

AN INAUGURAL ISSUE

Welcome to the inaugural issue (Volume 1, Number 1) of The *Ethiopian Theological Journal*, which is a proud new publication of the Mekane Yesus Seminary (MYS) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

This first journal is a primary fruit of MYS-Gudina Tumsa Research and Publication (GTRP) office. This office is named in honor of the late Rev. Gudina Tumsa, whose legacy of holistic ministry and strong leadership continues to inspire us today. The research and publication office serves as the “theological engine” for the EECMY. To my knowledge, this publication is the first of its kind in Ethiopia—a peer-reviewed platform dedicated to robust, broadly Evangelical scholarship.

The main mission of the journal is to serve the African/Ethiopian Christian community, both locally and globally, by fostering a dialogue anchored in the Reformation heritage and the absolute authority of the Bible. For the Evangelical churches of Ethiopia, this journal is more than a collection of papers; it is a vital instrument for documenting our unique theological journey and ensuring that our faith is articulated with clarity and intellectual rigor.

In this journal, we are committed to publishing articles that are broadly evangelical in their outlook and that serve the interests of our community here in Ethiopia and around the world. In this first volume, we present four double-blind, peer-reviewed academic articles and one review essay that exemplify our commitment to academic excellence.

The Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement in Ethiopia: History, Theology, and Spirituality

Rev. Dr. Ayalew Tesema Mengesha examines the impact of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements on Ethiopian Christianity. This article traces the historical journey of these movements, from early missionary encounters to dynamic indigenous revivals, identifying them as localized expressions of global revivalism. The article explores how the emphasis on Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts introduced a new, experiential spirituality that fundamentally transformed Ethiopian

Evangelicalism. By navigating complex historical narratives and theological debates, he addresses how these movements have shaped ecumenical relations and the societal roles of believers. Readers interested in the intersection of Scripture-centered mission and Spirit-led renewal will find this a compelling investigation into the dynamic interplay between global faith and local expression, offering crucial insights for the ongoing development of Ethiopian theology.

Mission Communication and Culture

Rev. Dr. Haile Sadins Sabab analyzes the complex challenge of communicating the unchanging Gospel across diverse cultural contexts. Based on the theology of the Incarnation and Pentecost, he argues that the Gospel is inherently transcultural and should be translated to fit the unique language and customs of its listeners. He carefully analyzes the essential tension between the Church and culture, emphasizing that while adaptation is necessary, the Gospel's salvific core must never be compromised. The article offers a critical look at the dangers of recipient-oriented communication, indigenization, and syncretism, advocating instead for a “critical contextualization” guided by Scriptural truth. Both local and international missiologists, pastors, and cross-cultural workers will find this work valuable for faithful and effective evangelism.

Symbiosis of Church and State during the መስቀል [Meskel] Celebration in Ethiopia

Rev. Dr. Tibebe Teklu Senbetu offers a fascinating socio-political and theological analysis of the annual and traditional መስቀል [Meskel] festival. Using a UNESCO-authorized video as his primary artifact, he investigates how this ancient festival, commemorating the discovery of the True Cross of Christ, serves as a powerful tool for national identity formation. He clearly demonstrates the peaceful coexistence of sacred symbols, such as the Cross, alongside secular emblems, such as the national flag, revealing an enduring historical symbiosis between the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the state. Crucially, this article challenges the EOTC adherents to transcend the purely cultural and

historical rituals of the celebration. He rather invites readers to reclaim the festival’s deep theological core, urging a shift from outward observance to the daily embodiment of a transformed, cruciform life.

“Translating New Testament Parables in the Style of Zargulla Narrative Texts: Luke 15:11-32

Mr. Ephrem Tariku Chifaw’s research deeply enriches the work of Bible translation practitioners by highlighting that true, high-quality Bible translation requires an understanding of the distinct narrative discourse characteristics of both the source and receptor languages. To justify the argument, Ephrem compares the linguistic features of Biblical Greek with those of Zargulla, an Omotic language of Southern Ethiopia, focusing on opening and closing markers, connectives, and participant tracking. Implementing a Literary Functional Equivalence model to the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, the study demonstrates how to achieve naturalness, clarity, and accuracy in translation without losing the biblical text’s original meaning. Translators and linguists are strongly encouraged to engage with this article for its evidence-based strategies to elevate the quality of narrative discourse in Ethiopian local languages.

A Review Essay of The Word of Life: A Theology of John’s Gospel by Craig R. Koester.

Brother Natnael Alemayehu Kebede presents a thought-provoking review of Craig R. Koester’s seminal work on Johannine theology. The review essay explores the significant correspondence between Koester’s central hermeneutical thesis, which is “to think theologically is to think relationally,” and the collective ethos of the African traditional worldview, specifically the Ubuntu philosophy of communal living. First, Natnael appreciates how Koester’s theocentric, relational paradigm challenges anthropocentric drifts in traditional African thought. Second, he challenges Koester’s dismissal of the substitutionary atonement motif surrounding the “Lamb of God” imagery, offering both a biblical context and patristic readings to defend a more balanced

understanding of Christ’s sacrifice. This review essay is highly recommended for anyone interested in African theology in context.

Tibebu T. Senbetu

Call for Papers

The editors-in-chief of the *Ethiopian Theological Journal* invite submissions of original research articles, essays, and book reviews for the 2nd volume. Our mission is to advance rich, transformative theological conversations that address broadly evangelical and academically relevant topics. We are particularly interested in scholarship that engages deeply with the unique Ethiopian/African context while remaining highly relevant to the global Church. By providing this platform, we aim to promote a culture of writing that equips the MYS to stand out as competent scholars in African theological education.

The MYS-GTRP strongly encourages contributions from a diverse range of voices, including MYS instructors, church leaders, and graduate students, as we seek to cultivate the next generation of Ethiopian scholars. Submissions are welcome across all major theological disciplines, particularly in Biblical Studies, Missiology, Historical Theology, Ethics, and Practical Theology. We invite you to join us on this remarkable journey to articulate doctrinally sound and contextually engaged faith for the Church today.