

International Report

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Practical Theology in Africa: Situation, Approaches, Framework and Agenda Proposition

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Abstract: Practical Theology's situation in Sub-Saharan Africa is not well documented except in South Africa, despite a strong theological focus on practical ministry across the continent and considerable discussion of African contextual theologies, including African theology, Black theology, reconstruction theology and women's theology. The article sketches the context by highlighting the gaps in the discussion of Practical Theology. It discusses embedded Practical Theological practices within contextual theologies and surveys Practical Theology's focus and aspirations across Africa, highlighting practices in Anglophone Africa, Francophone Africa and Lusophone Africa. Finally, it deduces a framework for Practical Theology in Africa and identifies the challenges and tasks that should be put on the agenda of Practical Theology.

Keywords: Practical Theology, contextual theology, Reconstruction Theology, Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, Sub-Saharan Africa

Zusammenfassung: Über die Lage Praktischer Theologie im subsaharischen Afrika ist, abgesehen von Südafrika, wenig bekannt. Dies überrascht angesichts der lebendigen Diskussion kontextueller Theologien und eines starken theologischen Fokus auf pastoralen Handlungsfeldern in der afrikanischen Theologie insgesamt. Dieser Aufsatz umreißt den Diskussionsstand, indem er auf Leerstellen hinweist, die Einbettung Praktischer Theologie im afrikanischen Kontext erläutert und ihre Arbeitsschwerpunkte und Ziele darstellt. Das Hauptaugenmerk liegt dabei auf Praxis im englischsprachigen, französischsprachigen und portugiesischsprachigen Afrika. Der Aufsatz stellt abschließend eine Rahmung für Praktische Theologie in Afrika vor, nennt Herausforderungen und beschreibt eine Agenda für die Disziplin.

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Stichwörter: Praktische Theologie, kontextuelle Theologie, Reconstruction Theology, Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, subsaharisches Afrika

Introduction

Except in South Africa, theological discussion on the continent of Africa has tended to focus on projects such as African theology, Black theology, Reconstruction theology and Women's theology, with little intentional focus on Practical Theology. Publications on African Christianity (1989, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995) edited by African theologians include those by Laurenti Magesa, Douglas Waruta, Hannah Kinoti, John Walligo, Jesse Mugambi and Carrol Houle.¹ In her essay "Practical Theology in West Africa," the Nigerian theologian Daisy Nwachuku cites the work of John Mbiti². Efforts to document Practical Theology from a pastoral care perspective include essays from the African Association of Pastoral Studies and Counselling (AAPSC),³ my article *Reflection on pastoral care in Africa: Towards discerning emerging pragmatic pastoral ministerial responses*⁴, and the newly published volumes by Tapiwa Mucherera and Emmanuel Lartey, *Pastoral Care, Healing and Wholeness in African Contexts* (2017) and Esther Acolatse, *Powers, Principalities and the Spirit: Biblical Realism and the West* (2018).⁵ In 2017, Cas Wepener, Yolanda Dreyer and Johann Meylahn⁶ mapped Practical Theology

1 Douglas W. Waruta and Hannah W. Kinoti, *Pastoral Care in African Christianity: Challenging Essays in Pastoral Theology* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1994).

2 Daisy N. Nwachuku, "Practical Theology in West Africa," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Oxford: Wiley- Blackwell, 2014), 515–524.

3 African scholars' contributions to the publication *Society for Intercultural Pastoral Care and Counselling based on Contributions in International Seminars 1988–2008* and *Pastoral care and counselling today manuscript (1991)* where many leading African scholars contributed such as Masamba ma Mpolo, Kongo (Democratic Republic of Congo); Emmanuel Y. Lartey (based in the USA but originally from Ghana); Charles K. Konadu (Ghana); Wilhelmina J. Kalu and Daisy N. Nwachuku (Nigeria); Daniel J. Louw, Julian Muller and Stephan de Beer (South Africa); Archiboldy Elifatio Lyimo and Derrick Lwekika (Tanzania); and Rose Zoé-Obianga (Cameroon).

4 Vhumani Magezi, "Reflection on pastoral care in Africa: Towards discerning emerging pragmatic pastoral ministerial responses", *In die Skriflig* 50, no. 1 (2016): 1–7. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v50i1.2130>

5 Tapiwa N. Mucherera, and Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *Pastoral Care, Health, Healing, and Wholeness in African Contexts: Methodology, Context, and Issues – African Practical Theology, Vol. 1* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2017); Esther Acolatse, *Powers Principalities and the Spirit: Biblical Realism and the West* (Eerdmans, 2018).

6 Cas J. Wepener, Yolanda Dreyer, & Johann A. Meylahn, "The Tradition of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria," in "Theology at the University of Pretoria – 100 years: (1917–2017)

at the University of Pretoria, depending on Nwachuku's⁷ essay on Practical in West Africa. However, the above publications and others fall significantly short in describing the situation of Practical Theology in Africa.

Practical Theology in South Africa needs a distinct identity, according to the respected practical theologian Jaco Dreyer⁸, writing in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*. In the same volume, the equally respected Nwachuku⁹ maintains that Practical Theology in Africa is deeply committed to lived religion—living a life of faith—rather than intentional intellectual or disciplinary reflection. Her observation echoes the late Kwame Bediako¹⁰ who argued that theology in Africa is engaged with African contextual life issues which result in multiple African theologies, rather than one type of theology. Paul Bowers¹¹ notes that theology in Africa, Practical Theology included, broadly concerns itself more with ministry and less with intellectual reflection, which is done in universities. Thus, the situation of Practical Theology in Africa emphasizes practice over reflection and identity.

While Practical Theology in South Africa has been considerably mapped by many South African Practical theologians¹², the notion of Practical Theology across other Sub-Sahara African countries has been conspicuous by its absence.

Past, present and future," *Verbum et Ecclesia*, suppl. 2, 38 no. 4 (2017): 133–155, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v38i4.1677>

7 Ibid.

8 Jaco S. Dreyer, "Practical Theology in South Africa," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Oxford, Wiley- Blackwell, 2014), 505–514.

9 Nwachuku, "Practical Theology in West Africa," 514.

10 Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992), 311.

11 Paul Bowers, "African theology: Its history, dynamics, scope and future," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 21, (2002): 109–125.

12 Wepener, Dreyer, & Meylahn, "The Tradition of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria"; Hennie J.C. Pieterse, "Scientific-theoretical research approach to Practical Theology in South Africa: A contemporary overview," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73, no. 4 (2017): 1–9, a4483. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i4.4483>; Gordon E. Dames, "Knowing, believing, living in Africa: A Practical Theology perspective of the past, present and future", *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (2013): 1–9, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1260>; Jaco S. Dreyer, "Practical Theology and the call for the decolonisation of higher education in South Africa: Reflections and proposals", *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 73, no. 4 (2017): 1–7, a4805. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i4.4805>; Jaco S. Dreyer, "Practical Theology in South Africa," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Oxford, Wiley- Blackwell, 2014), 505–514; James R Cochrane, John De Gruchy, J. & Robin Petersen, *In word and deed: Towards a Practical Theology for social transformation* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 1991).

Hennie Pieterse¹³, in his recent essay *Scientific-theoretical research approach to Practical Theology in South Africa: A contemporary overview*, cautioned the University of Free State not to consider Practical Theology as reflecting the entire African context. Pieterse questioned whether the faculty will find suitable co-researchers to research the African praxis on the grassroots level in the black communities of the country. Although this caution aimed at the South African situation, this concern can be raised at a continental or global level. Practical theologians from Africa, except South Africa, are underrepresented and few contribute to Practical Theology global fora. International bodies such as International Academy of Practical Theology reflect few members from other African countries except South Africa.¹⁴

Although not providing a detailed framework, a recent essay by Julian Muller¹⁵ titled *African Postfoundational Practical Theology* could arguably be identified as one of the very few publications aiming to articulate a framework for Practical Theology in Africa. Muller argues that Practical Theology in Africa brings one in conversation with liberation and feminist theologies in addition to interdisciplinary conversations, which contribute to political, economic and other community issues. He adds that theologies growing out of the African soil or those that find fertile ground in Africa are voices of unheard and marginalised stories. Jurgens Hendriks¹⁶ advances a similar argument that Practical Theology in Africa should hear the voices from the fringes. Muller¹⁷ rightly advises that Practical Theology for Africa should be located in one's home land, Africa.

Noting that Practical Theology in Africa has tended to leave a conceptualisation vacuum: the basic question that emerges is: what is Practical Theology in Africa? A further question is linked to the first: what and how does Practical Theology in Sub-Saharan Africa interplay with other theologies to produce a discernible Practical Theology in Sub-Saharan Africa? In answering these questions, however, I risk lending a misperception that by virtue of being a black person living in Africa, I am able to represent all Practical Theologians in Africa and overlook Africa's heterogeneity. Does a self-appointed specialist on Practical

13 Pieterse, "Scientific-theoretical research approach to Practical Theology in South Africa: A contemporary overview," 4.

14 International Academy of Practical Theology, "Members and CVs," accessed October 3, 2018, <http://www.ia-practicaltheology.org/membership/membership-list/>.

15 Julian C Muller, "African Postfoundational Practical Theology," *Acta Theologica* 37, no. 1 (2017): 86-96, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v37i1.6>.

16 Jurgens H. Hendriks, "Theological education in Africa: Messages from the fringes", *NGTT DEEL* 55, no.1 (2014): 61-80.

17 Muller, "African Postfoundational Practical Theology," 88-89.

Theology in Africa really matter? Conscious of my limitations as an academic and researcher, I aim to provide an overview of the situation of Practical Theology in Africa by describing its status as I see it and proposing a broad definitional framework highlighting some elements worth considering. In doing so, first, I will briefly define Practical Theology. Second, I will highlight the African contextual theologies and deduce practical theological practices embedded in the theological practice. Third, I will highlight the broad practical theological practices within Sub-Sahara Africa. Fourth, I will propose a definitional framework of Practical Theology deduced from Africa theology context and practices. Fifth, I identify the challenges and tasks that should be put on the agenda of Practical Theology in Africa.

1 Practical Theology – A Functional Definition and Understanding

Kathleen Cahalan and Gordon Mikoski¹⁸ in *Opening the Field of Practical Theology*, without committing to reducing Practical Theology to a concise definition, drew from various Practical Theologians such as Richard Osmer, Don Browning and many others and concluded that a thorough Practical Theological approach has three elements. It begins with a base in practice, moves towards theoretical reflection, and returns to practice. They concluded that “nearly all practical theologians today agree that there is no straight line from theory to practice.”¹⁹

Practical Theology attempts to make sense of the life of faith in the world.²⁰ Practical Theology attempts to bridge this gap between God and faith, on the one hand, and lived reality in the world, on the other.²¹ Ruard Ganzevoort²² says the hermeneutics of lived religion marks the distinction of Practical Theology from social sciences of religion and other theological disciplines.

18 Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski, “Introduction,” in *Opening the Field of Practical Theology: An Introduction*, ed. Kathleen A. Cahalan and Gordon S. Mikoski (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 1- 10.

19 Ibid, 2.

20 Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

21 Wepener, Dreyer, & Meylahn, “The Tradition of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria,” 133f.

22 Ruard R. Ganzevoort, “Forks in the road when tracing the sacred: Practical Theology as hermeneutics of lived religion,” accessed October 10, 2018, http://www.ruardganzevoort.nl/pdf/2009_Presidential.pdf.

However, the differences among practical theologians include its object, how praxis and theological theory are related, how the researcher is positioned, and how the primary audience is understood.²³ From the above descriptions of Practical Theology, a functional description that I will adopt is advanced by Bonnie Miller-McLemore.²⁴ Miller-McLemore comprehensively describes Practical Theology as referring to four distinct enterprises with different audiences or objectives. Practical Theology is (1) an activity of believers seeking to sustain a life of reflective faith in the everyday life, (2) a method or way of analysing theology in practice used by religious leaders and by teachers and students across the theological curriculum, (3) a curricular area in theological education focused on ministerial practice and sub specialties, and (4) an academic discipline pursued by a smaller subset of scholars to support and sustain these first three enterprises.²⁵ She notes that each aspect of Practical Theology points to different locations, that is, from daily life to the library, fieldwork to classroom, congregation and community, academic guild and global context. These aspects are connected and interdependent. Thus, from Miller-McLemore's description of Practical Theology, the first three enterprises are evidently practiced in Africa at varying degrees while there is a clear gap in the fourth enterprise. The manner in which the practical theological tasks described by Miller-McLemore are practiced in Africa within the variety of contextual theologies will be discussed below in an integrated way without isolating one enterprise.

2 African Contextual Theologies and their Status as Practical Theology

An apt question to pose at this point is: since all African theologies are about lived religion, why and how are African theologies relevant to Practical Theology? Wepener, Dreyer & Meylahn's²⁶ argument provides an insightful response to these questions. They argue that Practical Theology should be understood and appre-

23 Ganzevoort, "Forks in the road when tracing the sacred: Practical Theology as hermeneutics of lived religion", 1f.

24 Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Five Misunderstandings about Practical Theology," *International Journal of Practical Theology (IJPT)* 16, no. 1 (2012): 5–26, <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijpt-2012-0002>.

25 Miller-McLemore, "Five misunderstandings about Practical Theology," 20.

26 Wepener, Dreyer, & Meylahn, "The tradition of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria," 139.

ciated against the backdrop of historical developments in the particular areas on the continent where the discipline is being practised,²⁷ taking particular note of political and theological developments. Muller²⁸ observed that Africa is in an in-between space. Africans struggle with residual colonial powers (coloniality), business and economic oppressing powers (tyranny of imposed global forces on Africa), competing Western and African philosophies, and many other challenges. Therefore, Practical Theology in Africa should reflect and engage these issues in order to be relevant. For this reason, Muller²⁹ advises that Practical Theology in Africa should include African people's subjective experiences of the issues affecting them. Hence, to address the diverse challenges, different types of theologies have emerged.³⁰ While not named Practical Theologies, these theologies, including African theology, Black theology, Reconstruction theology and Women's theology, clearly have a practical focus.

African Theology emerged as a reaction to the early Western missionaries and some Western Theologians who advocated for the elimination of all that has to do with pre-Christian tradition.³¹ Bowers³² explains that the term African Theology commonly refers to the lively conversation within the African Christian community that, beginning early in the 1960s and increasing unabated to the present, seeks to address the intellectual and theological issues which concern African people on the African continent. Maluleke³³ notes that "African culture and African religion have long been acknowledged (albeit sometimes grudgingly) as the womb out of which African Christian theology must be and/or has been born." Bujo³⁴ notes that the quest for a definitive African theology only became an academic concern in the late 1950s and the 1960s. The theoretical framework behind the reflections that led to the emergence of African theology, as James Nkansah-Obrempong³⁵ argues, is twofold—the African "Personality" of Anglo-

27 Ibid, 139.

28 Muller, "African Postfoundational Practical Theology," 89.

29 Ibid, 89.

30 Bediako, *Theology and Identity*, 311f.

31 Kwame Bediako, "African theology," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. D. Ford (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997): 426–444.

32 Paul Bowers, "African theology: Its history, dynamics, scope and future," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 21, (2002): 109–125.

33 Tinyiko S. Maluleke, "African Theology," in *The Modern Theologians: An introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, ed. Ford, D. E. & Muers, R. (Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 485–501.

34 Benezet Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992).

35 James Nkansah-Obrempong, "The contemporary theological situation in Africa: An overview," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31, (2007): 140–150.

phone Africa and the “Negritude” movement of Francophone Africa. African Theology puts African religion and culture forward as an important interpretive framework for African Christian theology³⁶.

Bediako³⁷ linked African theology and Black theology by tracing the contexts out of which African theology was born—first, the struggle for the social and political transformation of the conditions of inequality and oppression in South Africa that gave rise to Black theology; ad second, the theological exploration into the indigenous cultures of the African peoples that gave rise to a different theological strand designated as African theology. Historically, Black theology in South Africa is imported from USA where it originates. Black theology developed in the Black culture and Black churches of the United States of America where, for centuries, Black Americans were segregated and marginalised in a White racist society. The influence of this theology extended throughout the Caribbean, all the way to South Africa.³⁸ Black theology examines racial and cultural identity in relation to Christian faith, including the economic oppression of Black people.³⁹ South African Black theology is a consequence of the colonially inspired theology of apartheid which, in part, grew out of the religious perspective of white Afrikaners.⁴⁰ Apartheid caused Blacks in South Africa to lose their human dignity and identity since they experienced racial, economic, political and social discrimination from their white counterparts.⁴¹ Therefore, Black theology is a theology of liberation from all forms of oppressions and injustices, such as racism and economic exclusion, that African Americans and Blacks in South Africa experienced.⁴²

Black theology in South Africa is a contextual theology that engages current political powers and structures from an African context and in this sense is distinct from American Black theology or Latin American liberation theology. The most important contribution of Black theology is its restoration of Black African

36 Maluleke, “African Theology”, 489.

37 Bediako, “African theology”, 426ff.

38 Kalembe Mwambazambi, “A missiological glance at South African Black theology,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 31, no. 1 (2010): 1–7, DOI: 10.4102/ve.v31i1.53.

39 Dwight N. Hopkins, “Black Theology of Liberation,” *The Modern Theologians: An introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, ed. Ford, D. E. & Muers, R. (Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 451–468.

40 Mwambazambi, “A missiological glance at South African Black theology,” 1.

41 Cornel W du Toit, “Black consciousness as an expression of radical responsibility: Biko an African Bonhoeffer,” *Religion & Theology* 15, no. 1 (2008): 25–52.

42 John S Mbiti, “Some current concerns of African theology,” *Expository Times* 87, (1976): 164–168; Hildegardis F Chimhanda, “Black Theology of South Africa and the Liberation Paradigm,” *Scriptura* 105(2010): 434–445.

people's dignity and identity.⁴³ As this task continues, many Black theology scholars argue that Black theology's contribution continues to this day.⁴⁴

While African theology and Black theology can be distinguished and are somewhat different⁴⁵, the two theologies have arguably converged in recent years. Kalembe Mwambazambi considers Black Theology as a branch of African Theology as he notes that "within African theology, the South African branch was called South African Black theology"⁴⁶; Hans Engdahl⁴⁷ agrees.

The convergence of African theology and Black theology is quite opportune in Africa. Whilst one can argue that Black Theology is a subcategory of African Theology, an equally convincing argument is that Black Theology and African Theology wrestle with the same issues. Black theology struggles against the construct of one people or ethnic group as superior and the dehumanisation of the other, who is viewed as inferior.⁴⁸ Black theology has a responsibility to both the oppressed and the oppressors to break the cycle of oppression so that the oppressed do not also become oppressors. However, this can also be said of African theology in its quest to respond to the contextual challenges of African people. These challenges are interconnected with the manner some early Western missionaries have presented Christianity in Africa. Thus, both theologies pursue dignity, liberation, recognition and emancipation.

While African theology and Black theology address considerable number of African challenges, these theologies are also limited. Maluleke insightfully explains that the conventional distinctions between "black" and "African" theologies as "siblings," "distant cousins," "old guard" or "new guard," soulmates or

43 Timothy van Arde, "Black theology in South Africa – A theology of human dignity and black identity," *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 72, no. 1 (2016): 1–9, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i1.3176>.

44 Van Arde, "Black theology in South Africa"; Maluleke, "African Theology"; Chimhanda, "Black Theology of South Africa and the Liberation Paradigm"; Abraham O. Adepo & Godfrey Harold, "The relevance of black theology in post-apartheid South Africa, 2013" accessed October 1, 2018, https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/43851/Adebo_Relevance_2013.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

45 Bediako, "African theology"; Martha T. Frederiks & Derrick T. Mashau, "Coming of age in African theology: The quest for authentic theology in African soil", *Exchange* 37, (2008): 109–123, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157254308X278549>.

46 Mwambazambi, "A missiological glance at South African Black theology," 2.

47 Hans Engdahl, "The Black Atlantic as reversal: A reappraisal of African and black theology," *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (2017):1–8, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4618>.

48 Timothy van Arde, "Black Theology in South Africa – A theology of human dignity and black identity", *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 72, no. 1 (2016): 1–9, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i1.3176>.

antagonists, or theologies of “inculturation and liberation”⁴⁹ no longer account sufficiently for the various dynamic and emerging strands of African theologies. He added that these analogies have been found to be too reductionistic in a continent in which there has been, for a long time, more theological variety and innovation than the two types can adequately cover. Africans need an integrative-comprehensive Black theology and African theology that embraces its other theologies. Mokgethi Motlhabi⁵⁰ argues for a theology that covers the issues addressed by the present Black Theology and African Theology combined, and much more. Therefore, Reconstruction theology has been proposed to replace Black theology and African theology by Charles Villa-Vicencio⁵¹ and Jesse Mugambi.⁵²

Mugambi⁵³, one of the leading proponents of Reconstruction theology, argues that all forms of African theology or Black theology should shift their emphasis away from the Exodus motif of liberation. Villa-Vicencio⁵⁴ substantiates this point by drawing a parallel between the activities of post-apartheid and that of the Book of Ezra-Nehemiah that deals with the return of the exiles. In other words, Villa-Vicencio draws a parallel between post-apartheid South Africa, in which activists who had been banned and exiled returned to fill the vacuum created by the new dispensation, and post-exilic Judah, where those who had been captives were allowed to return home to embark on the work of reconstruction in their devastated land. Theological proclamation by the church for justice and affirmation of human dignity, rather than liberation and equity, should stir the church to action that restores humans from their sufferings.

For Mugambi, the problems of racism, colonialism and neo-colonialism have caused destruction and distortion in religious areas of African society. He delineates three levels of operation for theology of reconstruction. First, at a personal level, it supports individual efforts to reconstruct personal life, finances, intentions, and motives after the destruction caused by colonialism, exploitation, and oppression. Second, at an ecclesial level, it urges the church to engage the public to reconsider church life. This goal requires clear theological articulation of

49 Ibid, 489–492.

50 Mokgethi Motlhabi, “African Theology or Black Theology? Toward an integral African Theology,” *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa* 8, no. 2 (1994): 113–141.

51 Charles Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation Building and Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

52 Jesse. N.K. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction* (Nairobi: East Africa Educational Publishers, 1995); Jesse. N.K. Mugambi, *Christian Theology and Social Reconstruction* (Nairobi: Acton Press, 2003).

53 Mugambi, *Christian Theology and Social Reconstruction*, 128.

54 Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation Building and Rights*, 7–9.

management, finances, and pastoral care that would propel society in the direction of rebuilding what had been destroyed through colonialism, imperialism, and apartheid. Third, at a cultural level, it proposes cultural reorientation that includes economic, political, social, ethical, and religious issues. Villa-Vicencio's theology of reconstruction integrates political, social, economic and legal issues. Mugambi's⁵⁵ theology of reconstruction proposes action that affects all of life.

Apart from Reconstruction theology, another significant theological work in Africa has been generated by The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, commonly referred to as "the Circle". The Circle is a community of African women theologians who come together to reflect on what it means to them to be women of faith within their experiences of religion, culture, politics and social-economic structures in Africa.⁵⁶ The Circle has generated a considerable amount of research regarding women of faith in Africa since its establishment in 1989. The Circle has adopted a narrative, reflective and experiential approach to African women's issues. It is arguably correct to say it provides a space for pastoral care for the involved women theologians. It has remained focused on women's liberation within theology. Thus, despite its significant and commendable work, it has remained limited to women's issues in general.

The question is: how are these contextual theologies Practical Theology? The Practical Theological focus of these theologies is not hard to discern. The Circle produces Practical Theology as lived religion of women theologians in Africa. The African theologies seek to respond to African contextual issues by taking African religion and culture as an important interpretive framework. It is pastoral, emancipatory, human affirmation and reclaiming of African human dignity. As such, it is a Practical Theology of recognizing the image of God among Africans. Black theology persists in its duty to the oppressed. In post-colonial Africa where black governments sometimes act in undemocratic ways or suppress and exploit its citizens, Black theology continues its agenda by challenging, confronting and subverting such oppressive structures. Reconstruction theology is all encompassing and aims at actions that transform all aspects of life. Its object and action field are the holistic human being, ecclesial structures and society. The persisting ills in Africa such as corruption, dictatorship, violence and bad governance call for holistic and encompassing theology. Thus, reconstruction is a kind of social and ecclesial transformational theology, an activist theology, a kind of moral theology, a kind of practical public theology and a liberation theology. It's a theology

55 Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*, 16–17.

56 Isabel A. Phiri, "Major challenges for African women theologians in theological education (1989–2008)", *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 34, no. 2 (2008): 63–81.

that aims at practically changing and improving situations without blaming the West. Practical Theology in Reconstruction theology entails taking ownership and employing an active approach to improving life without blaming colonial powers.

Both Black theology and Reconstruction theology, and indeed African theology in its convergence with Black theology, among other things, are a kind of public Practical Theology. Richard Osmer and Friedrich Schweitzer⁵⁷ usefully describe the task of public Practical Theology as, first, ensuring that the public is one of the intentional audiences of Practical Theology; second, including everyday concerns and issues in its reflection; and third, facilitating a dialogue between theology and contemporary culture. Thus, while the name Practical Theology is not used to describe these theologies, they have a strong ministerial (pastoral care) and public practical theological role, which is Practical Theology.

Further to discerning some elements of Practical Theology from African contextual theologies, it is important to map out the general Practical Theology approaches in countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

3 Practical Theology Practices in Africa

3.1 Towards Understanding Practical Theology in Africa

Evident from the Practical Theological approaches embedded in African contextual theologies above, Practical Theology manifests in a variety of ways. Importantly, the theological writings in Africa rarely bear the name Practical Theology despite focused research and publications on ministry and practice. In this section, I will introduce some theological approaches that could be deemed Practical Theology across the African continent under the following categories: Francophone Africa, Lusophone Africa, Anglophone Africa focusing on West, East and Southern Africa countries.

Within Francophone Africa, Kalemba Mwambazambi provides a useful outline of a practical theological approach in an aspirational way. In *The Church mission relative to socio-political issues in Francophone Africa*, Mwambazambi⁵⁸ states that Francophone countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Burundi, Cameroon and Central African Republic, experience major

⁵⁷ Richard R. Osmer and Friedrich Schweitzer, *Religious Education between Modernization and Globalization: New Perspectives on the United States and Germany* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

⁵⁸ Kalemba Mwambazambi, "The Church mission relative to socio-political issues in Francophone Africa," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 33, no. 1 (2012): 1–6, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v33i1.694>.

poverty and suffering. He explains that 89% of the Congolese people are unemployed and every year malnutrition kills more than 50,000 children in Cameroon. Chad has serious political challenges resulting in immense corruption. Corruption in the Republic of Burundi is fanning poverty and suffering of the poor. In this situation, Mwambazambi argues that theology (and Practical Theology) should promote moral character, especially positive moral values, among Christians so they embody the Kingdom of God and act in a morally blameless way. Such high morality will transform the ill practices in government and society as the people will see a good example from Christians. Hence, Mwambazambi advocates for moral theology in Francophone Africa to guide the people as well as reconstruct their characters and actions.

In Lusophone Africa, which consists of Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe and Equatorial Guinea, several authors identify a need for in-depth critical theological reflection.⁵⁹ Due to many years of civil war in Angola, Christianity has been growing but with little in-depth theological training. Theological training was viewed as an inherent part of community development, as the Gospel is considered to reflect Jesus' holistic ministry.⁶⁰ Theological responses and developments have been informed by the people's contextual experiences. For instance, some pastors prefer living in cities where they can receive salaries rather than going into rural areas. Hence, pastors are encouraged to be trained as community servants who are able to empower their communities through work and the Word.

João Domingos Aleixo⁶¹ in his doctoral thesis, *A theological ethical perspective of corruption in Mozambique*, argues that social ills in public and private institutions have caused citizens to become distrustful of institutions. Religious leaders have simultaneously colluded with corrupt officials and represented the church of Christ.⁶² In this situation, theology and Practical Theology is called upon to help Christians to live a life of high moral standards by "purifying the Christian attitude in the world."⁶³ Kruger du Preez of Institute for Christian Higher Educa-

59 Church of the Nazarene, "Africa Lusophone Field," accessed October 2, 2018, <http://africanazarene.org/africa-lusophone/>; Hendriks, "Theological education in Africa: Messages from the fringes"; Kruger P. Du Preez, Jurgens H. Hendriks, & Arend E. Carl, "Missional theological curricula and institutions", *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35, no. 1 (2014): 1–8, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v35i1.1326>

60 Hendriks, "Theological education in Africa: Messages from the fringes," 69.

61 João D. Aleixo, "A theological ethical perspective of corruption in Mozambique", A Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) thesis submitted a North-West University, South Africa.

62 Aleixo, "A theological ethical perspective of corruption in Mozambique", iv.

63 *Ibid.*, iv.

tion in Mozambique (HEFSIBA) emphasises the need for theology to impact the church and society.⁶⁴

In the conflict in Guinea-Bissa, the church and other religious leaders have been caught up in reconciliation and nation building. Theology and religious practice and life in Equatorial Guinea has tended to focus on instilling piety and spirituality as well as influencing society as a light in the midst of great oil wealth. São Tomé and Príncipe and Cape Verde are highly influenced by Roman Catholicism with 63.8% and 80% of the population being Roman Catholic, respectively.⁶⁵

In Anglophone West Africa and East Africa, Practical Theology and general theological discussion are interlinked. Nwachuku⁶⁶ deduces Practical Theology issues within the general writings on African theology from West and East Africa. She explains that John Mbiti has written on East Africa, Idowu on God in Yoruba of Nigeria, and Pobee on Akan religious thought in Ghana. Other African scholars who have written on lived religion include Musa Dube at University of Botswana, writing on Christianity, women and HIV; Jesse Mugambi at University of Nairobi; Mary Getui and Emmanuel Obeng writing for the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT); Ezra Chitando, Nisbert Taringa and Tapiwa Mapuranga in Zimbabwe, all of whom champion Reconstruction Theology; Esther Asolatse⁶⁷ and Mercy Oduyoye who are Ghanaian feminist theologians; and others such as Tapiwa Mucherera, Emmanuel Lartey, Benezet Bujo Bolaji Idowu, Osadolor Imasogie, Gabriel Setiloane and Gwinyai Muzorewa. Several of these authors agree that African theology is about lived religion. Jimi Zacka⁶⁸ in his essay, *Tasks of a theologian in Africa today*, similarly captured the lived religion focus of theology and Practical Theology in Africa. He maintains that theology in Africa (Practical Theology included) should address the cause of the poor in communities with eyes fixed on Jesus to ensure justice. He added that “in a continent plagued with mass poverty, bad governance and Afro-pessimism, the Church as the family of God remains the anchor of hope. It ought to give the children of Africa, its women and men, a genuine experience of God.”⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Du Preez, et al, “Missional theological curricula and institutions,” 1.

⁶⁵ Wikipedia, “São Tomé and Príncipe”, accessed October 2, 2018, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%A3o_Tom%C3%A9_e_Pr%C3%ADncipe

⁶⁶ Nwachuku, “Practical Theology in West Africa.”

⁶⁷ Esther Acolatse, *For Freedom or Bondage: A Critique of African Pastoral Practices* (Eerdmans, 2014) and *Powers Principalities and the Spirit: Biblical Realism and the West*, (Eerdmans, 2018).

⁶⁸ Jimi Zacka, “Tasks of a theologian in Africa today, 2016,” accessed October 1, 2018, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/tasks-theologian-africa-today-prof-jimi-zacka/>

⁶⁹ Ibid, 12.

In Kenya, Mugambi, Nthamburi and Waruta, the theological leaders who are considered elders of the Association of Theological Institutions of East Africa (ATIEA), encourage reconciliation, especially after the country's polarisation over the ethnic and political divide.⁷⁰ They have attended to violence against women. Furthermore, the increased interface of Christians with Muslims in this country is challenging theology to engage in interfaith dialogue.

In Zimbabwe, Ezra Chitando, Nisbert Taringa and Tapiwa Mapuranga survey the role that religion and theology have played in the country. Theology and religion have addressed crisis issues and sought to provide pastoral care to citizens in the context of democracy deficit, violence and deterioration of people's quality of life.⁷¹

South African theologians have explicitly used the name Practical Theology. Practical Theology is a distinct department with its own identity in university faculties⁷² and intentional publications explicitly focus on Practical Theology, whereas in other parts of Africa Practical Theology has been integrated with other issues. Still, the focus of Practical Theology has also been lived religion. Dreyer⁷³, describing the position of Practical Theology in South Africa, observed that the major development regarding an African indigenous Practical Theology in South Africa has been a focus on lived religion by Black African students. This focus has been on various African and South African contextual challenges. For this reason, Dames⁷⁴ argued that Practical Theology in Africa has to deal with the pluralistic challenges including issues of violence, oppression and destruction. The Practical Theological method that has been used in South Africa is largely a

70 Joshua J. McElwee, "Hope, concrete realities the focus at gathering of African theologians, 2012" accessed September 20, 2018, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/theology/hope-concrete-realities-focus-gathering-african-theologians>; Godfrey P. Ngumi, "Report of the Association of Theological Institutions of East Africa (ATIEA) Consultation 2010," accessed October 5, 2018, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ete/the-future-of-african-theological-education-papers-from-ete-and-partners-in-africa/report-of-the-association-of-theological-institutions-of-east-africa-atiea-consultation-2010>.

71 Chitando, Taringa and Mapuranga, "Zimbabwean theology and religious studies during the crisis years (2000–2008)."

72 Dreyer, "Practical Theology and the call for the decolonisation of higher education in South Africa"; Dreyer, "Practical Theology in South Africa"; Pieterse, "Scientific-theoretical research approach to Practical Theology in South Africa"; Wepener, Dreyer, & Meylahn, "The tradition of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria."

73 Dreyer, "Practical Theology in South Africa," 7.

74 Dames, "Knowing, believing, living in Africa: A Practical Theology perspective of the past, present and future," 1.

hermeneutical approach that employs Richard Osmer's four tasks of Practical Theology.⁷⁵

3.2 Risks to Practical Theology throughout Africa

From the various theological approaches employed in different African countries, it seems that scholastic Practical Theology in Africa predominantly utilises clerical and ecclesial paradigms, rather than lived religion. Training of ministers, influencing church practices, and teaching pastoral care, preaching, discipleship and missions are leading expressions of Practical Theology. The challenges of society such as poverty, corruption, bad governance, violence, poverty, and unemployment are identified but may not always be deeply reflected upon theologically. The public role of Practical Theology, moral formation, ethics of public office bearers, servant and selfless leadership are clear issues that theology should address, but conceptual clarity and relevant theological approaches need further development. The agenda of Reconstruction theology seems to be embraced in the form of public Practical Theology.

The threat to Practical Theology is great. The three elements (movements) of Practical Theology are not happening, namely beginning with a base in practice, moving to theoretical reflection, and returning to practice.⁷⁶ In many cases there is no movement as people are caught up in unreflected practice. This is a huge threat and risk for a discipline that is fluid such as Practical Theology, considering what Ganzevoort⁷⁷ called "forks of the discipline." Furthermore, the discipline is confused by many contextual challenges. For instance, the proliferation of African independent churches, political issues, African spirituality issues, economic challenges, and many other issues are stretching practical theologians who are already not adequately trained in many cases. Due to many needs, Practical Theology may be unwittingly evolving into a social science to address social challenges. Theological reflection tends to be shallow. The Bible is used as proof text to justify theological practical positions. The result may make Practical Theology bad theological science and bad social science at the same time.

Considering the foregoing discussion, I will deduce a framework from the various practices for Practical Theology in Africa.

⁷⁵ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008); Pieterse, "Scientific-theoretical research approach to Practical Theology in South Africa," 4; Nwachuku, "Practical Theology in West Africa," 523.

⁷⁶ Cahalan and Mikoski, "Introduction," 2.

⁷⁷ Ganzevoort, "Forks in the road when tracing the sacred."

4 Towards a Deduced Framework for Practical Theology in Africa

What framework or definition can be proposed that encompasses the various practical theological approaches discussed above? To that end, I draw the following definition or framework from the above discussion:

Practical Theology in Africa is a (1) theological approach that seeks to (2) understand, communicate and live out life of faith within a context where the individual exists within (3) struggles arising from blackness and African geographical location. The theology goes beyond reaction and referencing of Western theological patterns to (4) engage holistic African situations. The theology is characterised by reflecting on (5) ways of living, understanding and communicating God in postcolonial African context that is constantly changing.

First, Practical Theology in Africa is a theological task. It entails intentionally reflecting and discerning God in life issues with a pastoral focus. The greatest manifestation of theology and Practical Theology in Africa is its expression in pastoral and ecclesial care.

Second, Practical Theology in Africa is about understanding, communicating and living out the Christian faith. Understanding entails asking and answering the question: who is God to me as an African person within the context of African spirituality and other challenges? This includes making God relevant to African people, which has been the preoccupation of some African theologians, including Bediako, Mbiti, Idowu, Bujo, Imasogie, and Setiloane. Communication is about sharing the Christian faith (gospel) where the following question is asked and answered: how should I speak so people understand God in a relevant way in preaching, evangelism, mission and other pastoral practices? The faith and Christianity should be lived religion. Living out the faith includes Christian expression, witness, ethics, service—pastoral care diakonia.

Third, Practical Theology in Africa involves struggle due to blackness and persisting residual effects of colonial powers as well as the new position of White Africans. Therefore, Practical Theological reflection engages dimensions of public engagement with neo-colonial practices, protesting, advocacy and resistance—including confronting the black oppressors who exchanged power with white oppressors. African practical theologians must reflect upon and answer questions, including: how can my black African issues and agenda be taken seriously at the global roundtable? How does my black skin negatively impact the responses that I receive and the perceptions they form about me? What does it mean to be a White African who is associated with colonial baggage? How should I live as a White person within postcolonial Africa without being misconstrued? How

should I be understood? What are the causes of my problems and challenges? Answering these questions requires a multiplicity of perspectives and approaches. It goes beyond importing Western theological approaches to Africa or romanticising African beliefs and practices. It is about being critical, self-introspective, and adopting a reconstruction agenda, among other things. This entails a public practical theological approach.

Fourth, Practical Theology entails holistic engagement, being conscious of and attending to the messy-ness of life in Africa where one lives with paradoxes, what Daniel Louw⁷⁸ called “zig zag” movement in addressing chaos in society. For instance, there are black governments and yet people are oppressed and brutalised with impunity. Holistic engagement includes introspection, reflexivity, disruption of the status quo, transformation, confrontation, sacrifice, networking power and civic action. Can black African theologians answer questions such as: what does it mean to be a Christian where one is suppressed by one of your own? How do we shift from colonial blame game to take responsibility? What sacrifices should be made to progress towards realising the shalom of God?

Fifth, Practical Theology requires being conscious about the post-colonial context of Africa with its opportunities and challenges and exploring fresh ways of thinking and understanding, negotiating between old and new ways and finding a middle point of living in Africa.

5 Challenges and Tasks of Practical Theology in Africa Going Forward

Practical Theology in Africa occupies a critical socio-theological space. To perform an effective practical theological task within the life spaces of African people, Practical Theology should be conscious of the challenges facing the discipline and the task. These challenges are summarised below.

First, developing a distinctive identity of Practical Theology in Africa. African Practical Theology should be indigenous and home grown on the African continent. This goes beyond people, groups or race. It entails developing an identity that incorporates the unique challenges of being African whether white or black. While Africa is heterogeneous with diverse groups of people, there are clearly

⁷⁸ Daniel J. Louw, “Identity and dignity within the human rights discourse: An anthropological and praxis approach”, *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35, no. 2 (2014): 1–9, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v35i2.876>

discernible elements that are common and can be found in different forms. The Congolese practical theologian Masamba ma Mpolo⁷⁹ called the common elements among African people *homo africanus* characteristics. These are sanctity of life, relation between illness, misfortune and sin, spirits and ancestors in the life of the community, and life experienced as a whole. Therefore, Practical Theology in Africa is faced with a challenge of developing a holistic practical theological framework that includes practical spirituality, social, physical, political and economic issues, among other things. African theologians agree on two key central aspects that should be observed at all times, namely the centrality of the Supreme Being God in their lives and emphasis on practical life issues.⁸⁰ With Practical Theology being a new discipline that originated with Friedrich Schleiermacher, the question is: to what extent does the compartmentalisation of theology (which Practical Theology draws from) fit the holistic perspective of the African thought?

Second, strengthening and consolidating the theological networks to deepen theological reflection as well as optimising theological contribution. South Africa has vibrant theological and religious societies with a well-represented Society for Practical Theology in South Africa (SPTSA). However, at the continent level there are only a few Practical Theology networks, including the African Association of Pastoral Studies and Counselling (AAPSC) and Network for African Congregational Theology (NetACT). Other networks focus on Theological institutions such as Association of Theological Institutions of East Africa (ATIEA) and Association of Evangelicals of Africa. Dreyer⁸¹ rightly observed that Practical Theology lacks regional networks. We need to strengthen networks and use them as nodes of deepening theological reflection.

Third, improving the quality of Practical Theological scholarship through intentional capacity building and mentoring of young scholars. As older academics are dying, retiring from their institutions or taking up administrative roles, a vacuum is emerging as new issues requiring reflection arise. For instance, leading Practical Theologians in South Africa such as Hennie Pieterse, Daniel Louw, Julian Muller and Malan Nel and Daisy Nwachuku in Nigeria have retired. Other prominent African theologians such as Kwame Bediako of Ghana, Bolaji Idowu and others have died. Other theologians such as Isabel Phiri at World

79 Masamba ma Mpolo, "Spirituality and counselling for liberation: The context and praxis of African pastoral activities and psychology," in *Voices from Africa on pastoral care: Contributions in international seminars 1988–2008*, ed. K. Federschmidt, K. Temme & H. Weiss, *Magazine of the Society for Intercultural Pastoral Care and Counselling* (SIPCC), 2013, 7–8.

80 Nwachuku, "Practical Theology in West Africa," 517.

81 Dreyer, "Practical Theology in South Africa," 513.

Council of Churches, Mercy Amba Oduyoye at Trinity Theological Seminary in Ghana, Tinyiko Maluleke at University of Pretoria, Musa Dube at University of Botswana and Andrew Phillips at UNISA, just to mention a few, have taken senior management roles in institutions, which leaves them with little time for research. There is need for an intentional mentoring programme for young Practical Theologians to sustain and nurture quality theological engagement on the African continent.

Fourth, developing and strengthening collaborative research on the continent. African Practical theologians tend to pursue partnerships with scholars and institutions in the West. Can we develop a similar appetite and energy for collaboration with theologians in other African countries?⁸² Partnerships with Western colleagues and institutions tend to result in economic benefits for African scholars. African Practical Theologians should pursue networks with other African scholars for the intrinsic worth of research and the quest for knowledge and contribution.

Fifth, decolonisation of the discipline. South African higher education institutions have been occupied with decolonisation of the university curriculum since the student uprising in 2015. Practical Theology, like other tertiary education curricula, has been hugely influenced by European models. Dreyer and other South African Practical theologians rightly observe that Practical Theology in South Africa and other African countries has developed in a close relationship with Practical Theology in Britain, Scotland, Netherlands, Germany and USA.⁸³ As the bulk of Practical Theology in Africa can be retrieved from practices, the task of decolonising the discipline includes listening to practical knowledge of practitioners. Muller suggests a narrative approach of telling stories, listening to stories and retelling stories.⁸⁴ Hendriks, who was instrumental in the formation of NetACT and has continued to be actively involved in congregational studies across Africa, also suggests that Practical Theology in Africa should listen to voices (stories) from the fringes.⁸⁵ The stories of people from their contexts should be heard and theological responses and reflections get informed by them rather than importing Western agenda. Pamela Couture has done considerable work worth noting in this regard⁸⁶.

82 Dreyer, "Practical Theology in South Africa," 513; Wepener, Dreyer, & Meylahn, "The tradition of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria", 133f.

83 Ibid.

84 Muller, "African Postfoundational Practical Theology," 88f.

85 Hendriks, "Theological education in Africa: Messages from the fringes," 77.

86 Pamela Couture, *We Are Not All Victims: Local Peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of Congo* (Lit Verlag, 2016).

Sixth, promoting and encouraging practical theological reflection and engagement within the context of proliferating emerging churches. Theology in Africa is caught in a quandary of fast growing African Independent Churches (AICs) that belong to two categories. One group belong to the Zionists or White garment churches that worship under the trees. These churches draw their practices from African traditional religion and the Bible. The second group offer a charismatic and Pentecostal outlook. They are emerging in all corners of cities. Nwachuku cynically lamented that the pioneering struggles of Idowu, Mbiti, Pobee, and many other African theologians of having African churches that bear and reflect African-ness have been achieved and even overtaken.⁸⁷ This dream seems surpassed. She added that the greatest challenge in Africa today is no longer the referencing and importing of Western practices but how to bring personal theologies of daily life that are often informed by subjective experiences into a meaningful scholarly engagement.⁸⁸

From the description, challenges and tasks of Practical Theology in Africa, it is evident that the discipline is fluid despite its undeniable utility. Its tasks are broad and diverse but the question is: how will these tasks truly remain theological and practical? How can this be conceptualised, taught and practiced in a holistic manner?

87 Nwachuku, "Practical Theology in West Africa," 522.

88 *Ibid.*

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