

INSTITUTE FOR BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP IN AFRICA (IBSA) – WEST AFRICA

MINUTES OF THE FIRST MEETING HELD ONLINE ON SEPTEMBER 4TH, 2021 VIA ZOOM AT 11:00 GMT

1.0 Attendance

1.1 Present

Prof. John D. Kwamena Ekem	- Ghana	President
Prof. Jonathan E.T. Kuwornu Adjaottor	- Ghana	Secretary General
Dr. Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh	- Ghana	Vice Secretary General
Prof. William Loader	- Australia	Member
Prof. Jean-Claude Loba Mkole	- Kenya	Member
Prof. Eric Nii Bortey Anum	- Ghana	Member
Dr. Alice Matilda Nsiah	- Ghana	Member
Dr. Emmanuel Antwi	- Ghana	Member
Ebenezer Tetteh Fiorgbor	- Ghana	Member
Tony Badu	- Ghana	Member
Dr. Uloma Wabara	- Kenya	Member
Julius Ndishua	- Nigeria	Member
Dr. Joseph Williams Acheampong	- Ghana	Member

1.2 In Attendance

Isaac Avotri	- Ghana	IT Administrator
Evelyn Sowah	- Ghana	Recorder

2.0 Opening

The opening prayer was said by Prof. Eric Nii Bortey Anum at 11:06 GMT.

3.0 Devotion at 11:09 GMT

Prof. Eric Nii Bortey Anum continued with the devotion with a text taken from 1 Peter 2:5-10 with verse 7 as the anchor verse, the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. He mentioned that this statement is a wisdom statement which has been repeated in the New Testament. A capstone is the head which is the last stone placed into a building. Prof. Anum reiterated the main point of the author of 1 Peter using the description to emphasize the importance of what the rejected stone had become to the building, by making the building stable. Jesus Christ was rejected and crucified by his own people, but God in building the spiritual house has chosen Jesus Christ to be the capstone of that building made up of all believers in Jesus Christ. Additionally, he said the stone was metaphorically used and given excellent attributes and those who trust in it will never be put to shame. In places like Larteh and Nungua in Ghana, stones have been used to represent deities which people worship because they believe that the stone gave them a kind of protection. He believes that

metaphorically, we (Africans) the stone worshippers that the European Builders rejected in the early missionary enterprise have become the cornerstone of reversed Mission and Church growth. He encouraged scholars to double up resources to get the building stable and progressive and more protective now that we the rejected stone has become part of the capstone as the centre of gravity of Christianity has moved to Africa. He posits that empirical hermeneutics practitioners and their students have suffered a lot of rejection over the decades and still do today. He believes that there are still a lot of African Biblical interpreters who have joined the rejection team. He ended the devotion by praying that God through his Holy Spirit will open our eyes, ears and minds to reject the rejection in our biblical interpretation of the practice of biblical spirituality.

4.0 Paper presentation - Methodologies for doing Biblical Studies in Africa led by Prof. John David Ekem at 11:22 GMT

- **Introduction**

Prof. Ekem introduced the theme for his presentation by elucidating Africa's key role in Biblical Studies since the second century CE, which has become the centre of great Biblical activity. He mentioned that before the English had their own vernacular Bible in the form of the Authorized Version, Africans had their own in Sahidic, an Egyptian language. Egypt had become known for its translation works for more than a thousand years, which earned Africa the title, 'the cradle of Bible translation.'

- **Some Pioneering Reading Methods**

Prof. Ekem talked about Origen's Hexapla, a six column display of texts in Hebrew, their transliteration, and four different Greek versions: Aquila, Symmachus, the Septuagint and the Theodotion. He mentioned that Origen could be regarded as the first father of the Church to develop an elaborate method of Biblical interpretation. He said the Hexapla that Origen displayed was a classical pioneering work in intra-textual and intertextual studies which illustrates the multiplicity of versions as well as fluidity of the Biblical canon right from ancient times. He also made mention of other ancient reading methods such as *allegoria* and *historia*, championed by Alexandrian and Antiochian schools which emphasize pluralistic traditions. He asked rhetorical questions of whether these are mutually exclusive and which of them is more relevant to our context. He ended the pioneering reading methods by saying that these approaches have invariably influenced the way interpretations is done in Medieval as well as in modern times.

- **The Impact of Early European Missions on Biblical Scholarship in Africa: Some Case Studies.**

Prof. Ekem argued that failure to indigenize the Christian faith in North Africa coupled with the advancement and entrenchment of Islam is what has contributed to the stifling of Christian worship in North Africa. He said the inability to root the interpretation in the African context and the on-slight of Islam were the key factors that brought about

the silent tears of Biblical Scholarship in Africa. Fortunately, the early European Christian Missions sent glimmers of hope for the rebirth of Biblical scholarship in Africa. John Wycliffe and Martin Luther's Reformation, indigenes such as Jacobus Elisa Joannes Capitein, Christian Protten and Augustus William Hanson in the Gold Coast or Ghanaian context are some examples. In addition, Capitein's pioneering translation of the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles Creed and the Ten Commandments into the Mfantse language of the Gold Coast deserve mention. Rev. Augustus Hanson translated the text into Ga as: *Wa Tshe ni ia nungma mli* = Our father who dwells in God. He argued that through their stimulating translations, Protten and Hanson were affirming the transcendence, immanence and omnipotence of God.

- **The Post-Independence Scenario**

Additionally, he mentioned that the post-independence has witnessed several methodologies for doing Biblical Studies in Africa as this been facilitated by the establishment of University Departments of Religious Studies, Theological seminaries and Bible colleges. Since the post-independence exigencies of many African nations, new approaches to Biblical interpretation have emerged, the first being the biblical Interpretation from the Perspective of Inculturation and the second being the Biblical Interpretation from the Perspective of Liberation/ Postcolonial Exigencies. The current scenario is summarized into Diachronic Component, Synchronic Component and Contextual Dimension. The third approach is predominant in Africa and include the following; Intercultural Exegesis, Postcolonial Exegesis, Popular Readings Approach/African Contextual Bible Studies and Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics.

- **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Prof. Ekem posited that what African biblical scholarship needs is an Eclectic Approach embracing all three dimensions, namely: Readings behind the text, Readings within the text and Readings in front of the text.

5.0 Question and Answer time at 11:55 GMT

Questions were welcomed and responded to.

6.0 Business meeting led by Prof. Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor at 12:18 GMT.

6.1 Membership dues - \$50 per annum

The Secretary General inquired if all scholars agreed with the membership dues of \$50 per annum. Dr. Emmanuel Antwi sought for reduction to \$30 for full members and \$15 for PhD. students to make the institute attractive for more people to join. It was seconded by Dr. Matilda Alice Nsiah. Payment of dues will start from January 2022.

6.2 Membership drive

- It was proposed that membership should be extended to MA, MPhil and MTh holders to have the urge to continue to PhD and become full members.
- Member were encouraged to conscientize other scholars and biblical students to join the IBSA.
- Follow up on contacts from Cameroun, Kenya, Liberia and Sierra Leone were to be made.

6.3 Banks – Stanbic, Access or Bank of Africa

The Vice General Secretary was asked to also check Zenith Bank to ascertain transactions from bank to bank, charges and transfers whether they are easier and cheaper.

6.4 Selection/election of Treasurer

Dr. Alice Matilda Nsiah from Ghana was selected as the Treasurer with Julius Ndishua from Nigeria as Assistant Treasurer of IBSA – West Africa.

6.5 Journals to be added to existing list

- A list of proposed journals to be submitted to the President by the General Secretary and the Vice for consideration to be added to the earlier list submitted by IBSA Africa.

6.6 WhatsApp platform

Members were asked to submit their telephone numbers in the chatbox for the creation of a WhatsApp group for IBSA – West Africa.

Seven scholars submitted their numbers as follows:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------------|
| 1. Ebenezer Tetteh Fiorgbor | - | +233242751435 |
| 2. Julius Ndishua | - | +237670293377 |
| 3. Dr. Emmanuel Antwi | - | +233508740030 |
| 4. Dr. Alice Matilda Nsiah | - | +233208141510 |
| 5. Tony Badu | - | +233556427033 |
| 6. Uloma Wabara | - | +2348033896579 |
| 7. Prof. Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole | - | +254720611860 |
| 8. Prof John D. Kwamena Ekem | - | +233276863523 |
| 9. Prof Eric Anum | - | +233244297808 |
| 10. Prof J. E. T. Kuwornu -Adjaottor | - | +233244564079 |
| 11. Dr. Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh | - | +233244375654 |

6.7 Conferences? Call for papers?

- Meetings will be in the form of a conference where there will be a forum for scientific and business sessions, that academic presentation of papers and business meetings.

6.8 Meetings per annum

- It was agreed that there shall be two (2) meetings in a year. First meeting – Last Saturday in June; second meeting – First Saturday in December.

6.9 Next meeting date

The next meeting was scheduled for the first Saturday in December 2021, December 4, 2021 at 11am GMT. There will be call for presentation during this meeting. The Secretary General and the Vice are to organize this effectively in consultation with the President and Vice.

7.0 AOB at 13:05 GMT

7.1 Prof. Ekem thanked Prof. William Loader and Prof. Jean-Claude Loba Mkole for joining the meeting and encouraged all scholars to reassemble the things learnt and help to uplift Biblical Studies on the continent. He mentioned that students will be referred to as Associate Members and PhD holders will be fully qualified members. He also urged participants to come up with papers so that other scholars can suggest ways to help them polish and publish their papers.

7.2 Prof Anum suggested that flyers be designed and circulated on social media and theological institution and departments to attract more members. This suggestion was agreed on by the house and it will be undertaken by the Vice General Secretary.

8.0 Closing prayer

Dr. Emmanuel Antwi said the closing prayer at 13:07 GMT to bring the meeting to an end.

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Prof. John D. Kwamena Ekem
President

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Prof. Jonathan E.T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor
Secretary General

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Evelyn Sowah
Recorder