

**Dube, Z., Maseno-Ouma, L. & Mligo, E.S. (eds.). 2018. *The Bible and Sociological Contours: Some African Perspectives: Festschrift for Professor Halvor Moxnes*. *Bible and Theology in Africa*, Vol. 26. New York, NY: Peter Lang. Eight Chapters; pp. xi–146; ISBN 978-1-4331-3290-2.**

The purpose of the book is to honour the contribution of Professor Halvor Moxnes and his engagement with biblical scholarship, particularly of those people on the margins. Issues discussed in the book include how regular people in the communities read and interpret the Bible, and issues about gender, cultures, economy, politics, sex, and patriarchy.

The book comprises eight chapters with different African authors who come up with different approaches and methods in interpreting the Bible in an African perspective. These authors are Zorodzai Dube, Loreen Maseno-Ouma, Elia Shabani Mligo, Jocobus Kok, Philip Musoni, Lovemore Togarasei, Ephraim Tshuma and Gerald O. West. Issues researched and discussed include how to read, understand, and interpret the Bible in the context of people in the grassroots. Some of such issues include the following Papers. Mligo's paper is methodological. It discusses how contextual Bible Study can be a useful tool for social analysis and practical engagement with issues of life. Philip Musoni discusses how the Church understands the image of Christology in the African perspectives differently from how the missionaries saw it and influenced African people. Ephraim Tshuma continues to investigate the influence of African Independent Churches (AICs), which came as a result of a response to the western theologies which seemed to be more theoretical rather than practical and, therefore, failed to answer the theological challenges of African people to suffering and oppression.

Another critical issue in the book addressed by Lovemore Togarasei is that of HIV and AIDS, which is a pandemic in sub-Saharan countries in Africa. Theologians see the need for contextual criticism and liberation hermeneutics of the Bible to be able to find ways of how to cope up with the pandemic in order to come up with right answers against stigma and discrimination, sexual oppression, guilt and shame. Moreover, Gerald O. West portrays the whole issue of a new South Africa and its struggles to find justice and peace in South Africa; the authors urge to incorporate the scripture or theology in trying to answer issues that are raised in South

African to bring about unity, liberation, socio-economic freedom and development of the people.

The book continues to point to issues of power and gender which are exposed and challenged. Loreen Maseno-Ouma challenges the power, gender and patriarchal systems. The male domination, the oppression and hierarchy are challenged in the light of new exegetical methods of texts. Through history, Africa has been living in oppressive circumstances and because of that situation, people live in delicate circumstances that are very vulnerable. Most people live in fear and in uncertainty of life. Therefore, this book tries to seek ways of trying to find answers to all these challenges in an African context by using biblical texts.

The book has been written by scholars from the African context and mostly from the southern part of Africa. However, some issues discussed are globally applicable. It is my hope that western scholars will also find some issues which are challenging ones for them, and find a way of researching more on them. Issues such as the prosperity are not only found to African preachers but also to the western world preachers; and probably, we need also to go further to know why do such churches grow numerically bigger and bigger every day?

Authors have written on issues of inclusiveness; however, to my understanding, this has been very difficult to accept such a notion within African churches. Being inclusive to homosexuals in our communities is still very difficult because it hardly fits into African theology. These need more reinforcement in bringing about justice and peace. Africa has been facing a lot of challenges such as civil wars, poverty, and power struggles.

In conclusion, I must admit that the book is very good, insightful, challenging, informative and very effective African scholarship. It points to the need for more work and research to answer some of the very challenging and provocative themes and questions raised in it. Frankly, I found *The Bible and Sociological Contours* to have achieved the purpose in most respects. I recommend the book to students and teachers of contextual theology in universities and theological colleges.

#### **Reviewed by**

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