



# Sunomilean Theology as a Model of Inter-Contextual Biblical Theology

## *Conceptual and Methodological Foundations for Theologizing with Others*

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### Abstract

The heightened glocalization of the contemporary world that has engendered the radical inter-contextuality of its societies and the irreversible interpenetration of local and global realities demands that Christian theologians, besides building aptitudes in constructing local theologies, should equally develop competence in constructing intercontextual theology. Drawing upon an eclectic methodology that merges narrative analysis, thematic analysis, and creative research, this article posits that engaging theology in a glocalized world requires the glocalization of theology. It proposes *sunomilean* theology (theology/theologizing with others) as a model of intercontextual biblical theologizing that fits today's glocal reality. Sunomilean theology is rooted in Peter's conversation with Cornelius in Acts 10:27 and finds profound expression in the Council of Jerusalem's narrative that Luke records in Acts 15. Its methodology leans on a three-step itinerary: (1) theological self-awareness, (2) other-theological awareness, and (3) intercontextual theological negotiation.

### Résumé

La glocalisation accrue du monde contemporain, qui a engendré l'intercontextualité radicale de ses sociétés et l'interpénétration irréversible des réalités locales et mondiales, exige que les théologiens chrétiens, outre le développement de leurs aptitudes à construire des théologies locales, développent également leurs compétences en matière de construction de la théologie intercontextuelle. S'appuyant sur une méthodologie éclectique qui fusionne l'analyse narrative, l'analyse

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thématique et la recherche créative, cet article postule que s'engager dans la théologie dans un monde glocalisé nécessite la glocalisation de la théologie. Il propose la théologie *sunomiléenne* (la théologie/théologisation avec les autres) comme modèle de théologisation biblique intercontextuelle adapté à la réalité glocal d'aujourd'hui. La théologie sunomiléenne trouve ses racines dans la conversation entre Pierre et Corneille dans Actes 10:27 et trouve une expression profonde dans le récit du concile de Jérusalem que Luc rapporte dans Actes 15. Sa méthodologie s'appuie sur un itinéraire en trois étapes : (1) la conscience théologique de soi, (2) la conscience théologique de l'autre et (3) la négociation théologique intercontextuelle.

**Resumo**

A crescente glocalização do mundo contemporâneo, que gerou a intercontextualidade radical das suas sociedades e a interpenetração irreversível das realidades locais e globais, exige que os teólogos cristãos, além de desenvolverem as suas aptidões para construir teologias locais, desenvolvam também as suas competências na construção da teologia intercontextual. Baseando-se numa metodologia eclética que combina análise narrativa, análise temática e pesquisa criativa, este artigo postula que o envolvimento com a teologia num mundo glocalizado requer a glocalização da teologia. Ele propõe a teologia *sunomileana* (teologia/teologização com os outros) como um modelo de teologização bíblica intercontextual adaptado à realidade glocal de hoje. A teologia sunomileana tem as suas raízes na conversa entre Pedro e Cornélio em Atos 10:27 e encontra uma expressão profunda no relato do concílio de Jerusalém que Lucas relata em Atos 15. A sua metodologia baseia-se num itinerário em três etapas: (1) a consciência teológica de si mesmo, (2) a consciência teológica do outro e (3) a negociação teológica intercontextual.

**Keywords**

Intercontextual theology, theology with others, glocalization, Acts 15, Jerusalem Council

**Mots-clés**

Théologie intercontextuelle, théologie avec les autres, glocalisation, Actes 15, Concile de Jérusalem

**Palavras-chave**

Teologia intercontextual, teologia com os outros, glocalização, Atos 15, Concílio de Jerusalém

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**Introduction**

“How can we start with the many local and regional churches around the world and build a global fellowship — a fellowship that does ministry and theological reflections together . . . ?”<sup>1</sup> Veteran anthropologist and missiologist, Paul Hiebert, asked this question several years ago in connection to the need to adapt missions to a glocal world (a world characterized by the profound interpenetration of local and global realities) with the cortège of mutations it has triggered in world systems. The question highlights his concern to engage Christian ministry and theology, in this postmodern world of intensified intercontextual encounters, in ways that pay attention to both the local and global contexts. Fueled by such macro-social phenomena as mass migration, international exchange, global economy and business, globalization, top-notched information and communication technology, sophisticated transport systems, the accelerated respatialization of the world through the internet that has disembedded and reconfigured social geography, today’s world is interconnected in complex ways and has witnessed a lightning pluralization of its societies. Both at local and global levels, the contemporary world has become incurably intercontextual.

This heightened intercontextuality of the world begs that missions’ activists (theologians and practitioners) retune their approaches so that they engage contemporary glocal challenges. From a theological standpoint, this may entail constructing biblical theologies that reflect both local and global contexts. Hiebert suggests that creating networks that begin at local levels, developing global dialogues and partnerships to enhance fellowship and ministry, and engaging local and global theologies are important steps in responding to the globalization<sup>2</sup> of the world and the church.<sup>3</sup> This article considers the need to develop intercontextual biblical theologies as a way of responding to challenges related to living in a world where global forces have an impact on local lives and vice versa. It draws from the conviction that engaging theology in a glocalised world requires the globalization of theology. Its purpose is (1) to lay the foundations for an intercontextual biblical theology that sharpens the ability to theologize with others, and (2) to propose a model for biblical theology/theologizing with others, namely, *sunomilean* theology.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions*, 178.

<sup>2</sup> The word globalization conflates the terms *global* and *local*. It involves the incorporation of a global reality (product, service, strategy, concept) into a local reality to adapt it to that specific setting. Therefore, what is glocal or glocalized includes intermeshing of universal/universalizing and local/particularizing properties.

<sup>3</sup> Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts*, 178.

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**Conceptual Clarifications**

I will begin by defining the key concepts of *contextual*, *intercontextual*, and *biblical theology* and introducing the term *sunomilean theology*.

**Context**

The etymology of the word *context* suggests the image of “weaving together.” From this perspective, context conveys the idea of weaving a phenomenon (an event, an occurrence, a text, etc.) together with its surrounding/setting to enable a greater understanding of that phenomenon. In this study, I define context as the setting (circumstances, environment, or background) in which a phenomenon occurs, manifest, or exist and, in the light of which, the phenomenon can be better understood. *Context* clarifies the meaning of a phenomenon and is essential for interpreting it. Considered primarily from a socio-anthropological perspective, *context* integrates several components.

1. The *cultural component* focuses on the cultural dimension of a context. It includes (although is not limited to) the worldviews, philosophical assumptions, belief systems, values, and practices of a social group.
2. The *social component* emphasizes a society and its organization, comprising such features as social structures, social relationships, social geography, and social dynamics which undergird life in a social group, impact individual/group behavior, and conditions their interpretation of social reality.
3. The *historical component* highlights the history of a context, encompassing past events, conditions, and development that influence the present and shape the future of a social group. Understanding how these features influence a present situation, event, or sociocultural phenomena is vital in interpreting these phenomena.
4. The *situational component* is the specific situation that forms the immediate setting of an occurrence, phenomenon, interaction, etc. It embraces notions such as time, location, immediate environment, and others.
5. The *physical component* is the tangible geographical environment that surrounds an event, interaction, or a sociocultural phenomenon. More than often recognized, physical geographical features that constitute the setting of a phenomenon/situation greatly contribute to a fuller understanding of that phenomenon/situation.
6. *Personal and communal experience* are the daily experiences

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of a social group or individuals within a social group and how these experiences shape the social identity, collective consciousness, and *weltanschauungen*<sup>4</sup> of the people of a specific context.

7. *Social location* describes the multiple factors that outline an individual's place/position within a social structure based on his or her social identity and the resulting privileges/disadvantages. Social location combines social markers such as ethnicity, race, gender, social class, geographical location, age, education, ability, religion, sexual orientation, etc. Coming to grips with social location allows for an analysis of how the above factors may tailor the social dynamics, experiences, and perspectives of an individual or a social group.
8. *Social change* portrays the alteration over a period of time of social mechanisms (social organization, dynamics, interactions and relationships) within a social structure that engenders more or less visible social mutations. These mutations may occur at the level of social institutions, social patterns, social behaviors, or social relations. Understanding these changes is vital in understanding context.

These components underline the complexity and inclusiveness of context as each intersect and interplay in the constitution of context. To understand and interpret the reality of a social group, each of these must be studied.

We thus see that that context is larger than culture. Culture is only an aspect of context. As a larger and more comprehensive reality, context encompasses culture. *Culture* and *context* are not synonyms. Similarly, *intercontextual* and *intercultural* are likewise not synonymous, although these concepts may overlap.

***Intercontextual***

While *contextual* highlights what is associated with a *context*, *intercontextual* indicates what occurs in the *intersection between two or multiple contexts*. The prefix *inter-* provides the term an interactional and co-constructional force. The former highlights the reciprocity of action and influence that various contexts have on each other, while the latter emphasizes the collaborative negotiation and construction of meaning that occurs in the convergence of contexts. The prefix *inter-* communicates the notion of *conjunctive in-betweenness*; that is, the ability to intermediate, connect,

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<sup>4</sup> German: literally 'world-perception'. This term, now part of the English lexicon, refers to the worldview or particular philosophy of a given group or individual.

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consociate, or bring distinct phenomena/realities together in an interactive synergy. This means that intercontextuality accentuates mutuality, interconnectedness, sharing, reciprocity, and consociation. It is situated at the confluence of contexts and finds its place in the interaction between self and otherness.

To help explain the concepts at the heart of intercontextuality, I have coined three portmanteaus: *betweenomenon*, *betweenitivity*, and *interism*. The first term, *betweenomenon*, combines ‘between’ and ‘phenomenon’. It describes what exists or is produced between two or more phenomena. A *betweenomenon* is an in-between reality — a phenomenon situated at the junction of two or more realities. *Betweenitivity* brings together the terms ‘between’ and ‘activity’. It expresses the notion of intervallic activity; the back-and-forth movement that occurs in a space between two or more realities. The third term merges the prefix *inter-* with the suffix *-ism*. *Active interism* describes the ability to understand, move, think or live in intercontextual spaces. It presupposes the prior development of an integrative or multi/meta-contextual self, that is, a self that has integrated the ability to accommodate and function in multiple contexts. This ability can also be thought of as *dynamic intervalism*.

### ***Sunomilean Theology***

I recently coined the term sunomilean from the Greek verb συνομιλέω (*sunomilēō*). The term compounds the preposition συν (*sun*, ‘with’) with the verb ὁμιλέω (*homilēō*, ‘I converse, talk’) and can be defined as “I converse with, I talk with, I discuss, I hold a conversation with, or I am in company with.”<sup>5</sup> In this light, *sunomileo* is not talking *to* others, talking *about* others, or talking *for* others. Rather, it is talking *with* others, talking *together with* others, or *conversing with* them. While talking to others is *unidirectional/informative speech*, talking about others is *otherizing speech* (speech about others; often, without those others), and talking for others is *substitutional speech*, talking with others is *conversational, polylogical, heteroglossic, and multidirectional speech*. Sunomilean discourse thus emphasizes mutuality, reciprocity, and correlation in communication.

*Sunomilēō* occurs in the NT only in Acts 10:27. The verse is niched in a larger narrative that stretches from Acts 10:1 to Acts 10:48. This narrative recounts the story of the conversion to Christ of a Roman centurion, Cornelius, alongside his household through the ministry of Peter. Prior to this conversion, Luke indicates that, through the “Vision of a Sheet and Animals” (Acts 10:9-16), Peter underwent a conversion from his ethnocentrism — what Darrell Whiteman calls Peter’s “second conversion,” to prepare him for cross-cultural

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<sup>5</sup> William D. Mounce, “συνομιλέω.” Cp. BDAG, s.v. συνομιλέω.

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mission.<sup>6</sup> Acts 10: 27 specifically highlights the conversation that occurred between Peter (a Hebrew) and Cornelius (a Gentile) when they met around the proper worship of God. Following Cornelius' attempt to worship Peter as documented in Acts 10:26, Peter seeks to form the right understanding (theology) about how to accurately worship God and how God relates with God's servants. Although, by prostrating to Peter to worship him, Cornelius expresses the fear of God and his reverence to Peter as God's servant, by the same token, he mistakes God's messenger for the messenger's God. This is understandable given the pagan background of Cornelius. It is this pagan atavism that, Peter, in an engaging talk with Cornelius, seeks to redress.

In this God-orchestrated encounter of people from different contexts, Peter and Cornelius are brought together in a discussion about God and the worship of God. This generates an inter-ethnic, intercultural, interreligious, or, better still, an *intercontextual* conversation that occurs within a framework of respect and mutual understanding. The episode clearly illustrates the essence of a sunomilean approach to theology.<sup>7</sup> Sunomilean theology is theology with others. It is dialogic, polylogic or multidirectional theology. It is theologizing that takes into consideration otherness. Sunomilean theology is *conversational theology*. It is theology in which people of different theological leanings can be engaged in a constructive talk/conversation. It is theology that captures, reflects, and represents the voices of many.

**Theological Knowledge as a Situated, Social, and Contextual Production**

Feminist epistemologists, social epistemologists, and epistemic contextualists argue that knowledge is situated, socially constructed, and contextually produced. Knowledge is situated because it reflects the situation of a cognizing subject — the knower; “situatedness influences knowers’ access to information and the terms in which they represent what they know.”<sup>8</sup> In this sense, “a knower is not just a dispassionate inquirer but one situated to reflect within a given cognitive context which determines the knowing outcome.”<sup>9</sup> Knowledge is socially constructed in that it is embedded in a social setting and reflects that setting. Factors associated with a social environment have the potential to shape the knowledge production and attribution of epistemic agents from that environment. Thus, a “society’s participation in knowledge

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<sup>6</sup> Darrell L. Whiteman, “The Conversion of a Missionary: A Missiological Study of Acts 10,” 19–21.

<sup>7</sup> See also the sunomilean theologizing in the conversations between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7–26) and between Jesus and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–32).

<sup>8</sup> Elisabeth Anderson, “Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science.”

<sup>9</sup> Adekunle Ibrahim, “Introduction to Epistemology,” 27.

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generation [is] inevitable.”<sup>10</sup> Knowledge is also rooted in a context. Contextualists stress this contextual anchorage of epistemic activities. They posit that knowers are, of necessity, situated/localized cognizers since their knowledge, to a great extent, mirrors the context in which they live. Therefore, knowledge production cannot be envisaged in abstraction from the context to which an epistemic agent belongs. Duncan Pritchard’s contention that “knowledge is a highly context-sensitive notion”<sup>11</sup> finds relevance here. It follows that knowledge is contextual, anchored in a social environment, and reflects a situational reality.

As a system of knowledge, theology is a social construction that is situated and embedded in context. This makes theology socially produced, situated, diverse, and polycentric. Theology is multisite and multiplistic. In this light, theology is fundamentally contextual, each theology is context-based, and there is a pluriversality of contextual theologies rather than just a single theology. Contextual theologians such as Arthur Glasser, Charles Kraft, Dean Gilliland, Paul Hiebert, Charles Van Engen, David Hesselgrave, R. Daniel Shaw, Edgard J. Ellison, Stephen Bevans, Robert Schreiter, and Fohle Lygunda li-M have correctly emphasized the central place of a contextual discourse in Christian theologizing. It is only through theological reflections that are *truly* informed by the realities of their contexts and allows members of specific contexts to encounter God in contextually relevant ways that Christ’s Lordship will be made intelligible to all peoples in all nations.

### **Limitations of Contextual Theology**

Although contextual theology is vital, as it enables contextually relevant and intelligible reflections on God in the Scriptures, this approach to theology presents several limitations that are organically tied to its situatedness. Although some contextual theologies are opened to other forms of theologies, narrow contextual theology<sup>12</sup> may lead to several pitfalls if its promoters are not conscious that contextual knowledge in general, by reason of its context-rootedness, is bound to a specific time and space. This is what epistemic invariantists have often emphasized. Following are some pitfalls of a narrow contextual theological discourse:

1. *The standardization of contextual theology.*  
When theology overly focuses on a specific context, it

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<sup>10</sup> Yigal Godler, Zvi Reich, and Miller Boaz, “Social Epistemology as a New Paradigm for Journalism and Media Studies,” 213.

<sup>11</sup> Duncan Pritchard, *What Is This Thing Called Knowledge?*, 177.

<sup>12</sup> By *narrow contextual theology*, I mean contextual theology that is not aware of other contextual theologies and does not care about theological universals.



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generally tends to only emphasize contextual specifics. A rigid fixation with contextual specifics may result in the standardization of one's contextual theology and its recognition as the measure of truth. This standardization harbors in itself the seed for relativizing Christian theology, reducing it to local expressions only, and to blur core theological expressions that apply universally.

2. *The fragmentation of theology.*

The logical consequence of reducing Christian theology to its local expressions only is the dismembering of theology. This dismembering allows for an undue dispersivity of theology, making it difficult to maintain consistent theological standards across various contexts. This has the potential of fragmenting the global church for the sake of particularistic emphases.

3. *Theological isolationism.*

When contextual theology is narrowly constructed and defined, it may result in rigid theological identitarian closure, theological ghettoization, or theological isletism (theological isolation that is driven by a desire to preserve a specific theological identity). Contextual theology that is enamored by itself and fails to look beyond itself runs the risk of isolating its promoters and consumers from the broader Christian community, leading to a deficient, if not total absence of, dialogue and collaboration between various contextual expressions of the faith.

4. *A lack of theological comprehensiveness.*

Contextual theological reflections, due to their inherent context anchorage, do not capture the whole picture of biblical theology. Contextual theology is like one of the many facets of a diamond. Although it reflects in a real sense the nature of a diamond, it nevertheless does not render a full depiction of the multifacetedness and multiperspectivity of that diamond.<sup>13</sup>

These limitations of narrow contextual theologizing accentuate the need to maintain an intentional equilibrium between contextual and global expressions of the Christian faith. They highlight the need for an intercontextual theology.

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<sup>13</sup> Editors' note: Ref. Gillian Mary Bediako, Benhardt Y. Quarshie, and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, eds., *Seeing New Facets of the Diamond: Christianity as a Universal Faith — Essays in Honour of Kwame Bediako*, Regnum Studies in Global Christianity (Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana: Regnum Africa, 2014).

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**Introducing Contextual Theology**

Intercontextual theology is constructed considering theological perspectives from several contexts. It is developed at the point of convergence of various contextual theological expressions. Intercontextual Christian theology may bring together Christian theologizing from different geographical spheres (e.g., Africa, Asia, Europe), Christian traditions (e.g., Evangelicals, Ecumenicals), theological perspectives (e.g., Arminianism, Calvinism), or social locations (e.g., Black theology, Feminist theology) in a constructive theological conversation. *Constructive* implies that, although intercontextual theologizing may be confrontational — that is, it may become a site of tension and contestation — it is carried out in the framework of Christian fellowship, its ultimate finality being that of common edification and socioconstructivism. By allowing theologians to bring their various contextual understanding of God in the Scriptures, intercontextual theology provides them with a “space to notice the resonances, tensions, weaknesses, and benefits of each perspective.”<sup>14</sup> It also sharpens their ability to present their theological stance, discuss their theological identities and that of others, meaningfully debate, learn from others, and collaborate in view of creating a greater kingdom synergy. In this light, intercontextual theology is a *betweenomenon* that results from a theological *betweenitivity* from several contexts.

Intercontextual theology is a relatively new field. As a result, there is a scarcity of material dealing specifically with the subject.<sup>15</sup> An internet search for written resources on the topic on 18 November 2024 yielded few results. Most of these were not academic articles on the subject but introductory statements from theological institutions that either offer intercontextual theological courses or schools whose educational philosophy is shaped by an intercontextual theological perspective. A search of Google Scholar for the phrase “intertextual theology” for twentieth century (1901–2000) publications found only a single article in 1989 using the term. A similar search for 2001–2010 found eight results whereas the next decade (2011–2020) found 47 results. Two books which

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<sup>14</sup> Maher, “The Opportunity of Inter-Contextual Theology.”

<sup>15</sup> There are a growing number of texts on *intercultural theology*, which, though an older concept, may be considered as a subcategory of *intercontextual theology*. But while culture is a key component of context, context is more than culture.

Editors’ note: see especially Judith Gruber, *Intercultural Theology: Exploring World Christianity after the Cultural Turn*, Research in Contemporary Religion 25 (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017) and Henning Wrogemann’s three-volume *Intercultural Theology* — vol. 1: *Intercultural Hermeneutics*; vol. 2: *Theologies of Mission*; vol. 3: *A Theology of Interreligious Relations* — Missiological Engagements (Downers Grove, Illinois, USA: IVP Academic, 2024), first published in German as *Lehrbuch Interkulturelle Theologie/Missionswissenschaft* in 2012. Sadly, minority world publications are often inaccessible to those of us here in Africa.

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explicitly address intercontextual theology have been published since 2000: the edited volume, *Plurality, Power, and Mission: Intercontextual Theological Explorations on the Role of Religion in the New Millennium* (2000) and Amy Chilton's *Theology in Many Voices: Baptist Vision and Intercontextual Practices* (2023).

Most resources I found that discuss intercontextual theology, although not with that terminology, come predominantly from contextual theologians or theologians with an intercultural leaning. For example, in 1996 Justin S. Ukpong proposed “inculturation theology” not as a specific theological discipline but as a “hermeneutical process in theologizing that cuts across all theological disciplines, including Biblical exegesis.”<sup>16</sup> In 2002, Stephen Bevans, an ardent advocate of contextual theology, recognized that in constructing theology, Christian theologians should learn from others synchronically (from other cultures) and diachronically (from history).<sup>17</sup> In 2004, Hans de Wit propounded the concept of “intercultural hermeneutics” as an attempt to relate the inculturation of biblical stories in one culture with their inculturation in another culture, reminding “contextual hermeneutics of the presence of ‘other’ ‘local’ contexts.”<sup>18</sup> In 2007, Timothy Tennent emphasized that, since Christianity has truly become a global faith, all Christian theology should be “done with a greater sensitivity to its universal and particular aspects.”<sup>19</sup> According to him, these aspects should be kept in constant tension in theological activities so that Christian theology remains both interdisciplinary and transcultural. More recently, in 2023 Fohle Lingunda Li-M prescribed a “bridge paradigm” as a way of creating a space for dialogue between local/contextual theologies in Africa that are “characterized by divergent cultural and religious realities.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole, “Rise of intercultural Biblical exegesis in Africa,” 1350; quoting Justin S. Ukpong, “The parable of the shrewd manager (Lk 16:1–13): An essay in the Intercultural Biblical Hermeneutic,” *Semeia* 73 (1996): 189–210; Loba-Mkole does not provide a page number for the quoted text.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen S. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Culture*, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Gerald O. West, “Locating ‘Contextual Bible Study’ within Biblical Liberation Hermeneutics and Intercultural Biblical Hermeneutics,” 2–3; citing Hans de Wit, “Intercultural Bible reading and hermeneutics,” chapter 26 in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible*, edited by Hans de Wit, Louis Jonker, Marleen Kool, and Daniel Schipani, 477–392 (Amsterdam: Institute of Mennonite Studies, Vrije Universiteit, 2004), 481.

<sup>19</sup> Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Affecting the Way Think about and Discuss Theology*, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Fohle Lygunda Li-M, *Contextualisation Aujourd’hui*, 105; my translation. See also his summary article, “De la contextualisation à la contextualisation de la théologie en Afrique: Sens, portée et précisions de nouveaux appels.”

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Alongside the relative scarcity of materials on intercontextual theology, there is also a scarcity of well-elaborated methods/models for doing intercontextual theology. A model that has not been fully developed yet that may be termed *intercontextual hermeneutics* was hinted at by Mark Allen Powell in *What Do They Hear? Bridging the Gap Between Pulpit and Pew* (2007). In chapter 2, he recounts how he asked Christians from three different contexts — North America, Russia, and Tanzania — to describe how they understood the parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11–32). It is amazing how their reading of the same texts differed based on the contextual lenses from which they were read. This model consists, in a Bible study, in allowing people of different contexts to consider the same Bible text and share their understanding of the text to uncover how various contextual factors shape what they see in the text. Anne Maher has recommended a similar method for teaching intercontextual theology at Tabor College in Millswood, South Australia, Australia.<sup>21</sup> The Insituut voor Intercontextuele Theologie (Dutch: ‘Institute for Intercontextual Theology’) in Apeldoorn, The Netherlands, upholds the same approach. They advocate that, in intercontextual theology, “You study the Bible together with others and discuss what the text means in an ecclesiastical, cultural and social context.”<sup>22</sup>

It is owing to the scarcity of material and the lack of fully blown models for understanding and doing intercontextual theology that this paper is written. I propose to lay conceptual foundations for intercontextual theologizing and to draft a biblical model for intercontextual theology, namely, the *sunomilean* model of theology.

**Sunomilean Theology: NT Illustration, Methodology, Conceptual Components, Outcomes, and Rationale**

This section explores one NT instance of sunomilean theologizing (Acts 15:1–29) and examines its conceptual components and rationale.

***NT Illustration (Acts 15:1–29)***

Acts 15: 1–31 narrates the unfolding of the Jerusalem Council. The Council is “pivotal to the body and theology of Acts” as the passage tackles significant practical issue associated to the nature of salvation (does it result from the Law, grace or both?) and the integration of Gentile Christians into what had been, up to that time, essentially a body of Jewish believers.<sup>23</sup> According to Timothy Wiarda, professor of New Testament at Singapore Bible College, the “Council

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<sup>21</sup> Anne Maher, “The Opportunity of Inter-Contextual Theology.”

<sup>22</sup> Institute for Intercontextual Theology, “Study Intercontextual Theology that Suits You Best.”

<sup>23</sup> Michael Mahan, “A Narrative Analysis of the Jerusalem Council Discourses: Table Fellowship and the Implicit Theology of Salvation,” 40.

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serves as paradigm and precedent for a number of proposals concerning the theologian's task."<sup>24</sup> He upholds that the Council models and sets the precedence for the theological task in five ways:

1. it is a model for the task of contextualization,
2. it is model for Spirit-led community interpretation of Scripture,
3. it is a model for a bimodal authority structure,
4. it is a model of canonical conversations,<sup>25</sup> and
5. it sets the precedent for theological decision-making based on a concept of progressive revelation.<sup>26</sup>

In this study, I explore the Jerusalem Council as a model of canonical conversations.

The theological reflections that occur at the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15:1-29 are a vivid illustration of sunomilean theology as it involves people of different Christian contexts talking with each other in a bid to draft a theological discourse on salvation that applies to and beyond their various contexts. According to Acts 15:2, what prompted the Council was an attempt by Judeo-Christians to superimpose their law-driven contextual understanding of salvation to Christians of Gentile background. The Judeo-Christians advocated that for Gentile Christians to be saved, they needed to undergo circumcision in accordance with the Mosaic customs and laws. Their advocacy is recorded twice in chapter 15 (vv. 1 and 5), thereby highlighting its importance in the minds of these believers. Luke records in Acts 15:2 that Paul and Barnabas, who vehemently opposed this proselytizing position,<sup>27</sup> engaged in a sharp clash with the Judaizers. This clash suggests that the meeting of theological perspectives from different contexts could become a site of heated and intense contestation. It is this theological tussle that provoked the organization of the Council of Jerusalem. Its purpose was to ameliorate tensions between Gentile and Jewish Christians in the nascent and growing Christian movement, prevent any schism, find common ground that would allow for peaceful cohabitation between them, and draft a trans-contextual theology that would be applicable beyond various

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<sup>24</sup> Timothy Wiarda, "The Jerusalem Council and the Theological Task," 233.

<sup>25</sup> Wiarda describes canonical conversation as a "theological plurality" (theological diversity) or an "intramural debate" (a debate that occurs within the wall of the canons of Scripture) in which there is much common ground among NT actors involved in a discussion but there is also the presence of areas of disagreement; "The Jerusalem Council," 240.

<sup>26</sup> Wiarda, "The Jerusalem Council," 233–242.

<sup>27</sup> For the crucial distinction between *proselytization*, which absolutizes one's own contextual theology and forbids contextualized theologizing for other contexts, and *conversion*, which allows both contextual and intercontextual theologizing, see Andrew F. Walls, "Converts or Proselytes? The Crisis over Conversion in the Early Church."

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local contexts.

To participate in the Jerusalem discussions, the church of Antioch chose Paul and Barnabbas alongside other members of the church. Among them was Silas, a follower of Jesus of Hellenistic Jewish origin (Acts 15:22). Upon arrival in Jerusalem, they engaged in deliberations with the apostles and elders of the church in Jerusalem to examine the claim of Judaizers that Gentile believers needed circumcision to be saved (vv. 1 and 7). It is worth noting, before further exploration of Luke's narration in this chapter, that the theological conversation that goes on in Acts 15 is both *interethnic* (Jews and Gentiles — i.e., non-Jews — are involved), *intercultural* (Jews and Greeks are involved; 'Greek' is here a cultural term), and *inter-ideological* (Law-free perspective of the gospel championed by Paul and his team and the Law-based view of the gospel sponsored by Judaizers are included).

At least three textual facts of exegetical import found in Acts 15:6–7a are strategic in understanding the prerequisites, nature, and purpose of the intercontextual theological polylogue that unfolds at this Council and in shedding light on dynamics of sunomilean theology. The first fact is associated with Luke's use in verse 6 of συνάγω (*sunágō*, 'to assemble, convene, gather together, join together') in relation to the apostle and elders who gathered to solve the theological divergence that opposed Christians of Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. This fact emphasizes the need for talks where intercontextual theological divergences occur. The second fact is his use of the phrase ἰδεῖν περὶ τοῦ λόγου τούτου (*idein peri tou logou toutou*), which may be translated "to see into this matter," "to deliberate," or "to examine." The phrase clarifies the purpose of the gathering. Finally, there is his use of πολλῆς ζητήσεως (*pollēs zētēseōs*) which may be rendered as "much discussion," "much debate," "much mutual questioning," or "much disputation." (Note that Luke first used the word *zētēseōs* in 15:2). The presence of this locution highlights both the duration and amount of deliberations that went on.

It follows that sunomilean theology should ideally begin with an intentional desire to gather various contextual perspectives in a bid to engage them in constructive deliberations. These talks may involve much discussion, mutual questioning, or debates. The conversations are intended to enable a clearer and deeper understanding of various contextual perspectives, so that the contextually transversal theology that would emerge reflects various local positions. (It is worth mentioning that deliberations in sunomilean theology, although sensitive to other theological perspectives, are anchored in God's word as deliberators see Scriptures as authoritative and normative for matters regarding Christian faith and doctrines.)

The itinerary of the deliberations is recorded between verses 7b and 29. The itinerary roughly follows four steps. First, it starts with introductory words from

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Peter (vv. 7–11). Peter's opening words affirm a theological postulation from the Judeo-Christians given that Peter was the chief representative of disciples from this context. Second, disciples of Gentile background are given the latitude to present and defend their theological stance through their representatives, Paul and Barnabas (v. 12). Third, the theological voices of disciples of Jewish background is heard again as James, a robust representative of Judeo-Christianity, is allowed to speak. His intervention also serves as a conclusive note to the deliberations (vv. 13–21). Finally, after sustained talks that alternate between the theological stances of Judeo-Christians and Gentile Christians, deliberators reach a consensus and formulate theological postulates that would be applied in various local churches of Gentile territories that generally comprised both Jews and Gentiles (vv. 22–29). Luke indicates in verse 22 that this decision that came from apostles and elders reflected various theological perspectives involved in deliberations. His use in verse 25 of the phrase ἔδοξεν ἡμῖν γενομένοις ὁμοθυμαδὸν (*édoksen humin genomenois homothumadòn*, lit., 'it seemed good to us, having-become of-one-mind / having-come together-with-one-accord') attests to the fruitfulness of the talks that resulted in creating a common ground amongst various theological factions involved in the Jerusalem talks. It marks an intersection between holders of various contextual perspectives.

It is important to highlight some important facts regarding the alternation of speaking, listening, and silence in the unfolding of the deliberations in Acts 15 since these facts shed light on sunomilean theology. After Peter's address, the whole assembly keeps quiet (σιγάω / *sigáō*) and listens (ἀκούω / *akouō*) to Paul and Barnabas speak (v. 12). Of note is the fact the Greek word *akouō* means much more than hearing: it is hearing to understand, perceive the sense of, consider, or attend attentively to what is said. After Paul and Barnabas ceased talking (*sigáō*), James stood up and spoke (v. 13). Immediately as James initiated speech, he enjoined the assembly as follows: ἀκούσατέ μου (*akousate moi*; note the imperative form of *akouō*), which may be translated "hear me" or "listen to me." This alternation of speech, listening (to understand), and silence that occurs severally between verses 12 and 13 shows that Luke gives these attributes a strategic place in the intercontextual theological deliberations that held at the Council of Jerusalem.

From the analysis above, a three-dimensional sequence is observable in the intercontextual discussions that unfolded in Acts 15.

1. *Representatives of each group presented their theological position(s).*

Their theological discourse anchored in their perception of salvation. The fact that they defended their theological position presupposes that they were aware of their theological

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identity and articulated it in intelligible ways for others to understand.

2. *Representatives of each group allowed other groups to express their theological position(s).*

This occurred in two ways. First, they kept quiet, giving other groups the latitude to express their theological position(s). This is obvious in Luke's multiple use of *sigáō* in the text. Second, they listened. Luke also emphasizes this dimension in his recurrent use of *akouō*. It follows that, learning to be quiet and actively listen to others is foundational in sunomilean theology.

3. *All the groups agreed on a transversal theological discourse that would be applicable beyond various immediate contexts.* They started from their contexts but transcended them. They moved beyond their immediate contexts by outlining and agreeing on theological universals. They move their discourse from extremities/poles to a center, thereby favoring consensus convergence and the idea of a conversation.

***Methodology***

Based on the above analysis of the methodological sequence of theological deliberations on salvation at the Council of Jerusalem, I propose three essential pillars for a methodology of sunomilean theology:

1. *Theological self-awareness/self-reflexivity*  
emphasizes the discovery/promotion of one's theology (content, nature, method, outcomes). It deals with auto-theologizing and addresses delimited theological issues in specific contextual areas. It is at this level that all theologians need to engage contextual theology as it promotes the uncovering of one's own theological identity and the construction of a theology that reflects the realities of a specific context.
2. *Other-theological awareness*  
involves the discovery of others' theology. Theologians need to open up to others' contextual theologies. This openness arises from curiosity and the need of discovering others' theological perspectives. Other-theological awareness is *discovery or exploratory theology*. It enables the discovery of the theological identity of others.
3. *Intercontextual theological negotiation*  
integrates a move towards other theologies to theologize with their promoters. I describe this as *inter-theologism*. It may



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involve outlining recognizable transversal thematic patterns in specific contextual theologies as well as underlining their differences. It is motivated by a desire to create a synergy of difference and to enhance the sense of transvaluation, the enrichment that results from an encounter with otherness. This move enables the delineation of both theological specifics/particulars and theological universals. To engage inter-theologism requires that theologians gain a good knowledge of a variety of present-day contextual theologies and develop skill in navigating their way inter-contextually. In other words, they need to build aptitudes in active interism. It is at this level that intercontextual theologies can be constructed.<sup>28</sup>

From this methodological itinerary, sunomilean theology allows three foundational theological expressions. First, it allows for a *self-theological understanding*, that is, an understanding of one's own theological system. In this sense, it promotes theological self-definition. It is within this framework that contextual theology falls. Second, it allows for an *other-theological understanding*. In other words, it recognizes theological alterity, allowing others to define themselves and delineate their theological systems. Finally, it allows for an *intentional negotiation of theological meaning* with others. This being the case, it enables learning *about* others, learning *from* others, learning *with* others, and learning about oneself from others.

This means that sunomilean theology is co-constructual and interactional but does not mean a negation of one's theology. Auto-theologizing as a local/contextual theologizing is where it starts. It does, however, not end with local theology. Conscious of the limitation of contextual theology, the enrichment that the discovery of otherness provides, and the empowerment created by the synergy of difference, sunomilean theology seeks to be aware of others' theologies, learn from them, and, ultimately, theologize with others whenever necessary. In a nutshell, sunomilean theology pays attention (1) to the local context of the theologizing subject as well as that of others; (2) to the local and global contexts; (3) and to delineating a trans-theology from local theologies that transcends and is transversal to them.

It is precisely in its intrinsic potential to empower theological self-awareness/self-reflexivity, other-theological awareness, and intercontextual theological negotiation that sunomilean theology demarcates from forms of theology such as Black theology, Liberation Theology, Minjung Theology,

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<sup>28</sup> Contextual theology differs from intercontextual theology in terms of degree of generality and universality.

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Feminist theology, Queer Theology, and the likes. While these theologies are contextual (they are localized and identity-based or ideology-driven theologies), sunomilean theology allows an approach to theology that enables both a contextual and trans-contextual engagement with Scriptures. Contextual forms of theology such as those mentioned above focus on a specific context, identity, or ideology; seek to be relevant to a locality, identity, or ideology; and, in general, employ methods akin to indigenization, contextualization, enculturation, etc. Sunomilean theology's focus is on dialogue across contextual theologies. Its goal is to facilitate and potentiate mutual learning across contexts and its methods of predilection are comparative and dialogic strategies of inquiry.

To articulate this distinctive differently, sunomilean theology starts within a contextual border (one's own theological context), reaches out to theological reflections beyond that border in view of understanding them (other theological contexts) and exchanging theological meaning with them (intercontextual semantic negotiation). It is therefore not just in-border theology. It is trans-border or inter-border theology. This essentially entails that to engage sunomilean theology, contextual theological borders need to be crossed. The following conceptualizing around the term *border* captures the contours of the development of sunomilean theology:

1. *Intra-borders theologizing*  
Also describable as *in-the-border* theologizing, intra-border theologizing promotes the understanding of theological reflections within one's context. This is vital because social location/situatedness is a non-negotiable factor in theological knowledge production and ascription/attribution.
2. *Extra-border theologizing*  
This is also portrayable as *beyond-the-border theologizing*. It promotes the understanding of others' theological reflections within their context. It is motivated by the knowledge that the world is multi-contexts and, although Christian theology is first contextual, it must also reflect this multiplistic reality, and, therefore, be multisite. It is further driven by the need for others and their theological reflections.
3. *Inter-borders theologizing*  
I also depict this form of theologizing as *between-the-border theologizing*. It highlights the understanding of one's theological reflections together with others to see where they converge and diverge, are similar or dissimilar, and find common patterns in these multi-sited reflections that show harbingers for a trans-border theology. As noted earlier, this corresponds to theologizing with others. Theologizing with others enables an encounter between contextual/local

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expressions of the Christian faith. It builds on the premise that, however articulate and elaborate a local/contextual theology may be, it presents intrinsic limitations owing to its localness (local nature). It does not have the complete picture of reality. It is perspectival, angular, situated, and its presentation is monoglossic. Sunomilean theologizing is multiperspectival, multi-angular, trans-situational, and its presentation is heteroglossic.

Sunomilean theology therefore enables the unfolding of a theological polylogue, a theological conversation of many. It makes trans-theologizing or inter-theologizing possible. Although sunomilean theology allows for theological pluriversality, theological heteroglossia, and multi-sited and multi-polar theology, it also provides a space for local variations of Christian theology to engage in a conversation. In other words, it allows for theological dialogism. However, for sunomilean theology to fully find expression, learning quietness and, especially, developing the art of *productive intervallic listening* are vital. The expression describes a *betweenitivity* in which intercontextual communicators suspend their response until they have understood the other. That is, they listen to others not primarily to respond but to gain an understanding of what their interlocutors are saying. They listen respectfully; they listen to see the world from the others' perspective; they listen to create a synergy out of divergence; and they listen to live peacefully with others even if disagreements exist.

***Definition and Conceptual Components of Sunomilean Theology***

***Definition***

Sunomilean theology is a Scripture-based approach to engaging theology that takes into consideration diverse contextual expressions of the Christian faith in a bid to construct a theological discourse that mirrors both local/contextual and global Christian perspectives. It is constructed in a Scripture-anchored conversation/dialogue with Christians of other contexts/traditions and seeks to capture, reflect, and represent the voices of many.

***Nature***

Sunomilean theology is inherently conversational, enabling a talk *with others*. Those involved recognize that they have important views to defend and that others equally have important things to say. As such, it hinges on and alternates between key features of intercontextual communication such as silence, listening, talking, negotiating meaning (discussion), and collaboration, thereby highlighting the need for others.

***Tone***

Sunomilean theology is friendly and constructive. It is friendly in that those

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involved in talks show love and care for each other and ensure that their speech is not threatening. It is constructive in that, although intercontextual interactions may be confrontational, and thus a site of tension and contestation, they are carried out within a framework of Christian fellowship, with the ultimate finality being that of common edification and socioconstructivism.

*Purpose*

The purpose of sunomilean theology is to enable an understanding of theological self-identities, an understanding of the theological identities of Christians of other contexts, and the creation of a synergy of difference that results from a conversation with otherness for the sake of enhancing our practice of *missio Dei* in the world.

*Outcome*

Sunomilean theology allows a meaningful coexistence of contextual theological differences, keeping them in a dynamic tension so as to produce the transvaluation that comes from the encounter of contexts. Sunomilean theologizing also enables theological socioconstructivism — that is, the construction of theological knowledge that occurs within a context of energetic interaction with otherness. It engenders theology that occurs at the confluence of contexts and is mutually constructed.

*Usefulness / Applicability*

Sunomilean theology is practically and theoretically useful for the following reasons: (1) It provides intercontextual theology with essential new and vital concepts; (2) it provides a Scripture-emergent and Scripture-anchored methodology for engaging intercontextual theology; (3) it provides a scientific tool that can serve as a template/model for measuring and doing intercontextual theology; and (4) it proposes a practical approach to theology that syncs with the reality of a glocalized world as it keeps theological particularisms and universals in tension.

*Rationale*

Why a sunomilean theology? What is its justification? What is its rationale? Why is learning the *sunomilization of theology* — the process by which theology is *sunomilized* or sunomilean theology is constructed — important?

*The Kingdom of God is a Global Reality*

Although Christians naturally belong to a context, and to a great extent, are a social construction of that context, there is also a real sense in which every Christian belongs to an entity larger than its locality. From the moment someone truly pledges allegiance to Christ, that person becomes a citizen of the Kingdom of God (henceforth, KOG). Since the KOG transcends localness and embraces globality, one who becomes a Christian is integrated in a translocal

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and universal entity. There is therefore a dimension of universality in every Christian. It follows that participating in the KOG integrates both the notions of localness (context) and globality (trans-contexts). This means that Christian theologizing that does justice to the nature of the KOG should reflect this dual kingdom dimension: it should be local (this is where theologizing should start) and, at the same time, global. To be truly *basileic* (that is, mirroring the essence of the KOG),<sup>29</sup> Christian theological reflections should deliberately maintain the tension between the local and the global. Kingdom theologians should thus transcend local/contextual theologizing to engage what I describe as *glocal theologizing* — doing theology that keeps the local and global in synergy.

*Trans-contextualism or Inter-contextualism Is Inevitable in Today's World*

Today's world is both a mosaic/tapestry of contexts *and* a meeting place of contexts. Thanks to macroglobal phenomena such as air travel and multidimensional migrations, the encounter of people from several contexts has accelerated in unimaginable ways. Today, it is hard to meet people who are exclusively mono-contextual.<sup>30</sup> The advent of the internet has also reconfigured social geography, disembedding, delocalizing, and dematerializing social interactions. The internet has created a respatialized world (virtual/digital reality) that defies geographic boundaries and political frontiers. Life in a respatialized world is life that brings various contexts together, forcing intercontextual exchange and cohabitation. In this space, doing biblical theology requires thinking both locally and globally.

*The Enriching Power of Synergistic Thinking*

A proverb of the Igbo people of Nigeria says: “*Ibu anyi danda.*” The expression may be translated as “no task [or, load] is insurmountable for *danda* [a species of ant].” This proverb expresses the communal vision of many African cultures, an inclusive synergistic vision of reality that praises the strength of unity/communalism over individualism. It emphasizes that work is made lighter when many hands join in. Applied to theology, it means that theologizing (thinking the Scriptures) together is better than thinking alone. Without doubt, contextual theologizing is vital. However, much could be achieved for God's kingdom if contextual thinkers of theology came together in a collaborative conversation. Theological synergy in the body of Christ is of

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<sup>29</sup> Editors' note: The adjective *baileic* is derived from the New Testament Greek word βασιλεία (*basileia*), meaning 'kingdom' or 'royal administration' or 'act of ruling' or 'royal reign' or 'territory which is ruled by a βασιλεύς (*basileús*). Usually translated simply as 'king', a *basileús* is “one who rules as possessor of the highest office in a political realm.” BDAG, s.v. βασιλεία and s.v. βασιλεύς.

<sup>30</sup> Editors' note: To be sure, there remain many rather homogenous demographics in the world, in which monoculturalism and monolingualism remain the norm. But here in Africa, at least, such populations are very isolated and are thus, indeed, “hard to meet.”

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greater impact than theological isolationism.

*All Knowledge Produced by Humans belongs to the Commonwealth of Humanity*

All humans share co-creationality and co-humanity. This means that they all are created beings that mutually share humanity, equally created as the image and according to the likeless of God (Gen 1:26–27). Co-creationality and co-humanity generate in humans an essential transversality of shared nature and existence. This means that an ontological universality unites humans whatever their contexts. Christians share much more than co-creationality and co-humanity. They also share co-recreationality. They are recreated in Christ to form a new humanity. Hence, they are linked by a transversality of shared humanity, shared creation, and shared re-creation. This means that beyond being contextual constructions, they share an essential universality that is both physical, spatial (they live in the same *kosmos*), and metaphysical (recreation in Christ is spiritual). It follows that the hard fragmentation of human production on individual or contextual grounds is antithetical to both the core reality of human existence and the universalistic essence of Christianity. Hence, although I take responsibility for my Africanness (this may be evident in my reading of Scriptures and thoughts patterns), I also view myself as a global citizen, that is, one who belongs to humanity and acknowledges both its universality and particularisms. As a result, I believe in the universal validity of knowledge humans produce as being a commonwealth of humanity. I therefore draw from it without racialized prejudice so long as it can help advance the cause of *missio Dei* on earth.

*Preventing a Fixation with Particularistic Theologies*

A fixation with one's theology may engender a tendency towards its standardization, normativization, or universalization. In the past, Westerner's fixation with their own theology fostered the notion that their theological reflections were *theologia perennis* (a single, correct theology that is immutable across time) or *theologia universalis* (a single, universal theology that is immutable across geographies and cultures). Consequently, they felt that their theology, being both *theologia perennis* and *theologia universalis*, was to assume global dominance. That justified why they exported it to all corners of the globe, imposing it on others as *the* theology, practicing proselytization rather than seeking conversion. This approach which has the potential for *contextual theologicide* (the genocide of contextual theology) came as a result of an undue obsession with one's own theology at the detriment others' theologies. Today, narrow contextual theological constructions, wherever they may originate, face the same temptation of nurturing in itself the unhealthy desire of seeking standardization.

*Preventing an Undue Fragmentation of Christian Theologies*

Staying at the level of contextual theology alone has the potential to

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fragment Christian theology into several competing contextual theologies. This fragmentation may result in reductionist, compartmentalized, or segmented theologies that reflect several contextual worldviews but collapse Christian theology into multiple isolated parts. The danger would be that of losing the global picture of Christian theology because the whole would have been disintegrated into theological particularisms or contextual theological specificities. Having a smorgasbord of contextual theologies is laudable as it highlights the contextual multifacetedness of those involved in making sense of God and God's revelation in Scripture — hence the need for intercontextual theology that at the same time promotes theological particularisms but also emphasizes the place of a holistic understanding (although provisional) of Christian theology. Thus, it is necessary to always maintain contextual and global theology in tension.

### **Conclusion**

The Church needs intercontextual theologies. Sunomilean theology is a biblical model for engaging in intercontextual theologizing. Doing theology in a globalized world necessitates a globalized approach to theology. In a world that is built on a transversality of shared humanity, characterized by heightened inter/trans-contextuality, and shaped by the profound respatialization of its social geography that makes intercontextual encounter co-substantial to today's life, formulating Christian theological reflections that keep abreast of the times requires considering both local and global realities. Theology that reflects today's *zeitgeist* should be profoundly contextual and intercontextual— that is, sunomilean.

With the dramatic changes that have intensified intercontextual encounters around the globe and made them an essential feature of present-day societies, Christian theologizing that refuses to integrate these realities in its activities and to intentionally look beyond itself will soon lapse into the irrelevance of theological ghettoization. To prevent this and to theologize in a way that keeps local lives and global forces in constant equilibrium demands, first of all, that contemporary theologians develop skills for both contextual theology and the *sunomilization* of theology. This means that today's theological institutions should produce both contextual theologians and theologians who are *active interists* or *dynamic intervallists*. They should hone in their students both contextual theological competence and intercontextual theological literacy. The sunomilization of theology also requires the adoption of a meta-theological frame that explores various contextual expressions of theology and synergistically brings them together in a meaningful, constructive, and productive encounter. This will result in local theologies being enriched by other local expressions of theology.

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<sup>31</sup> Editors' note: A revised edition was published in 2024 by Éditions Contact in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.



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<sup>32</sup> Editors' note: The *Insituut voor Intercontextuele Theologie*, located in Apeldoorn, The Netherlands, has since launched a new website, <https://iith.s2soon.nl/nl/>