



BOOK NOTE REVIEW

Knoetze, Johannes, ed. *Evangelism — Perspective from an African Context*. Wellington, South Africa: Barnabus Publishers, 2024. Pp. 323. R250.00 (paperback).

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In 2023, the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria organized a conference on the theme “Critical Discussion of Evangelism in (Southern) Africa in 2023.” The book *Evangelism – Perspective from an African Context* captures the key lessons from that gathering in twenty chapters, divided into four parts:

1. Theological Perspectives on Evangelism
2. Evangelism and Other Religions, Faiths, and Worldviews
3. Evangelism as a Holistic Approach
4. Evangelism in Specific Contexts

One of the book’s central arguments is that evangelism should not be reduced to a purely individual decision for Jesus. In chapter 19, **Lourens Bosman** articulates this well, arguing that true evangelism leads to following Jesus and, in turn, calls believers to Kingdom living. When evangelism is solely about personal salvation — *my faith, my eternal life, my experiences* — it risks fostering a self-centered spirituality. This individualistic approach can overshadow the broader reality of God’s Kingdom on earth and the cosmic scope of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. Instead, Bosman advocates for a holistic and integrated evangelism, where the church as a faith community collectively embodies the Gospel through both word and deed. In the African context, this communal perspective resonates deeply. Bosman also highlights the importance of corporate prayer for evangelism as an expression of this communal perspective.

A particularly insightful chapter is “**Evangelism in Southern African Pentecostalism**” by **Jones Mawarenga**. The professor from University of Malawi (in Zomba) explores how the Azusa Street Revival influenced early Pentecostal missionaries, such as John G. Lake, who brought the movement to South Africa. Migrant workers (*matchona*) played a crucial role in spreading Pentecostalism to countries like Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania. The Pentecostal emphasis on the second coming of Christ fueled a strong zeal for

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evangelism. Additionally, Pentecostalism's belief that *any* believer, regardless of gender, could be empowered by the Holy Spirit for evangelism led to a natural inclusion of women in ministry. Mawarenga provides three short biographies of influential Pentecostal evangelists: Laiton Kalumbule (Malawi), Nicholas Bhengu (South Africa), and Reinhard Bonnke (Lesotho). He also notes that Pentecostalism aligns well with Africa's oral culture, making it more accessible than other Christian traditions. The movement's openness to incorporating African musical instruments and its emphasis on meeting the needs of the poor further contributed to its widespread appeal. Moreover, Pentecostalism inspired various theological education initiatives with a strong evangelistic focus. Another Zomba-based scholar, **Brian Theu**, reinforces Mawarenga's points in chapter 14, arguing that Pentecostals experience *Spirit baptism* as empowerment for evangelistic ministry.

The book also includes two European perspectives. Stefan Paas and Michael Biehl offer insights from outside Africa, with Biehl's chapter on *reverse evangelism* among African migrants in Germany standing out. He observes that evangelistic strategies commonly used in Africa, such as emphasizing the Holy Spirit, often do not translate well to German society: "It is because Germans do not give space to the Spirit" (291).

However, some chapters, such as **Christo Lombaard's** discussions on Implicit Religion and Religious Appropriation (in chapter 10), become overly philosophical, making their practical relevance to the African context unclear. More focused editing could have improved readability. Additionally, a concluding chapter summarizing the book's key lessons for evangelistic practice would have strengthened its impact.

Evangelism — Perspective from an African Context is a valuable contribution to contemporary missiological discussions, particularly for those engaged in evangelism in Africa. By emphasizing a communal and holistic approach, the book challenges the dominance of individualistic evangelism models. While some chapters could have been more practically oriented, this collection provides significant insights for theologians, church leaders, and missionaries alike.