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Review

Ukwuije, Bede Uche, *Trinity and Inculturation: The Humanity of God and the Future of African Theology*. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2026, ISBN 9780268211141, 360 pp.

Reviewed by Dr. Yure Comfort Yola[1]

African Christian theologians and educated Africans have often wondered how their pre-Christian heritage relates to their present faith and especially how to think biblically as Africans whose pre-Christian thoughts permeate their lives. Being a product of this background and writing for the same audience, Bede Uche Ukuije, in this great book *Trinity and Inculturation*, addresses a critical issue: the naming of God in African theology. *Trinity and Inculturation* is an attempt to move discussions of African theology forward, contrary to the initial efforts of African theologians who focused on the definition of African religious identity. These theologians sought to bridge the gap between Christian monotheism and African monotheism and frequently Africanised Jesus, referring to him as our ancestor or elder brother. Ukuije's book answer another question: How shall we view Jesus, not only in his humanity, but also as a member of the Godhead?

To answer this question in African theology requires an unapologetic theological method in which there is no middle ground from which the argument can be built. That is, viewing Jesus as our ancestor or elder brother may tally with African thought, but viewing him in his position as a member of the Godhead does not necessarily find a parallel or point of departure in African thought. Hence, Ukuije's book is an attempt to avoid the temptation to eradicate what is most central to Christian theology—the triune God—while

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focusing on some aspects of that theology which resonate with African thought.

The work contributes significantly to debates about African identity. Rather than grounding identity exclusively in cultural heritage, Ukwuije argues for understanding humanity through God's self-revelation in Christ. This approach provides a theological basis for human dignity, social responsibility, and intercultural dialogue. Despite its academic nature, the book addresses several critical issues that remain highly relevant in contemporary Africa such as religious pluralism, Christian-Muslim relations, the use of religion for politics, the persistence of traditional religious worldviews, and questions of cultural identity in a globalised world. Ukwuije's concern that religion can be manipulated for violence, political domination, or cultural exclusion resonates strongly with contemporary African realities, especially in Nigeria, the author's particular context. The book encourages Christians to engage other religions without abandoning the distinctiveness of Christian faith.

The book offers a valuable resource for seminaries, universities, and theological institutions as it challenges both lecturers and students to move beyond simplistic contextualisation and to wrestle seriously with doctrinal questions. Its emphasis on the Trinity, Christology, and theological method will help strengthen the academic rigour in African theological scholarship. Ukuije's argument that Christian mission must combine cultural sensitivity with faithfulness to the uniqueness of Christ is particularly important in view of the tendency toward universality. *Trinity and Inculturation* also provides theological resources for addressing the challenges of secularisation, prosperity theology, religious competition, and globalisation, which confront the African church today.

Ukuije's work demonstrates impressive historical and theological depth as the author traces debates about African identity, religion, and the naming of God from Enlightenment philosophy through modern African theology. The book also successfully engages African theology in dialogue with global theological scholarship and courageously critiques some long-standing assumptions within African inculturation theology while remaining committed to the African theological project.

Unfortunately, the book's critique of earlier African theologians is stronger than its engagement with present pastoral realities. Greater engagement with issues such as corruption, youth unemployment, migration, digital culture, and gender considers would strengthen the books practical impact.

The book is also intellectually demanding and is intended primarily for advanced theological readers. Some readers may find its technical language challenging. Its sustained engagement with German theology, especially Jüngel, may be difficult for readers without prior exposure to systematic theology. Readers may also question whether Jüngel's framework, developed in a European context, can adequately address all dimensions of African religious experience. More could be said about Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity, which currently shape so much of the contemporary African religious landscape.

Even so, *Trinity and Inculturation* is a major contribution to contemporary African theology. It is rigorous, original, and thought-provoking. While some arguments invite debate, the book successfully stimulates fresh reflection on God, culture, mission, and Christian identity in Africa. It is recommended to scholars, pastors, seminarians, and advanced theology students as a valuable framework for reconsidering the future direction of African theology.