**ABSTRACTS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA (ATISCA) FOR THE THIRD JOINT CONFERENCE, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA.**

**1. Ending the poverty of theology in order to end poverty: Some reflections**

*Ezra Chitando, University of Zimbabwe, Department of Religious Studies, Philosophy and Ethics, P. O. Box MP167, Harare, Zimbabwe.* ***Email:*** *chitsa21@yahoo.com*

**Abstract**

Whereas poverty appears to have entered into a permanent covenant with Africa, there is a critical need to employ theology as a resource to overcome poverty. Unfortunately, for the large part Africa is wallowing in the poverty of theology. Some of the emerging theologies threaten to entrench poverty in Africa by popularising miraculous strategies of overcoming poverty. Whereas honest and deep reflections on poverty, its causes and the actions required to overcome it will provide sustainable solutions, there has been a tendency to promote mystical solutions. This presentation seeks to provide insights into how to utilise theology to overcome poverty in Africa.

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**2. Re-reading “texts of terror” in the context of Gender Based Violence in communities of faith**

*Lovemore Togarasei, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Botswana, Private Bag 0022, Gaborone, Botswana,* ***E-mail:*** *togaraseil@mopipi.ub.bw*

**Abstract**

The Bible is very central in the practice of the Christian faith, particularly in Africa. But some critics (e.g. Wanjiru and Chitando 2013) think that instead of being ‘good news,’ the Bible has caused havoc in the African continent. For example: the use of the Bible in the dispossession of African resources, particularly land, the use of the Bible to justify apartheid, the contemporary use of the Bible by gospreuneurs to exploit fellow Africans and the use of the Bible to justify gender based violence (GBV). This paper will focus on its abuse in perpetuating GBV. Although the whole Bible can be accused of causing havoc in Africa, when it comes to GBV, the OT part of the Bible is the major culprit. Writing in 1984, Phyllis Trible identified four texts from the OT that she described as “texts of terror.” Trible’s description of these four texts can be extended to the majority of OT texts. In this paper I shall therefore identify some of the texts in the OT that have been read in a way that fuels GBV. With these in mind, I then suggest a re-reading for mitigation of GBV.

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**3. Exploring the Lived Experiences of Refugees who settle Outside Camps in a Christian Country: The case of Malawi.**

*By Mastone Mbewe, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Chancellor College, University of Malawi, P.O. Box 280, ZOMBA.* *mastonembewe@yahoo.com*

**Abstract**

Although Malawi is a Christian country there is need to reflect on the reality of what happens at grass-roots level which can prove the religiosity of this nation. This paper explored the lived experiences of three refugees who settled outside Dzaleka Camp in Malawi. The major objective of this study was to understand the lived experiences of refugees who settle outside Dzaleka Camp in terms of reflecting the religiosity of Malawi as a Christian country. Many refugees in Malawi run away from Dzaleka Camp, the only remaining refugee camp to settle outside for better life. The paper is meant to expose issues that arise from outside camps as the refugees mix and mingle with the Christians in Malawi. The paper generated deep information on the lived experiences of refugees who stay outside camps in order to understand the religiosity of Malawi citizens from the perspective of the refugees themselves. Malawi is often known as a Christian country, but very little is known about real life experiences that can demonstrate the religiosity of Malawians. When refugees come to Malawi, they are led to that camp and monitored to stay within the camp for the whole period they are supposed to be in Malawi. Very often refugees run away from Dzaleka Camp and establish themselves in the townships but the kind of life they lead as refugees in a Christian country is not known hence the gist of this paper. The main research methodology employed was qualitative research design, using phenomenological approaches and in-depth interviews for generating data.

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**4. Southern African governments respond to the Prosperity Gospel: the case of Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Namibia**

*Professor James N. Amanze, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Botswana, Private Bag 0022, Gaborone, Botswana.* ***Email:*** *amanzejn@mopipi.ub.bw*

This paper examines the responses of four southern African countries namely Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland to the prosperity gospel which is in vogue in practically every corner of the southern African region. The argument of this paper is that though the prosperity gospel is benefiting a lot of people by bringing them closer to God, a number of southern African governments are uneasy in the way in which the money is collected from the people who ultimately end poor and not rich which is contrary to the premises of the prosperity gospel which teaches that absolute faith in God produces unimaginable wealth. Recent events in many southern African countries bear the evidence that many people have been ripped off of their money by self-styled preachers who claim to have the magical power to open the gates of heaven as it were and showers heavily blessings in the form of money to the believers. Wealth accumulated in this way has quite often ended in the personal accounts of the preachers themselves without any form of accountability.

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**5. Factors contributing to the rise of cohabitation in Botswana**

*Senzokuhle Doreen Setume, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Botswana, Private Bag 0022, Gaborone, Botswana.* ***Email:*** *senzokuhle.setume@mopipi.ub.bw*

**Abstract**

Cohabitation is a current reality that has been observed worldwide and Botswana is no exception. The rates of cohabitation in Botswana have been on the rise since the 1991 Population and Housing census where it constituted 12% of marital relationships. The 2011 Population and Housing census shows that the rate of cohabitation (21%) surpasses that of marriage (18%) meaning that more people in the marriageable age are cohabitating than married. Botswana is a religious tolerant country and many world religions have been established in the country. Marriage is a sacred institution that has been historically held as a religious/cultural obligation in most religions. This paper therefore explores the rise of cohabitating unions in the midst of a religious and cultural environment that promotes marriage and discourages non-marital cohabitation. The paper discusses how a relationship that seems to be deviant becomes a popular one. Different factors that have contributed to the rise of cohabitation in Botswana are explored and evaluated. These include labour migration, poor economic conditions at urban places, and a general empowered position of some women through formal education and economic advantages as well as the perceived HIV and AIDS risks that are associated with marriage. This is done in order to explore how cohabitation may have impacted on family life and gender relations in Botswana, in both positive and negative ways.

**6. Rain – Making Art, Rituals and Ceremonies in Botswana**

*Professor Fidelis Nkomazana, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Botswana, Private 0022, Gaborone, Botswana:* ***Email****: Nkomazaf@ mopipi.ub.bw*

 **Abstract**

The paper explores rituals and customs closely related to rain making beliefs and practices in Botswana. In these rituals and customs, *dingaka* (traditional doctors), who play a central role in the art of rainmaking are believed to possess immense power and knowledge to cause clouds to form and produce rain. The background information that has been collected from review of relevant literature has contributed a great deal to understanding the conceptions of rainmaking. The study is also based on personal interviews as well as a field survey on rain making rituals and ceremonies. The results of these interviews and literature review show that rainmaking was an important religious practice in Botswana and also that some communities continue to conduct these rituals and ceremonies in the 21st century Botswana.

**7. A Christian appraisal of the Botswana Presidential Appeal to build houses for the poor in society: A political advert or a religious motivation?**

*Rev. Dr. Obed N. Kealotswe*, *Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Botswana, Private Bag 0022, Gaborone, Botswana.* ***Email:*** *kealotsw@mopipi.ub.bw*

**Abstract**

Some ten years back the President of Botswana made an appeal to the nation through private companies, individuals, communities, associations, non-governmental organizations and churches to build houses for the poor people in Botswana. By that time about 47% of Batswana lived under the poverty datum line. This sounded a very ridiculous thing because Botswana has been classified by the International Monetary Fund to be one of the richest economies in Africa which could meet its expenditure without asking for loans. A lot of wealth has been derived from the diamond industry which is amongst the best in the world. Some critics have argued that Batswana are poor because there is a very unequal distribution of wealth in the country where the rich are becoming richer when the poor are becoming poorer. Inspite of this critic many Batswana especially in the rural and semi-urban areas have been very happy with government projects aimed at eliminating poverty such as self-reliance *Ipelegeng* and many other projects including the government sponsorship of agricultural activities.

When the appeal was made, many churches participated in donating money or building houses for the poor. The problem to be investigated is that churches claim that they are following the biblical instructions in building houses for the poor. The question is where were the churches before the Presidential announcement? This raises questions on the faithfulness of Christian participation in the projects. This is what this paper tries to find out. Secondly, the church in Botswana has been very badly infiltrated by partisan politics. It then becomes very questionable as to when the church acts in faith or as part of the political system. This paper will evaluate this Presidential appeal by referring to the roles of Christianity and African Traditional Religions (ATRs) in the care of the poor. The paper will conclude by identifying some theology that could help in appraising the appeal.

**8. Beating the magicians at their own game: A case of Paul and his labour in Ephesus (Acts 19:8-20)**

Rev. Dr. Francis Nsengiyumva, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Chancellor College, University of Malawi, P. O. Box 280, Zomba, Malawi. ***Email:*** *apoloprepet@yahoo.com*

**Abstract**

Belief in the existence and dangers of witchcraft, magic, sorcery is strong and widespread among Africans today. Not only it remains a menace to both individual and the Churches but also it is practised by Christians and non-Christians, who engage in traditional belief and magic to have their desire fulfilled. Cases involving death, illness and misfortune are considered to be the outcome of evil intent done by close relatives rather than caused by natural processes. The question that this paper seeks to verify is whether the Christian Faith could offer to its adherents the required power to get them out this most feared phenomenon.

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