

**Iho Ayo/ Mekgolokwane/Ululations/Festschrift:
Dedicated to Prof David Tuesday Adamo, the
Decoloniser of Old Testament Studies in Africa**

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Professor David Tuesday Adamo

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A powerful voice from the Western part of the continent of Africa! A voice that could be heard not only through the presence of its owner at our annual Old Testament Society of South Africa (OTSSA) meetings but also more importantly, for the purpose of this introduction, in several issues of *Old Testament Essays (OTE)*, one of our prestigious journals locally and continentally. It is the journal that now contains the ululations (read: Festschrift) to honour this voice.

This is the voice of none other than one of our very own Nigerian African Old Testament scholar, Professor David Tuesday Adamo. He is one of the key scholars who have made important contributions to the field of African Biblical Hermeneutics. Adamo's refreshing voice, given the American and Eurocentric training and orientation which have shaped and continue to shape biblical scholarship on the African continent, has been loud and clear. Adamo's persuasion that there is African presence in the Christian Scriptures, that is, both in the Hebrew Bible and in the Second Testament, has been felt, as will also become evident from the essays contained in this special issue and his curriculum vitae as well as in his numerous research publications including his books and journal articles.

Adamo's commitment to deliberately make Africa and her concerns an important hermeneutical lens through which to engage the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible in particular, emerges from the following among others:

- First, Adamo argues that there should be decolonisation of the contents and methods of biblical scholarship especially as they are theorised and practised by African biblical scholars.
- Second, the honouree insists that there is an African presence in the Christian Scriptures. In Adamo's view, the Christian Bible is not only replete with many references to Africa and Africans, Africans feature in critical roles in the biblical text.
- Third, Adamo intentionally foregrounds the African context in his interaction with the biblical text. His particular focus on the application of the Psalter within the lived experiences of members of selected Nigerian indigenous churches in recent years can be cited as a case in point.
- Fourth, the honouree is persuaded that there is a continued positive impact of the Christian Bible on many a life of an African person, especially, African Christian believers.

In light of the preceding achievements and many more, Professor David Tuesday Adamo deserves our ululations (Iho Ayo//Mekgolokwane/Festschrift). Indeed, *di retwa di bowa mokatong* (they are praised only when they have finished the race).

To that end, this special issue of *Old Testament Essays*, contains the essays that seek to honour his scholarship. As Hulisani Ramantswana in this volume has noted, this is a historic issue! Why? In the *OTE*'s more than six decades of existence, Professor David Tuesday Adamo becomes the first black African Old Testament scholar in Africa to be honoured in this way by the journal.

The essays in this special volume engage with the scholarship of Adamo and cover a wide variety of themes. For example, the essays of Knut Holter and Hulisani Ramantswana offer readers a glimpse of trends in Adamo's scholarship (cf. Ramantswana's essay) or situate his scholarship within the broader context of Nigerian biblical scholarship (cf. Holter's essay).

Other contributors use the element of culture, especially the Nigerian culture, as an optic lens to engage with the biblical texts (cf. Abasili, Akintola, Dada and Elness-Hansen in this volume)

Some essays explore the theme of the African presence in the contributors' interactions with the biblical text (cf. Høyland Lavik, Mbuvi, Ndogo, and West in the present volume).

Other authors use the theme of gender as a hermeneutical lens to interact with the biblical text and with Adamo's works (cf. Abasili, Kondemo, Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele), Kuloba Wabyanga, Olojede and Mtshiselwa in this volume).

Hendrik Bosman asks critical questions that relates history to our present-day post-colonial contexts while Dirk Human engages one of the favourite books in Adamo's scholarship, that is, the Psalter. The contributions are expounded below under four categories.

A ADAMO'S SCHOLARSHIP

In his essay, Hulisani Ramantswana reviews Adamo's contributions from 2003 to date, particularly, Adamo's distinctive readings of the Old Testament that were published by *Old Testament Essays*. Prof Adamo has been one of the loyal African contributors to *OTE* and is the first black African Old Testament scholar in Africa to be honoured in this way through the journal.

In his article, Knut Holter investigates Nigerian biblical studies by relating African interpretive concerns to Western scholarly traditions with David T. Adamo's academic publications as the academic lens.

B THE RELIGIO-CULTURAL READING OPTIC

African cultural hermeneutics, according to its foremost exponent David Adamo, is an approach in biblical interpretation that makes the African socio-cultural

context a subject of interpretation. In his essay, Adekunle Oyinloye Dada critically assesses Adamo's usage of Yoruba cultural elements with a view to determining the extent to which the honouree has engaged successfully the biblical text and whether this has translated to a better understanding of the Bible in Africa.

Informed by the present-day justice-denying Nigerian context in which social injustice and oppression prevail, Godwin Olutayo Akintola asks the following critical question: can the present-day prophets of The Apostolic Church LAWNA Nigeria, a church that sets great store by the prophetic ministry, be called upon to be as audacious as the eighth-century BCE Israelite prophets were, in raising their voices both within and outside the faith community to demand for a right and just society?

Taking her cue from the Gen 16 character of Hagar, one who gives testimony within the text to a fuller understanding of God, Beth E. Elness-Hanson argues that listening to and seeing other contemporary African voices and writings open one's ears and eyes to fuller understandings of God today. Among the voices worth listening to, is Adamo's, the vanguard in African Biblical Hermeneutics

C AFRICAN PRESENCE IN THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE

Traditional historical-critical scholarship has not showed great interest in the Old Testament texts about Cush. However, the Nigerian biblical scholar David Tuesday Adamo has through his many studies of the Cush texts, sensitised the guild to what can be labelled as an African presence in the Old Testament. Taking her cue from Adamo, Marta Høyland Lavik's article engages the Hebrew Bible texts about Cush and the Cushites. It argues that Cush functions as a literary motif in the Old Testament corpus.

In his essay, Andrew M. Mbuvi revisits the text of Acts 8: 26–40 about the Ethiopian eunuch in order to address the following critical questions: What is the significance of this story that the author of Acts felt the need for its inclusion in the book? What might it symbolise in the structure of the book? How does it fit with the mission of the spreading of the gospel to the "uttermost parts of the world" (Acts 1:8)?

Using also the story of the Ethiopian eunuch as a point of reference to African realities reflected throughout the biblical text, Sampson S. Ndogo argues in his essay that although the portrayal of Africa by colonial architects has been that of an underdeveloped and backward continent, the biblical record which he claims has been proven for its reliability and historicity, provides us with the impetus to re-analyse key texts in order to re-examine the hegemonic views that underlie the agenda of undermining African advancements.

In his article, Gerald O. West asks: Does it have to do with more about the doings of Africans and less about the sayings in the Old Testament? West argues that the doings of Africans led to the question of the sayings of Africans. Obliquely, yet following the same Black Theology ideo-theological trajectory, West considers how Adamo's comparative cultural work on proverbs, intersects with emerging South African decolonial race and/as class comparative work on proverbs.

D GENDER AS A HERMENEUTICAL LENS

In her essay, Marthe Maleke Kondemo argues that though the Bible may be seen as oppressive to women, (for example the characters of Esther and Vashti), women have a way of navigating the alienating patriarchal context. Although elitist, if the strategies used by the two queens are combined, Esther and Vashti can serve as role models to the Mongo women of the DRC in their affirmation of their new identities and roles.

Using as a point of departure Adamo's reading of Ebed-Melech's justice-seeking protest against the prophet Jeremiah's mistreatment by King Zedekiah and the royals of Judah, Robert Kuloba Wabyanga reads the efforts of Ebed-Melech in recognition of the noble efforts of various protesters and of the female character of Song of Songs as a black wo(man) (שֶׁהוֹרָה). The woman in the Song of Songs in Wabyanga's view, is not only protesting against her oppression, but also retelling the story of how she lost her vineyard (כַּרְמִים) due to injustice and became poor, disparaged and feared.

In his tireless efforts to unlock the Hebrew Bible's reality for African contexts and persuaded by his commitment to decolonise the subject of biblical studies, Adamo made successful efforts to reflect on the African presence in the Old Testament. This statement sums up Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele)'s view of Adamo's contributions to biblical studies. What about the question of gender though? She asks. Thus, in her essay, Madipoane Masenya (Ngwan'a Mphahlele) asks these crucial questions about Adamo's scholarship and gender: In Adamo's concerted effort to confirm the presence of Africa and the Africans in the Hebrew Bible, does the woman question feature? If it does, how does the honouree navigate the question of gender? Due to the nature of the contents of this essay, which was printed in *OTE* in 2020, the essay is re-printed in this issue with the permission of the editors.

In the view of Ndikho Mtshiselwa, the Zimbabwean migrant women display the embodiment of intersectional struggles of the working-class people (class), women (gender) and immigrants (internationality) in Southern Africa. In his essay, Mtshiselwa thus investigates the oppression of people in Exodus 1-15 and Southern Africa as well as its resistance, in an intersectional perspective.

In conversation with David Adamo’s *Africa in the Bible* approach, which investigates the presence of Africa and Africans in the Christian Scriptures, in her essay, Funlola Olojede conducts a synoptic search of the named and unnamed “African” women of the Hebrew Bible, specifically of the Torah and Nebiim with the aim of probing their socio-economic statuses. She argues that the social identity and status of these women could help to counteract some of the modern images of African women as victims of patriarchy under male power.

Taking a cue from David Tuesday Adamo, Alexander Abasili’s article employs ‘Africentric’ hermeneutics as a contextual interpretative approach to his reading of the text of Num 5:11-31. Using the Igbo-Nigerian culture as a case study, Abasili interprets the ritual in Num 5:11-31 – a ritual that is gender-specific, applying only to a woman suspected of adultery – from the perspective of a married African Igbo woman. Abasili therefore calls attention to the sexual injustice endured by married women in some parts of Africa and calls for the eradication of such injustice.

Jacobus Eliza Johannes Capitein (1717–1747) is remembered as the first African to argue in writing, that slavery was compatible with Christianity in the dissertation he defended at Leiden in 1742 on the topic: “*De Servitute Libertati Christianae Non Contraria.*” In his article, Hendrik Bosman asks the following critical questions in our post-colonial contexts. Was Capitein a sell-out for arguing with scholarly vigour in his dissertation that the Bible did not prohibit slavery and that it was therefore permissible to continue with the practice in the 18th century or was he resisting the system by means of mimicry due to his hybrid identity – as an African with a Dutch education?

In his essay, Dirk Human examines one of Adamo’s favourite books of the Hebrew Bible, that is, the Psalter. He relates Ps 135 to Ps 136 and argues that traditions and motifs from the Israelite Ur- and Heilsgeschichte help to portray the Israelite deity as a powerful ‘striking’ God, who defeats all other powers and gods. For these mighty deeds, Yahweh deserves praise and thanksgiving from all who serve him namely Israel (135:19) and ‘all flesh’ (136:25).

E PROFESSOR DAVID TUESDAY ADAMO’S SCHOLARLY TRAJECTORY AND PUBLICATIONS

1 Scholarly Trajectory

a What now of his origins?

Professor David Tuesday Adamo was ushered on planet Earth on 5 January 1949 to a single mother as his father died before he was born. Coming from a poor socio-economic background, little would the people of the Irunda-Isanlu, East Yagba, LGA, Kogi State, Nigeria know that Baby Tuesday would grow up to become a university professor!

b Educational background

Professor Adamo obtained his qualifications from a variety of institutions both in his local Nigerian context and in the United States as follows:

Bachelor of Theology (BTh), ECWA Theological Seminary, Igbaja, Nigeria, 1977; Bachelor of Science (BSc), The University of the State of New York, Albany, USA: Liberal Arts, 1982; Master of Theology (MTh), Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, USA, 1980; Doctor of Religion (Rel.D), Indiana Christian University, Indianapolis, USA, 1983. In 1986, he went on to complete a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) degree in Religion with specialisation in Old Testament and Semitic Languages and a minor in Ancient and Medieval History from Baylor University, Waco, Texas, USA.

c Inauguration as professor

Professor Adamo was ushered into the position of full professor in 2004 after presenting his inaugural lecture titled, “Decolonizing African Biblical Studies” at Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. The theme of his lecture could not have been more fitting in view of the honouree’s concerted efforts to Africanise Old Testament/Hebrew Bible studies in his research outputs.

Professor David Tuesday Adamo was (until 2020) a professor of Old Testament studies in the Department of Religious Studies at Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria.

d Current research interests

Professor Adamo’s present research interests include Old Testament and the African Presence in and Contributions to the Bible, African Biblical Hermeneutics and African Indigenous Religions.

e Major conferences attended:

As typical of resourceful scholars, Professor Adamo attends and participates in numerous academic conferences where he presents academic papers both in his local Nigerian context and internationally, especially in South Africa and the United States. A few examples of the conferences he attended are listed below.

Nigeria and Europe

Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, 1991; Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies Conference, Ibadan, Nigeria; 5–10 August 1987, Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies Annual Conference, University of Jos, Jos, 2007; International Organization for the Study of Old Testament Conference, Switzerland, August 5–10, 2001.

OTSSA and SASNES

Annual Conference of Old Testament Society of South Africa, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, September 2005; Annual Conference of Old Testament Society of

South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, September 2006; Old Testament Society of Southern Africa Annual Conference, Bloemfontein, South Africa, 2013 and Southern African Society for Near Eastern Studies, North-West University, 2018.

SBL and AAR

American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meetings, San Francisco, USA, November 1997; American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meetings, Orlando, Florida, USA, November 1998; Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meetings, Atlanta, USA, November 2010; Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meetings, San Antonio, USA, 2016 and Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meetings, San Diego, California, USA, 2019.

f Membership of academic societies

A resourceful scholar is usually part of a community of scholars and his/her peers. It is no surprise that Prof Adamo is a member of several prestigious academic societies including American Academy of Religion; African Association for the Study of Religions, New Testament Society of South Africa, Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions, Old Testament Society of South Africa and the Society of Biblical Literature

g Honours, distinctions and professional awards

The many accolades behind Professor Adamo's name reveal the calibre of scholar that he is. Some of the awards and honours he received include the following:

He was listed among WHO'S WHO in Biblical Studies and Archaeology by the Biblical Archaeology Society (1986 – 1987), Edition, USA, and again in WHO'S WHO among Black Americans, USA in 1992–1993. Adamo received a Certificate of Recognition for Outstanding Contribution to the Black History Month from the Department of Federal Housing Authority, Fort Worth, Texas, USA (1986); Federal Government of Nigeria Scholarship Award (1980–1983); and the Award for Outstanding Contribution to Teaching Excellence and General Service by Paul Quinn College, Waco Texas, USA(1986). In addition, Adamo received the Award of Excellence for Outstanding Community Development in Makutu-Isanlu by Makutu Development Association (December 2009). He became also a Fellow of the Institute of Management Administration of Nigeria, Educational Administration (FIMAN), (2010); and Fellow of the Nigerian Academic of Letters (FNAL), (2010). Adamo was also described as one of the best African Old Testament scholars in Africa by some of the South African, Norwegian and Tanzanian Old Testament scholars.

A few months prior to the Covid-19 disruption in 2019, Adamo was honoured by the Society of Biblical Literature (the ABH Program Unit) in San Diego, USA, for his outstanding contribution to the African Biblical Hermeneutics.

h External examination and post-graduate supervision

Professor Adamo has successfully supervised several Masters and Doctoral students. He has also served as examiner of several doctoral theses in Nigeria and South Africa.

i Academic administration

The honouree has also displayed his skill as a competent administrator in the following positions, among others:

Adamo helped to set up the proposal for the Department of Religious Studies or Christian Studies in Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria.

In addition, he held the following positions among others:

Head of Department of Religious Studies, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria (1993–1994, 2004–2006), Dean: Faculty of Arts, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria (1994 to 1998), and acted for the Vice-Chancellor, Delta State University (1994), Head of Department, Philosophy and Religious Studies (2007–2008), Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Kogi State University, Anyigba (2008) and Deputy Vice Chancellor, Kogi State University, Anyigba (2008–2010).

j Family life

Professor David Tuesday Adamo is a family man. Adamo is married to Ebunola Grace (née Are) and the union is blessed with four children namely Dr Oluwayomi Bamidele, Dr. Pauline Bolutife, David Tuesday Jr. and Remilekun.

k Countries visited

The honouree visited several countries including Hungary, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Norway, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America and Zimbabwe.

2 Publications

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