilling confidence among believers (Cowan's first purpose) or at providing a compelling thesis for evangelisation (Cowan's second purpose).

[1] Cowan, 'Introduction', 8.
[2] Geisler, 'The Apologetics of Jesus'.

History of Apologetics

Apologetics can be traced back many centuries. In 399 BC, Socrates was charged with preaching about foreign gods and teaching corruption to the youth. He did not apologise in the conventional sense of expressing regret, but rather made an unapologetic defence of his teachings and their origin. Five centuries later, the Apostle Peter implored believers to be bold but less abrasive when asked about their faith or the reason for their hope in Christ.[3] 'The early Christian apologists, such as Justin Martyr and Tertullian, defended the faith against the attacks of pagans and Jews, while also presenting a positive case for the truth of Christianity'.[4]

Norman Geisler and Paul Hoffman, delving into the rise of skepticism against Christians and their faith, explained that it was not until eighteenth-century modernism and twentieth-century post-modernism that the 'existence of truth about goodness' was seriously challenged through a 'deeply ingrained cultural resistance to truth'.[5] Broadly, apologetics is not just a defence of the faith. It serves two purposes in Christian faith: '(1) bolster the faith of Christian believers, and (2) aid in the task of evangelism' and world mission.[6]

Geisler asserts that Jesus himself functioned as an apologist, calling people to believe by giving them evidence of the fulfilment in his words and works. Jesus used the testimonies of witnesses, miracles, signs and wonders, Scripture, history, teachings, parables, authority, prophecies from the Torah, arguments, a sinless lifestyle, and his death, resurrection, and ascension as evidence and reasons for his lordship.[7]

The Apostle Paul is a great example of an apologist who combined the work of evangelism and apologetics in his ministry. His sermon on Mars Hill (Acts 17:16–34) demonstrates apologetics in action, as Paul engaged with the Athenians, addressing their philosophical and theological concerns.[8] The

[3] 1 Peter 3:15; Markos, *Apologetics*, 17.
[4] Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City*, 23.
[5] Geisler and Hoffman, *Why I am a Christian*, 11.
[6] Cowan, 'Introduction', 8.
[7] Geisler, 'The Apologetics of Jesus'.
[8] Zacharias, *Can Man Live*, 101.

Bereans are another example (Acts 17:10-12). While Paul engaged in apologetics in preaching the gospel, the Bereans examined the Scripture to be sure their faith had not been eroded. As Laue notes, 'The Bereans were open to what Paul and Silas had to say, but they were uncertain about their beliefs until they examined things for themselves',[9] moving from doubt and uncertainty to an unwavering faith.

Laue explains that God has consistently interacted with humanity to clear doubts and uncertainty with proof of His true divinity. 'God meets people where they are in their faith development and invites them into a conversation, using objective evidence and reason to help them move from questions and doubts into an ever-deepening faith relationship'.[10] Laue makes a clear distinction between doubt and unbelief, stating that doubt is a genuine, evidence-seeking attitude while unbelief is a conscious refusal to accept the truth regardless of the evidence presented.[11] John the Baptist had earlier borne witness to Jesus, and later he sent messengers to ask if Jesus was indeed the expected Messiah (Matthew 11:2–6; Luke 7:18–23). Similarly, Thomas also had doubts about the resurrection before he met the resurrected Lord (John 20:24–29). These instances prove that doubts and questions do not necessarily amount to disbelief. Instead, they may highlight a struggle to find the truth. Likewise, the disciples' fear and hesitation in openly siding with Jesus even before the coming of the Holy Spirit could be seen as a lack of courage rather than rejection of faith.

Importance of Apologetics in Christian Discipleship and Evangelism

Apologetics is very important for the Christian faith. It is a great additional aid to existing forms of discipleship because it helps believers to understand the reason for their hope in Jesus Christ and builds the capacity to share the gospel with the world.[12] Although apologetics is vital to defend faith, it goes beyond merely learning propositions and communicating them to others; it is also a

[9] Laue, Apologetics-Based Curriculum, 12.
[10] Laue, Apologetics-Based Curriculum, 11.
[11] Laue, Apologetics-Based Curriculum.
[12] Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 19.

strong tool for building a strong foundation for Christian faith. Contrary to the popular misconception, apologetics is not about argument and debate. Rather, it is a persuasive and compassionate way to bring even the most hardened people to the light of the gospel.[13] Conviction and winning people are the major purposes of evangelism and discipleship. It is through biblical knowledge and the power of the Holy Spirit that believers can be successful.

Contemporary Issues in Missions

There are many contemporary issues facing missions in the world, including globalisation and urbanisation, mercy and justice, mutuality, migration, monoculture, the shift in Christian centres, the definition of mission, and reclaiming the gospel message.[14] In Africa, the scenario differs somewhat: contextualising the gospel, church planting and growth, leadership development, the expansion of Islam, cultural barriers, addressing social issues, inculturation and syncretism, persecution and security, limited resources, and the role of technology. In West Africa, these challenges are particularly acute and include: Islamic-Christian tensions, Boko Haram insurgency, poverty and economic challenges, cultural and linguistic diversity, church growth and development, missionary work in Muslim-dominated areas, addressing social issues, reaching unreached peoples, using technology, and partnering with local churches.

The issues named in this section lean fairly cleanly into two groups. The first group is comparative in nature, which addresses the correct spiritual reality: cultural context, polytheism, ATR, and Islam. These are aimed at the outside world; they correspond to Cowan's second purpose, which is apologetics and concerns bringing outsiders to faith (evangelisation). The second group refers to internal issues that have to do with the faith of the current believers and apostasy as one example of the internal issue is addressed through Cowan's first purpose. Thus, below I will regroup the above sections according to the above characteristics: external vs internal apologetic issues.

Cultural Inclinations

[13] Copan, *True for You*, 23.
[14] Fritz, *The Meeting of the Waters*, 1–14.

Across the world, and especially in Africa, cultures are not only transmitted to the younger generation, but are also strictly upheld. In most instances, non-compliance attracts consequences, ranging from mild to grievous. As a result, Christian converts in such societies are caught between wholly following their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and fulfilling their cultural duties. Ndereba illustrates this in the case of Christian men in Gĩkũyũ who felt compelled to give away goat(s) to be recognised as elders in the community.[15] While this rite may appear harmless on the surface, Mbiti notes that prayers offered during this rite are directed not to God but to lesser spiritual beings, divinities, spirits, and the departed,[16] which stands in direct contradiction to the Christian faith. Furthermore, Chege demonstrates that these mediatorial offices often require the shedding of blood,[17] while the Bible clearly states that the only mediator between humanity and God is Jesus Christ.

The Multiplicity of Gods

Skeptics often posit that the Christian faith is guilty of the very stance it seeks to refute, especially concerning the multiplicity of gods. While classical topics such as the existence of God and the problem of evil are critical questions for younger Africans in an increasingly pluralistic context, there is also a need to answer questions that emerge from the African religious heritage.[18] Among them is the question of whether the triune God of Christianity is the same as the gods of ATRs. African urban spaces are increasingly pluralistic in religious, ethical, and philosophical terms, which tends to raise the question: 'Are we all referring to the same God?' As Swinburne notes, except for pockets of atheistic Africans in urban cities, the need for classic apologetic proofs for the existence of God is negligible, since Africans already function within a religious worldview that assumes the existence of God or the gods. The fundamental question is: Which of them, God or gods?[19]

Issues Around African Traditional Religion (ATR)

Mbiti argues that ATRs are like the Jewish religion in having more continuities than discontinuities with the gospel of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ himself being

[15] Ndereba, 'The Supremacy of Jesus Christ'.
[16] Mbiti, *African Religions*, 66.
[17] Chege, *The Meru Religious Beliefs.*
[18] Sochanngam, 'African Christians'.
[19] Swinburne, 'The Social Theory'.

their fulfilment.[20] On the opposite pole, Byang Kato claimed that ATRs have more discontinuities with the gospel message than continuities.[21] Bediako stands in conversation with both of them, delicately balancing African identity and gospel fidelity.[22] ATRs speak of God based on his attributes. For example, the Akan (Ghana) refer to God as 'he who knows or sees all', while the Zulu (South Africa) and Banyarwanda (Rwanda) call him 'the wise one'. These concepts reveal some level of continuity with Scripture in terms of attributes and names for God.

The Christian worldview is unique in its exclusivity concerning how humanity attains salvation. One of the ways that apologetics can help combat issues around ATR is to demonstrate that ATRs are primarily concerned with communal harmony, not salvation. While this expands concepts of reconciliation to a holistic scope, it bypasses the underlying Christian understanding of salvation and atonement. Additionally, the concept of the Trinity, which interfaces with the person and work of Jesus Christ, parts company with the monotheism, pantheism, and polytheism of ATRs.

Issues of Apostasy

Apostasy refers to a situation in which an individual has strayed from biblical truth or denied the faith. The Pastoral Epistles indicate Paul's understanding that apostasy will continuously increase until it reaches its climax just before the second coming of Christ.[23] This expectation is well demonstrated in Gnosticism, which denied or radically reinterpreted the doctrine of the incarnation,[24] the resurrection and the last judgement,[25] with an emphasis on knowledge and wisdom as means of salvation.[26]

According to Paul, the journey into apostasy follows four major steps: People will not endure sound teaching; they will accumulate teachers to suit their own passions; they will turn away from listening to the truth; and they will wander

[20] Mbiti (1979)
[21] Kato, *Theological Pitfalls*.
[22] Hartman, 'Kwame Bediako'.
[23] 1 Tim 4:1–5; 2 Tim 3:1–9; 4:1–5; Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus*.
[24] Akin, *1, 2, 3, John*.
[25] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude.*
[26] Fiensy, *New Testament Introduction*.

off into myths (2 Timothy 4:3–4). Through apologetics, the 'sound teaching' postulated by Paul can be upheld in the face of growing prosperity messages that proclaim grace as an all-around licence for any type of living.

Issues Around Islam

In Islam, there is only one God. His name is Allah and his nature is entirely singular. While this appears like a continuity with the Christian faith, closer examination reveals several deviations. Allah created man, not in his image, but simply to do his will on earth. Allah has no children. As an impersonal god, Allah owes nothing to his followers. Only faithful Muslims have the chance to earn Allah's love through a life of hard work.[27] Moreover, while Jesus is described in Islam as born of a virgin, sinless, a prophet, and the messiah who will come again, he is not acknowledged as the Son of Allah. Islam's concept of salvation is multifaceted, if not unclear and problematic for the Muslim believer.[28]

The words and actions attributed to Muhammad in the Hadith were gathered more than two centuries after his death. Given the lateness of these reports with no external corroboration, it is extremely difficult to confirm their reliability. Furthermore, while the Quran confirms the existence and singular nature of Jesus, it also states that he was not crucified. The biblical account of Jesus' crucifixion, however, is nearly universally accepted by critical scholars, with more than a dozen references in non-Christian sources confirming Jesus' life and death.[29]

Priest documents how Islamic apologists and missionaries are persuasively winning Igbo Christians to Islam through a combination of apologetics, social care, and misrepresentation of Scripture.[30] Most significantly, those who convert are largely nominal Christians — not deeply convicted of their faith. This underscores the urgent need to partner with local churches, ministries, and theological institutions to help Christians become more convicted and

[27] Motzki, 'The Collection of the Qur'ān'.
[28] Campbell, Apologetic Response.
[29] Campbell, Apologetic Response.
[30] Priest, *The Conversion of Igbo Christians.*

grounded in their faith, and be better equipped to bring the lost back to Christ.[31]

Methodology

This research uses the systematic literature review methodology. It also benefits from an African theological approach based on the Holy Bible and its context. Instead of collecting primary data, the research examines the literature of missiology, apologetics, African theology, Islamic studies, and African traditional religions. The research reviews fixed sources, such as the Holy Bible, using biblical exegesis, and secondary sources, such as peer-reviewed articles, monographs, journals, and dissertations. The research also reviews the existing literature in the field by suggesting a context-specific interpretation. Thus, the analysis of the literature allows the researcher to approach the problem from a biblical perspective while ensuring cultural relevancy.

Search and Selection Strategy

In this review, information was gathered from the databases of ATLA Religion and Google Scholar, from theological seminary libraries, along with searches of university institutional repositories for relevant dissertations and theses. The search phrases included combinations of such words as 'apologetics', 'African Traditional Religion', 'contextualisation', 'Islamic apologetics', 'discipleship', 'Great Commission', and 'African missiology'. No limitations were set regarding publication years because the review included texts that are generally recognised as essential to the study, regardless of their year of publication. Such texts include Geisler, Craig, and Moreland. Preference was given to resources published after 1970 because that represents the time period when the African theological tradition started to flourish in terms of the research of ATR and contextualisation, especially by scholars such as Mbiti, Kato, Idowu, and Bediako.

[31] Wagner, *Church Planting*; Borthwick, Strategizing; 2015; Stetzer, *Subversive Kingdom*.

The included sources presented direct discussions relating to apologetics, African missiology, or one or more the challenge areas analysed in this paper. Those areas included cultural practices, a multiplicity of gods, ATR, apostasy, and Islam. Sources that dealt with apologetics in a Western philosophical style without reference to the African case were excluded. Also excluded were literature that dealt with missiology in general, but had no strong apologetic missiology or worldview-comparison aspect or method. The only exception to these exclusions was Scripture, which was treated as a primary source in terms of standard biblical exegesis. The criteria used for secondary literature was not applied to Scripture.

Rationale for a Literature-Review Design

As the research questions involved in this study revolve around existing knowledge and information rather than investigating a new, previously unknown group of people, a systematic review of the literature approach was used in the analysis. The final part of the analysis involved the determination of the main functions of apologetics in relation to the matters of discipleship and evangelism, as well as the main obstacles faced by African missions in recent times. Both questions require the application of systematic search, evaluation, and synthesis of the existing scholarship.

The third research question, concerning the application of apologetics in church and ministerial training, is more practical in nature and must be solved by empirical research. However, in this paper, it has been treated in light of the literature, obtaining what the existing literature says or suggests about its implementation. Therefore, the recommendations in this study should be considered literature-based hypotheses eligible for future empirical research, rather than the results of actual research.

Summary of Findings

The following findings emerge from the systematic literature review conducted in this study.

First, apologetics, though not a widely recognized concept among people in ministry, is not an unknown concept. The reviewed literature consistently

confirmed that apologetics is a way of deepening knowledge of the faith that the believer professes, and has a significant impact on how believers fulfil the Great Commission.

Second, the prominent and recurring challenges identified in the literature included syncretism, secularism, atheism, Islam, agnosticism, and the growing LGBTQ movement. These challenges are compounded by socio-economic and political factors including insecurity, increasing poverty levels, and the temptation of materialism among the youth.

Third, other religious worldviews are increasingly willing to engage Christian believers in debate-like conversations because of the perceived poor knowledge that many Christians have exhibited. Islamic apologetics in particular have developed sophisticated arguments that require an equally rigorous Christian response.

Fourth, the literature affirms that apologetics should not be seen as purely the use of logic to establish the Christian faith. The Christian faith is first and foremost faith-based; apologetics must remain Spirit-led, while being intellectually rigorous.

Discussion

Examined in conjunction with the theoretical framework presented earlier, the results of this research point to one main assertion: the difficulty of the African missions should be understood as a deficiency of trust rather than a deficiency of information. Supporting this conclusion are the three pieces of evidence gained from the analysis.

First, all of the sources collected show the significance of apologetics,[32] but the given sources were written mainly with respect to a traditional apologetic context related to the West. Thus, the principle represented in the sources is the necessity of proof for spiritual reality. The complications pointed out by this review for African missions are the different proof issues one deals with in African missions. The main issue for the majority of Africans is not the

[32] Markos, *Apologetics*; Craig, *Reasonable Faith*; 1994; Geisler and Hoffman, *Why I am a Christian*; Cowan, 'Introduction'.

existence (or non-existence) of spiritual reality, but the question of which position is right and appropriate with respect to that reality. The divergence between the material provided in the relevant literature and the actual challenges African believers face allows one to conclude that the African mission needs to develop its own materials for apologetics, instead of applying materials developed in the Western literature.

Second, the evidence presented in Priest's argument that converts to Islam from the Christian faith in Igbo communities are generally nominal rather than true believers[33] is the most compelling argument in support of the confidence-deficit theory as opposed to the knowledge-deficit theory. If the problem were simply that individuals lacked the necessary information to convert, religious conversion would occur primarily among the least educated. What Priest's findings show is that these individuals probably know the gospel and what it involves but have not, for one reason or another, actually believed it – which is precisely the gap that apologetics aims to fill when it serves the purpose of strengthening the faith of existing believers.

Third, despite initially seeming unrelated to the core of the apologetics literature, the review's findings on socio-economic pressures such as poverty, insecurity, and materialism among youth can be seen to have strong connections to the paper's account of apostasy and prosperity theology. That is to say, because the idea of the prosperity theology gives rise to the belief system that wealth is the measure of success, the socio-economic pressures outlined in the review can be understood as the effects of those religious failings. This link is made to show that the review's contribution is to demonstrate how the wrong theology bridges religious and socio-economic contexts. However, it ought to be clear that these points should not be understood as establishing a causal relationship between the socio-economic pressures and the theological claims made. Further research, as indicated in the limitations section below, is needed to test the argument.

[33] Priest, *The Conversion of Igbo Christians.*

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that apologetics is of utmost importance in the propagation of the Christian faith. The reviewed literature consistently affirmed that the definition of 'apologetics' has yet to reach a consensus. Many people tend to have a partial or limited understanding of the term. Despite this challenge, there is unanimous agreement about the relevance of apologetics for the fulfilment of the Great Commission. Apologetics will enhance believers' conviction and confidence to share their faith with the people around them. The role of the church, apologists, and other Christian organisations in achieving this is indispensable. There is need for more pastors and church leaders to incorporate apologetics into their messages and Bible study programmes, and for 'train the trainer' seminars and workshops to equip pastors and Bible study teachers to learn from renowned apologists. Further research is recommended to explore how apologetics can be formally integrated into African theological curricula and denominational training programmes.

This paper's unique contribution is that it uses the combination of apologetics with the African missiology to demonstrate how the main issue with African mission really manifests itself as a lack of confidence instead of a lack of knowledge. This insight provided real practical implications for the design and organisation of curricula for discipleship programs in churches in Africa.

Recommendations

As a result of the importance and relevance of apologetics established in this study, the following recommendations are made:

- In this age of increasing pluralism, all believers should take advantage of training and seminars that focus on apologetic strategies and techniques, coupled with other aspects of mission training.

- Church leaders, pastors, and ministries should endeavour to organise apologetics conferences and workshops for teachers and ministers in their sphere of influence, equipping members for the challenges they encounter in evangelism and daily life.

- Missionaries will benefit immensely from knowledge of how to constructively and persuasively witness to people of diverse belief; they should therefore seek institutions that teach new and effective strategies for missions and the defence of faith.

- Theological institutions in Africa should consider incorporating apologetics as a core subject in their curricula, particularly with attention to ATR, Islam, and contemporary African philosophical challenges.

- Since the discussion links prosperity theology to economic pressure, apologetics curriculum should be constructed to include a segment devoted to the theology of wealth and suffering rather than only being taught as a component of philosophical discussion.

- Since the literature has treated classical existence of God apologetics and comparative worldview apologetics in isolation, in seminary and lay institute programs the class on apologetics should be integrated with knowledge of ATR and Islam instead of being taught as a separate component.

Limitations of the Study

This study is restricted by aspects specific to the methodology used, namely, the systematic literature review, which limits the study in certain ways. First, and most important, because of the design choice noted in the opening of this paper, the study does not independently test the claims of apologetics and African missions against primary data from believers, pastors, or missionaries; rather, it takes what the literature says about them. The suggestions and recommendations presented above are therefore best interpreted as hypotheses derived from the literature, appropriate for empirical testing in the future. They are not the result of actual testing on a living population.

Second, the sources used in the literature reviewed are mostly sources in the English language and are of a Protestant evangelical nature. A more comprehensive account would also include African theological voices from

Catholic and Orthodox perspectives, as well as from Francophone and Lusophone Africa.

Third, the review focused on Nigeria and West Africa as specific areas. The findings about Islam, ATR, and apostasy may not be as applicable in other parts of Africa where the histories of religion are different. For example, the experience of East Africa with ATR is quite different from that of West Africa in some important ways.

Finally, source selection in any type of literature review is a subjective decision about what is relevant and of good quality; therefore, the review will take a form that may vary from one reviewer to another based on their own theological starting point.

Suggestions for Further Research

Following the limitations discussed above, as well as the recommendation for further research in the conclusion's final paragraph, three possible paths of further research can be suggested. First, and most obviously, to address the major limitation of this study, an empirical follow-up research project in the form of structured interviews or a survey conducted with pastors, seminary students, and ordinary believers would show whether the relevance of the proposed confidence-deficit hypothesis is indeed confirmed in contemporary reality. Second, a study comparing apologetic orientations of West and East Africa or the Anglophone and Francophone regions would address whether the approach and theoretical concept discussed in the theoretical framework are relevant in different regional contexts that have been shaped by diverse histories of development. Third, in accordance with the link established between prosperity theology and socio-economic conditions, research aimed at measuring the impact of an apologetic training curriculum on the community would contribute to the transition of this field of research from literature-summary-based studies to empirical findings-centred investigations.

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