



Decolonising the Church for Sustainable Development in Africa

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Abstract

African ecclesiology and development have been highly influenced by the way White Missionaries Christianised Africa. Since Africa regained its independence, progressive scholarly attention was given to the decolonisation discourse, but ecclesial mission continues to bear retrogressive marks of colonial missiology. As Christianity has grown massively in Africa, while declining in Europe and the West, missionary trajectories have changed and a need for the African Church to contribute to integral mission, especially in relation to sustainable development in underdeveloped and developing Africa, has arisen. Therefore, the African Church ought to be interdependent, self-sustaining, self-governing and self-determining, while it appreciates and relates to Western churches as equal partners of the global Church. Problematically, countless African churches are still dependent on their Western mother churches, partners and donors to facilitate local ecclesiastic, leadership and followership development programmes, to the extent that some Africans provokingly infer that the God of the Church in Africa is White. As the gospel is inclusive, having White Westerners ministering to Black African ecclesial work is inclusionary and complementary. However, the failure of Africans to balance foreign support with contextualization hinders their integral mission and contribution to African sustainable development. The Church can only be transformative and relevant if it is well contextualised. Theoretically framed under decoloniality and based on a literature review, this study finds that the Church has not contributed much towards the African socio-economic and political development. It recommends the Church decolonises its sustainability, theological education, leadership development and mission to be contextually transformative.

Keywords: Church, colonisation, contextualisation, decolonisation, Integral mission.

Introduction

God has always been present in Africa. Before the arrival of White Christian missionaries, Africans knew and worshipped Him through African traditional religions (Iragena, 2018; Manganyi & Buitendag, 2013; Nkomazana & Setume, 2016). However, the Christianization of Africa is credited to the work of White missionaries who evangelised and supported the establishment of the African Church (Morris, 2018). History reminds us that White missionaries built churches, developed some local ministers and facilitated a variety of spiritual, social, medical, educational and economic developments by establishing churches, schools, hospitals and other investments to effect integral mission and sustain missionary work (Johnson & Anire, 2021; Kachembele, n.d.; Pawliková-Vilhanová, 2007). Eventually, Africans became dependent on foreign missionaries for everything: overall leadership, pastoral care, education, medical care and general welfare.



Though some missionaries developed indigenous leaders to take over from them after their departure, most missionaries struggled to contextualise the gospel (Mwanza, 2020). The failure of white missionaries to contextualize Christianity was exacerbated by their association with colonialists (Okon, 2014), racially discriminatory behaviour and keeping silent about the evils of colonialism (Ballard, 2008). Over time, White missionaries influenced African ecclesiologies by imposing their cultures, hermeneutics and hegemonic leadership styles. Today, the course of mission has changed and scholars such as Granberg-Michaelson (2015), Kalu (2008) and Okyerefo (2014) claim that Christianity is declining in Western countries while growing at pace in Africa. We are experiencing reverse mission, whereby Africans are taking the gospel back to former missionaries' motherlands; therefore, the Church in Africa should be decolonised sufficiently to develop contextualised governance, sustainability and integral mission, especially for needy African societies. This paper starts by reviewing the autonomy of the African Church and interfacing it with sustainable development, to explore ecclesiastic decolonisation through contextualisation.

Reviewing the autonomy of the Church in Africa

Ecclesial autonomy is a contested issue that is conceptualised in different ways. As Van Rooi (2011) observes, ecclesiastic autonomy can be understood as either independence or interdependence. Those who view it as independence seek to take full responsibility of controlling and running their affairs by themselves, while those who conceptualise it as interdependence adopt an ecclesiology of vulnerability that is characterised by openness, brokenness and interconnectedness. Considering that the Church is the body of, and belongs to Jesus Christ to advance *missio Dei*, independence sounds unthinkable, because the Church should submit to the authority and control of God through Jesus Christ for its sustenance and operations. Therefore, autonomy cannot mean independence from God because the Church remains under the Lordship of Christ (Van Rooi, 2010:134) as His bride (Revelation 19:7–9; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25–26). Furthermore, every local church is part of the global Church and cannot be separated from it. As God, His Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are and remain one in a triune Godhead, all local denominations should stay united and supportive of each other and engaged through ecumenical fellowship.

However, in this study, autonomy refers to independent governance, sustainability and operations under the overall leadership of God. It also means being equal partners of the global Church without being subject to direct influence from foreigners. Innumerable churches in Africa are still highly influenced and determined by foreign mother churches and partners. Masengwe et al. (2012) used the Church of Christ in Zimbabwe as a case study, and concluded that African Church leaders are ignorant and arrogant, and still operate with foreign authoritarian governance systems and foreign ideologies that do not address contextual issues such as political and socio-economic hardships. Agenzia Fides (2019), in covering the problematic economic autonomy of churches in Africa, reports that Father Donald Zagore spoke out at the XVIII Plenary Assembly of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar in Uganda, where he said that

the Church in Africa must increasingly project itself towards this goal. We cannot continue to look constantly towards Europe, to depend totally on Europe and at the same time to tell our young Africans not to go to Europe, not to put their lives in danger. In terms of financial autonomy and economic development, the Church in Africa must be a model and a prophet for its people.

Clinton (2018) appreciates the legacies of White missionary work, such as the establishment of schools and hospitals that continue to provide educational and health services to natives. However, she also refers to a number of colonialist spoils that African churches should decolonise



themselves from, such as an overemphasis of seminary and theological education to qualify for ministry and the devaluation of traditional modes of education, such as songs and stories, the Westernisation of Christianity and the demonization and devaluation of indigenous cultures:

Missionaries have often unwittingly imported their cultural preference into the churches they started. Early African churchgoers were taught to sing hymns accompanied by a piano and to listen to sermons while sitting on rows of benches in a concrete building. Well-meaning Westerners simply mimicked their own church experiences rather than encouraged Africans to develop their own practices. Today, many established churches continue to operate in a Western fashion, even as some newer churches are choosing to worship with drums and dance or to teach God's Word using call-and-response patterns while sitting on mats under trees ... The desire to train African church leaders led to the establishment of seminaries and Bible schools. Unfortunately, African pastors often were not empowered to be self-theologizing—that is, to examine Scripture and develop contextualised answers to the African church's questions (Clinton, 2018).

While missionary seminaries offered insight into complex topics, such as soteriology and pneumatology, they did not offer practical answers to how Africans can address their spiritual, social, political and economic issues on their own. Therefore, this study proposes an ecclesiology of vulnerability through which churches can submit to God and appreciate and relate to each other as equal parties of the global Church, without being over-influenced by each other. Consequently, they can adopt *theonomic* reciprocity, whereby they all separately and sometimes cooperatively identify, mobilise and utilise God's provisions to achieve individual and collective sustainability. They can collaborate and correspond with God to sustain themselves by investing and managing divine provisions for sustenance.

Acclimatising the Church with Sustainable Development in Africa

Interfacing the Church with sustainable development is a life-giving engagement. Lamentably, the Church in Africa has been often disengaged from sustainable development, mainly because of confusing misconstructions and portrayals. Tagwirei (2024) concludes that the Church is predominantly portrayed like a salvationist embassy that is concerned with the soul, and sometimes as a workshop through which ministers of the gospel publicise their ability to fix people's lives, like they would fix a car, or as marketplaces at which they trade blessings, healing and wealth, miscellaneous ideas and goods for cash and kind, or as theatre, where they accommodate entanglements with comedians, charlatans and controversial actors, or as burial societies that provide financial aid, moral security and presence to members in times of illness or bereavement. Yet, the Church is, should be understood and always be portrayed comprehensively as an assembly of followers of Jesus Christ who are called to advance God's integral mission (Itulua-Abumere, 2013). Thus, the Church should not merely proclaim, but also demonstrate the gospel in all areas of life. As Jesus Christ called His disciples to be the salt and light of the world (Mathew 5:13–16), the Church ought to influence and transform the world. When this is done, the Church can contribute much towards sustainable development in Africa. In this light, the Church should be reinvigorated, to be active hearers and doers of the word (James 1:22–25), by pursuing an integrated missionary purpose of its existence.

In order to acclimatise the Church with sustainable development, it is important to define the latter. According to the United Nations *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future* (1987), sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. According to Hiagbe (2015:166–167), sustainable development brings out the



full potentials of each individual and community; furthermore, Africa is struggling with underdevelopment, and religion can and must find ways to transform the continent. Africa is facing challenges related to spiritual insecurity and syncretism (Tagwirei, 2024b:2), social issues such as moral degradation, early and unwanted pregnancies, child marriages, divorce, family disruption, substance abuse, mental ill-health, high levels of criminality and corruption and economic and political problems such as corruption (Agbiji & Swart, 2015).

The presence of these problems means requirement of the Church to be the salt and light of the world is not yet fully realised. Considering its integral mission and God-given instruction to be doers of the word of God (James 1:22–25) who live out Jesus Christ's liberationist spirit (Luke 4:18–19), the Church should proclaim good news to the poor and serve as a voice for the voiceless to liberate spiritual, social, economic and political captives and oppressed people of Africa. Accordingly, the Church must reform and decolonise its economic sustainability, theological education, leadership development and mission, so as to proclaim and demonstrate the liberating gospel in all facets of life. By doing so, the Church will save not only the soul, but the body and everything else relating to humanity. Eventually, the Church will be as transformational as its Trinitarian God is and as its integral mission entails.

Decolonising the Church towards Sustainable Development

In view of the identified (in)abilities of the Church to contribute to much needed transformational development in Africa, I advise that the following aspects BLOW should be decolonised.

Decolonise ecclesiastic sustainability

Tagwirei (2022) reports that, in Zimbabwe, the traditional sources of ecclesial income (freewill offerings, tithes, donations and other collections) are inconsistent, fluctuating, unreliable and unsustainable; therefore, ecclesial economics must be revolutionised by diversifying sources of income through operating income-generating businesses to cover the rising costs of the holistic mission and to enhance self-reliance, self-propagation and self-governance. Although his findings are specific to Zimbabwe, Tagwirei's submission can be universalised, because it resonates with the reality in the rest of Africa. Depending on freewill offerings, tithes, other collections and local and foreign donations is unsustainable. In addition to the questionable effects of missionary colonisation and influences, a lack of self-sustainability keeps the Church in Africa begging for foreign support, which causes it to be vulnerable to external influences.

Although Western aid has helped the African Church and countries in many ways since time immemorial, the Church in Africa may never be free to contextualise the gospel fully while it is dependent on foreign financial, material and manpower support because external help remains under the helpers' control and conditions. Meanwhile, the indigenous Church cannot easily grow its economic, material and human resources without diversifying its revenue. While doing business as a church attracts temptations, such as commercialisation of the gospel, the negative impression of the Church as a profit-making endeavour, division of attention from the work of ministry to making money, as well as corruption and cultural conflicts, the inflation of the operational costs of churches, accompanied by economic recession in Africa, necessitates diversification of income. To withstand aforementioned temptations, churches can create separate departments of business and employ experts to run their businesses professionally, and establish boards to prevent or mitigate corruption and division of attention, enhance checks and balances to avoid personalisation and abuse (by ecclesial leaders) and promoting accountable standardisation of church businesses and missionary work.

Churches are recommended to adopt the notion of Business as Mission (BAM), by taking entrepreneurship beyond generating additional income, to creating marketplace opportunities for



ministry. Adopting BAM transforms ecclesial business from mere profit-making to holistic missionary advancement beyond Church walls. All in all, it capacitates the native Church to proclaim, demonstrate the gospel and address contextual issues without foreign barriers.

Decolonise theological education

Theological education in Africa has been dominated by missionary and colonial input that does not fully correspond with contextual realities. Reflecting on the utterances of selected African Christian theologians, such as Kwame Bediako, John Mbiti, Jesse Mugambi and Mercy Oduyoye, who initiated the decolonisation of African Christian education, Sakupapa (2019) argues that African theology and theological education in Africa must be decolonised to be intentionally contextualised, in order to address issues that are affecting Africans in Africa. Furthermore, in tracking decoloniality in African Christian theology, Sakupapa (2023) contends that decolonial African theologies are contextual, pluriversal and relational and can be improved further by forms of theological analysis and theological reflection that pay particular attention to lived and historical realities. Such decolonisation will not enhance contextually relevant Christian theology only in academia, but also in churches once graduates who become pastors apply it. Dominiak (2022) refers to 'provincializing' the (White) Western context as normative, 'translating' or 'transplanting' theology back into culturally authentic discourses that yield meaning and deconstruct White power, and positively affirming various cultural identities in different locations.

According to Resane (2019), missionary theological education was elitist and detached from contextual realities. Therefore, it is needful to foster what he terms 'recurruculation' and contextualise theological education to address lived experiences, such as gender justice. I agree with Gatwa (2013) that theological education should be adapted to the growing needs of the Church in Africa. The harvest is plenty and labourers are few, considering the shift of Christian demography towards the Global South, which poses a new challenge for Africans to build up their capacities for global missions. Although Africans started, in the 1950s, to question African Christianity that looks like a Western implant (Gatwa 2013), African churches are still informed, dressed and addressed by White influences, as evidenced by the among of White literature, clothing, music and mannerisms, compared to limited indigenous presence.

Therefore, there is a need for Africans to develop their own, contextualised literature, clothing, music and human resources. By doing so, African Christianity can address African issues and identify with African people. As Bediako (2023:14) states,

curriculum renewal and the strengthening of the theological academy are essential for Christian depth and continued vitality in African churches and communities, and it is to be hoped that the vision for such will take root more widely with ever-increasing momentum.

Decolonise ecclesial leadership and its development

Though local leaders have been taking up leading positions and facilitating leadership development programmes, some African denominations and branches are still highly influenced by Whites. Other African leaders are sometimes invited to facilitate Western ecclesial leadership and related influential programmes, but the presence and influence of White facilitators from other countries at African leadership development events like seminars and conferences remains very high. While foreigners may attempt to contextualise their presentations, they are unlikely to be able to identify with immediate issues, compared to natives, who have lived experiences and knowledge of local issues that need attention. As Pattel-Gray (2023) explains from an Australian context, indigenous leaders and communities are often on the peripheries of leadership structures, so decolonising the Church in a practical sense must start from moving natives 'from the periphery to the centre, recognise our leadership, and value our theological insights and the



significant cultural contribution we can bring to the church'. Pattel-Gray argues that there is an unspoken and disappointing belief that indigenous Christians are unable to provide leadership to the whole church, as they lack capability, education and opportunity. She asserts that

many Indigenous leaders bring theological knowledge, sound business acumen, decolonising processes, and transformative practices. These abilities would enhance the Christian faith and build greater relationships, moving us towards a more just and egalitarian Christian community where all people are valued, respected, and embraced.

Tagwirei (2024b) agrees that, though locals do not always have the requisite capacities, African Christian leaders can serve well if their leadership is developed, and that capacity building can only be effective if it is contextualised fully. Leadership development models, such as that of Malphurs and Mancini (2004) are generally good, but cannot be universalised to address all contexts. So, it is expedient for indigenous theological scholars and Church leaders to develop contextually feasible leadership development models that local church leaders can adopt for their respective contexts. As Tagwirei (2024b) argues, "it is prudent to appraise leaders, identify and address their challenges while developing their knowledge, being, feeling, doing and economic sustainability in alignment with their contextual needs". Instead of inviting foreign facilitators, indigenous churches should develop and use their own native models, as well as human, financial and material resources. Without contextualization, African leadership and its development may remain a racist system of exclusion that restrains Africans from fulfilling inferior positions and denies them access to lived experiences and solutions to their contextual issues. An inclusive leadership and development recognises the autonomy of the local Church, the capabilities of indigenous leaders and theologians and engages with historical and present realities without hearsay and generalised assumptions, to achieve contextual influence and transformation.

Decolonise *missio ecclesiae*

The mission of the Church in Africa has been entangled with White missionaries, who were associated with racist, discriminatory and destructive colonialism. As referenced by several scholars, such as Masuku (2023:3–5), Dube (2022), Makahamadze and Sibanda (2008), Okon (2014) and Ballard (2008), White missionaries were hypocritical in speaking out against sin and condemning indigenous cultures, while not condemning colonial evils and receiving land from and benefiting from business deals with colonialists. In doing so, the missionaries displayed arrogance and belittled natives by enforcing missionaries' colonial languages, dress and music and working to abolish indigenous traditions. Knuth (2020:132) explains that

many anthropologists have seen Christianity as embedded in European colonial experience and the missionaries as destroying valuable local cultures. They have been more interested in reconstructing pre-Christian religion and culture than in the process of Christianization. Indeed, most of the 19th-century missionaries did not only understand themselves as apostles of Christ, but also as advocates of their home countries and interfered in local politics. They sometimes shared racist assumptions and were behaving rather like colonial masters than true friends as Victor Azariah criticised in his famous speech at the first World Mission Conference in Edinburgh 1910. They presented themselves as the determining subjects of the mission endeavour in order to generate public interest and successful funding.

Keum (2012:13) explains that "we regret that mission activity linked with colonisation has often denigrated cultures and failed to recognize the wisdom of local people". In this light, the Church should contextualise itself by, for example, using certain languages, dressing in a particular way and accommodating indigenous cultural practices that are sinless, such as playing the drums,



singing, dancing and worshipping in local genres, which may be different from Western ones. In that way, the Church can decolonise its mission. As Knuth (2020:135) states, the subject of mission should be taken up again to avoid prolonging the overestimation of the role of Western missionaries who wish to influence the whole world in their own cultural ways. Knuth (2020) argues that the self-evangelisation of the “margins” should not be overlooked, because indigenous people who received the gospel professed and propelled it in their communities, and continue to do so today, evidence of which is the massive growth of Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa, and reverse mission, through which Africans, who used to be recipients, are now benefactors who promote the gospel and lead mega-churches outside their motherlands (Tagwirei, 2024b). Furthermore, the focus of White missionaries was not holistic. Although they invested in education, medicine and agriculture by establishing schools, hospitals and farms, they did not address oppressive and exploitative colonial politics and economics. Taking the integral mission as proclamation and demonstration of the gospel in all areas of life, from its inclusive and multidimensional basis of the mission of God as holistic, up to addressing the total life of all human beings in all contexts, *missio ecclesiae* should be decolonised from its exclusive Whiteness to be integral – by contextualising *kerygma*, *diakonia*, *koinonia* and *leitourgia*.

Contextualising *kerygma*

The message of preaching must be made relevant to the listeners, and we agree with Ogunlana that, “Jesus Christ who is the message of preaching must be made incarnated in the listeners’ context” (2017:90). For Ogunlana, the message must be interweaved with the listeners’ context. The person and work of Jesus Christ must be expressed in vernacular languages. Instead of using Western expressions, I agree with Ajibade (2021) that African preaching must integrate African oral elements, such as myths, proverbs, folklore, dance, drama, poetry and storytelling. The gospel can only transform lives and communities if it is incarnated in recipients’ contexts. Proclaiming the gospel should, while avoiding syncretism, resonate with the cultures, philosophies, worldviews and experiences of recipients. Ajibade (2021) says that the process of relating messages to contemporary contexts should involve listeners. Listeners should participate in decoding and translating the messages of the Bible and preachers to their own situations. As Ogunlana (2017:91) states, “when they become participants in deciphering the meaning of the message of Christ for their context, they become the co-authors of preaching”.

So, to decolonise *kerygma*, preachers should contextualise their messages dialogically. I agree with Ottuh (2014) that contextualisation of *kerygma* localises biblical texts in Africa by using African existential understanding and materials to interpret such text, to make biblical understanding and evangelisation more effective in the soil of Africa, because

reading, interpreting and applying biblical texts to Africans from western cultural oriented background can constitute a problem to the understanding of the Bible within the African context. Although, African scholars still make use of the historical critical method of biblical interpretation as evented by the western scholars, Africa biblical scholars have also evented African method of biblical hermeneutics which also involves inculturation hermeneutics all of which are intended to drive home biblical messages for the African Christian understanding (Ottuh, 2014, p. 38).

While it is helpful to borrow lessons from European and Western scholarship and practical theologies, contextualising the preaching of the gospel in Africa will enhance the understanding, reception and application of ecclesial mission more effectively than when preaching is done using foreign approaches.

Contextualising *diakonia*



We agree with Kuhn (2005:102), Waweru (2015) and Mombo (2010) that a decolonised and integral mission should integrate the spiritual into the social, economic and political well-being of humanity, in pursuit of the demonstration of the gospel everywhere and on everyone. Since the Church is expected to stand up and speak out as the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13–16) and be the hearers and doers of the word (James 1:22–25) and live openly like letters to be read by everyone (2 Corinthians 3:2), believers should advance *diakonia* (by caring for the needy, and everyone else, and advocating for justice and stewardship) and its prophetic voice while exemplifying a Christly leadership that epitomises servant leadership, stewardship and other-centeredness. When the diaconal mission of the Church is decolonised in this way, the Church can mitigate multifarious social ills, such as poverty, substance abuse, mental ill-health, sexual immorality, child abuse, unwanted pregnancies and related challenges. Similarly, the Church can then speak out against common African political evils, such as selfishness, poor governance, corruption, state capture, intolerance, conflict and violence, as the prophetic voice of the voiceless and conscience of society. In addition, the decolonised diaconal mission of the Church can also raise its voice against corruption and exemplify selflessness and righteousness in view of the call of 2 Corinthians 3:2 for exemplariness. It can serve as an agent of economic transformation by establishing and growing investments that create employment and contribute to sustainable development. This approach is also recommended by scholars such as Ma (2024), Mabwe et al. (2018:144), Tongoi (2016) and Albright (2014), who submit that the Church should run businesses as mission, to generate income to meet the rising costs of integral missionary work while creating opportunities to advance the gospel in the marketplace.

In addition to transforming African economies, a decolonised *diakonia* could also uphold environmental stewardship. Tagwirei (2024a) states that, while the African environment is subjected to multifaceted disruptive human and natural crises, such as illegal mining, deforestation, natural disasters, veld fires and water and air pollution, the Church can make a difference by extending its diaconal mission to include environmental stewardship, as God instructed Adam to care for the garden of Eden. In the current context, this mission can take the form of clean-up campaigns, tree planting, and other initiatives – either denominationally or collectively under the auspices of representative ecclesial bodies. Le Roux (2017), Golo (2020) and Hitzhusen and Tucker (2013) proclaim that Christianity, and all other religions, hold great potential for stewarding and transforming the environment to mitigate climate change and ensure sustainable development. Thus, if the Church in Africa is decolonised fully, it can minister beyond saving souls, to also transform the environment in Africa.

Contextualising leitourgia

Leitourgia is a Greek term that means work of the people. Kgabe (2007:76) defines *leitourgia* as “services performed for good of the people”, while Achikeh and Umeugochukwu (2019:135) describe it as “the customary public worship performed by a religious group”. *Leitourgia* is the worship services (known as liturgy) by which the Church glorifies God by praying to and praising Him while edifying each other through praying for one another, encouraging each other and singing and dancing together. Instead of doing it in English, with Western music and instruments which disengage some natives from their worship because they lack understanding of foreign worship practices, local languages and indigenous music and instruments should be used in local worship services. According to Jessee:

Christian churches in Africa have been using the western hymns introduced by early missionaries as their official hymnody. These western hymns have been translated into various indigenous languages ... A closer analysis of this literature will reveal a forced marriage of convenience between purely western music and African text (2019: 123).



Unless they are contextualised, Western musical compositions remain foreign, even when translated into African languages. That is why Jese (2019:123) continues that imposing Western worship mannerisms and music on African liturgy distracts from the meaning and does not impact African congregants. With the same perspective, Jese argues that “cultural music is an avenue that expresses what lies deep within the soul and that which words cannot express”. Therefore, folk and indigenous music enable natives to express themselves without limitations before God and men. Additionally, contextualised music enriches African identity. In drawing from the Lutheran liturgical services, Lebaka (2015) says that using traditional African religious music, African drums, rattles, horns and whistles that people identify with, increases attendance and participation of the local people. In agreement with Simango (2018:8–9), this does not mean that Western hymns and complimentary liturgy should be totally discarded because some of them are universally transformative. However, indigenous languages, music and instruments should be prioritised in Africa, to edify, impact and inspire African Christians to live out the gospel in their respective communities, thereby also enhancing sustainable development.

Contextualising koinonia

Koinonia refers to fellowship, membership, partnership, involvement and communion. According to Breed and Semanya (2015:6–7), God wants His people to uphold the *koinonia* that He exemplified through the reconciliatory work of Jesus Christ and fellowship by the Holy Spirit. As our Trinitarian God unites believers with Him and each other (1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 2:18–22), the Church ought to be one, and believers should experience and share the good and bad times of life together. As cultures differ on fellowship, African churches should contextualise their worship. For example, while it is common, in the West, to relegate older people to care homes, it is considered inconsiderate to do so by most African cultures. According to African custom, Africans demonstrate their love and respect to their elderly parents and relatives by taking them in and sharing their lives until they are separated by death. Similarly, due to traditional ideals of *Ubuntu*, which promotes love, unity, hospitality, empathy, dignity and shared humanity, African fellowship involves attending weddings, funerals and visitations with the sick, the poor and the rich. When the *koinonia* dimension of *missio ecclesiae* is decolonised, it will be contextualised to correspond with the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*. When Africans attend funerals, they share the pain and burden caused by death by contributing food and other needs in cash or kind. The same applies to weddings – it is customary for attendees to bring gifts in cash or kind to demonstrate their compliments and support. When they visit the sick, poor, imprisoned or other people in need, *Africanness* calls for monetary or kind support. When *koinonia* is lived out in this way, it fosters interconnectedness, togetherness and interdependence, which enhances cooperation against evil, for good and, eventually, for inclusive transformation and sustainable development.

Conclusion

Decolonising the Church in Africa is long overdue. While White missionaries should be appreciated for African Christianization and civilisation, it is needful to decolonise inherited ecclesiology by contextualising theological education, theology, leadership development and *missio ecclesiae*. The Church should indigenise and integrate its integral mission with the African spirit of *Ubuntu*, to enhance selflessness, holistic proclamation and demonstration of the gospel in all areas of life, whether spiritual, socio-economic or political. Doing so can foster inclusive continental transformation, because it inspires believers to live out the gospel while addressing contextual issues (*contextualising kerygma*), to be there for each other in good and bad times (*contextualising koinonia*), identify themselves and edify each other by the use of indigenous languages, music, instruments and dance in worship (*contextualising leitourgia*) and meet each other’s spiritual, social, political and economic needs (*contextualising diakonia*). Given this, the



Church can promote love, peace, cooperation, participation and sustainable development in Africa.

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