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10 Transitioning from Phenomenology of Religion to Applied Religions

Contributions from Ezra Chitando

Tenson Muyambo

Abstract

This chapter is a reflection of Ezra Chitando's contributions to the study of religion, gender and masculinities in Africa, particularly from a Zimbabwean perspective. It is a chapter that makes a trajectory survey of some of Chitando's works that have transformed the phenomenology of religion as promulgated by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) into applied religion, where religion has been found to be the centre of human existence, which is at the centre of people's lived realities. To achieve this, I used some of Chitando's works where he applied religion to address human existential challenges such as masculinities in the context HIV & AIDS, gender and other pandemics such as COVID-19. I also used casual conversations with him on matters of religion and development, health, climate change and through working with him on a number of book projects just to mention a few. Using grounded theology as the lens for this chapter, I argue that Chitando has demonstrated beyond doubt that religion is not an abstract/utopian phenomenon but a concrete entity that works through, with and for people. The chapter concludes that Chitando has successfully engaged religion to find meaning and relevance in African realities, more particularly Zimbabwean realities.

Keywords: Phenomenology of religion, applied religion, development, masculinities, pandemics, grounded theology

Introduction and Background

This chapter consists of two parts: firstly, the part that situates Ezra Chitando as an academic and secondly his contributions to the transitioning from phenomenology of religion to applied religion as he navigates the intersections of religion, gender, masculinities, development, politics and health. The first part (a) demonstrates Chitando's attributes that have seen him as an academic, and the second part (b) situates the chapter into

proper perspective as to what Chitando has done and continues to do in nurturing young scholars.

A Seasoned Scholar of Religion: Nurturing Emerging Academics

While eulogies from an Africa perspective are cited and recited when an individual has transitioned from this physical world to the 'other' world/worlds, it does not defy logic to do so when the individual is still around and with us. I have had and continue to have enviable opportunities of working *under, through* and *with* Ezra Chitando both as a student and as an academic. The formative years of this interaction were characterised by a tutor-student relationship. With the passage of time, it developed into a mentor-mentee relationship.

One of Ezra Chitando's most remarkable attributes is his humility. I remember always referring to him as "Prof" in our conversations, but he consistently insists on being called Ezra. His humility is matched by his unparalleled patience in academic circles. Many Religious Studies scholars who were part of the then Department of Religious Studies, Philosophy, and Classics at the University of Zimbabwe can attest to this. I experienced his patience both as a student and as a fellow publisher. As an academic supervisor, he provides constructive and instructional critiques, always finding an encouraging way to offer feedback on a supervisee's work.

Due to this patience, Ezra Chitando has become a young academics nurturer *par excellence*. It is a joy and a learning journey to co-edit books with him. I have had some privileges of working under, through and with him in some book projects, where I am either a chapter contributor to his edited book or a co-editor with him. I recall an incident where I complained bitterly about authors who were not cooperating in a book project. His comments were just, "...the only reason why there is no violence by the editors on authors is that editors finish their work AWAY from the authors..." (WhatsApp communication on 18 April 2023), encouraging me to be patient with them and to not lose hope. Such subtle advice is not only humbling but indicates that editorship takes much sacrifice, patience and endurance. At one point when I almost quit a project we were working on together, he said "...don't even panic... But let's push", reassuring me and I had to soldier on. He works with young academics with lots of

love and accommodation, and builds in them a sense of confidence. Having given this brief, the next part of the chapter discusses Chitando's contributions to the transitioning from phenomenology of religion to applied religion.

Religion, as a discipline, has suffered immensely from what Cox (1996) calls reductionism. It has been studied, largely from other disciplines rather than itself. This has created enormous challenges in defining religion. In some circles, religion has been dismissed as 'confessional' and not scientific in nature (Muyambo et al, 2022; Muyambo and Tendere, 2023). Secularisation theories have worsened the matter. In a world ravaged by several challenges not limited to pandemics, inequalities, climate change, poverty and underdevelopment, religion's role has been questioned.

While the preceding argument holds merit, I must acknowledge that religion has stood the test of time. This resilience is largely due to academics whose unwavering belief in religion as a vital aspect of people's livelihoods remains steadfast. To understand the trajectory of religion, from the writings of Edmund Husserl and James L. Cox to those of Ezra Chitando in Zimbabwe, it is essential to first conceptualize how religion is understood in this chapter. According to Smith (1964, 1987), Cox (1996), and Chitando (1997), the term 'religion' has been subject to a long-standing debate regarding its elusive, culture-specific, flexible, non-normative, and non-universal nature. Simply put, 'religion' is "fluid and, at times, associated with misleading connotations, as it is seen as both binding and confessional" (Sibanda et al., 2022:2). In response to this ambiguity, Smith (1964) suggests discarding the term 'religion' altogether, replacing it with the concepts of 'personal faith' and 'cumulative traditions.' Similarly, Smart (1969) argues that defining religion is unnecessary. He advocates for using the term 'worldviews,' which he sees as more inclusive and beneficial. Smart further contends that separating religion from the secular is not productive, as what we are truly dealing with are the religious and symbolic aspects of human life—rituals, ultimate beliefs, myths, and so on (Sibanda et al., 2022). In light of this, I define religion as a people's worldview—how they engage with the core of their existence. It is within this context that the following section aims to highlight how religion has been freed from the confines of reductionism and scientism. Special recognition is given to Ezra Chitando for his significant contributions to

the popularization and contextualization of the phenomenology of religion, which has restored dignity and integrity to religions that were once dismissed as insignificant or non-existent.

Phenomenology of Religion: Chitando's Perspectives

Religion was and in some circles is still viewed as an abstract phenomenon that only the privileged could comprehend, except the African. Emil Ludwig, a Western anthropologist, comes to mind here when he was so perplexed to hear that an African knew God. He wondered "how can an untutored African conceive of God" (Uka, 1991:40). For him God was a philosophical concept that 'savages' were incapable of framing (Uka, 1991). I am obliged to indicate that such mischievous and scandalous undermining of the religious sphere of the African was shamed by the introduction of the phenomenology of religion as both a method and theory in the study of religion. Although Edmund Husserl and to some extent James L. Cox are said to have popularised this method and theory in the study of religion, it suffices to argue that Ezra Chitando, a student of Cox, made it Zimbabwe's, if not Africa's most cherished method and theory in the study of religion. Cox's (1996) explanations of the method and theory further finds traction in what Chitando did in applying the method and theory in the study of religions, particularly African Traditional Religion. Chitando's (2010) insightful explanations and application of *epoche*, *eidetic intuition* and *cultivating empathy* does not only save religion from unjustifiable reductionism but offers dignity to other religions previously dismissed as 'fetish', 'juju', 'primitive' (Idowu, 1973). Below is a brief explanation of Chitando's (2010) description of the three principles of the phenomenology of religion:

Epoche

While I won't delve into the etymological complexities of the term *epoche*, I will explore Ezra Chitando's expansion of the concept, building on earlier contributions by phenomenologists and philosophers such as Edmund Husserl and Van der Leeuw. Traditionally, *epoche* has been understood as meaning "to stop" or "to hold back." However, Chitando

(2010:267) adds that "*epoche* cultivates an attitude of openness to the phenomena of religion." This suggests that researchers should suspend their judgments regarding the truth or falsity of a religion. Chitando's perspective is insightful because it allows every religion to be viewed and appreciated on its own terms. For non-practitioners, *epoche* requires them to 'step back' and 'bracket' their own beliefs in order to understand religious phenomena from a more neutral standpoint. This contrasts sharply with the approach of figures like Emil Ludwig, whose failure to adopt *epoche* led to skewed views of African religions. According to Chitando, *epoche* helps researchers avoid making distinctions between 'true' and 'false' religions. In his view, such distinctions are inherently judgmental and inappropriate within the phenomenology of religion, where the focus is on understanding religious experiences without bias or preconceived notions.

I must quicken to say that Chitando is alive to the fact that inasmuch as *epoche* makes a lot of sense in an attempt to have an objective analysis of phenomena, it has some limitations. He questions its practicality. How does one approach phenomena with an open mind? Where does he/she leave his/her cultural excesses that are inherent within cultures? To overcome this dilemma, Chitando urges researchers to be fully immersed in the religious beliefs and practices of the communities they are studying. In the words of Chitando (2010:268) researchers "must overcome the distance between themselves and the focus of their research." This has enabled scholars of religion who, hitherto, had difficulties in carrying out reliable and valid studies on religions, do so. Chitando, as a phenomenologist, solved the puzzle of how to phenomenologically carry out research. Having been equipped with such instructive insights, many researchers can do research on any religion without bias and/or prejudice. It is at this juncture that studies on African Traditional Religion, which have been far in between, became and continue to be plenty. The inferior tag on religions of the South waned as such religions found and continue to find space among the league of religions. Another aspect of the phenomenology of religion that Chitando sheds light on is *eidetic intuition*.

Eidetic Intuition

This principle does not function in isolation from *epoche*. Chitando (2010) makes it clear that having 'stopped' or 'holding back' presuppositions

about phenomena, one is supposed to intuit the meaning of what actually manifests itself in the world. This is seeing into the very nature of phenomena as they exist, commonly referred to as *eidetic vision*. The combination of *epoche* and *eidetic intuition* results in an objective view of phenomena and prevents scholars of religion from being judgmental. As one combines the two, there is a third one that Chitando regards as a premium, that is *cultivating empathy*.

Cultivating Empathy

Coupled with *epoche* and *eidetic intuition*, a scholar of religion must cultivate empathy towards the religious individuals and communities that they are studying. The underlying idea is that the focus of religion and its study is human beings. Chitando (2010) urges scholars of religion to be conscious that they are dealing with human beings hence the need to “feel for” and “feel with” adherents of the religions they are studying. This is what is now popularly known as ‘doing research with’ practitioners as opposed to ‘doing research on’ them. The scholars of religion must ‘put themselves in the shoes’ of the practitioners for a better and more informed understanding of the phenomena under study. This can only happen when one has already practiced *epoche* followed by *eidetic intuition*. This is quite essential for researchers who use participant-observation as a method for studying phenomena. Equipped with this vital information participant-observation, characterised by respect and mutuality, research becomes enjoyable and beneficial both to the researchers and the participants as co-researchers.

It will be unscholarly not to question pitfalls of cultivating empathy. Chitando cautions his readers that while it is advisable for a researcher to participate in the religious rituals of any religion under study, there is need to be able to ‘walk out of’ that immersion lest one becomes a convert of the religion one is studying. Scholars of religion must be able to balance participation with immersion so that after the study they revert to their role as scholars not as believers. It is with such caution that we begin to see young scholars flourishing and beginning to excel in research. While I am aware that Chitando did not break virgin lands in this regard, his contribution to the phenomenology of religion brings new insights as he does not only buttress what other scholars have done, but uniquely does so. He makes religion a lived reality as he interfaces it with HIV & AIDS,

gender, development, patriarchy and more recently with the COVID-19 pandemic. Such application of religion got the notice of the World Council of Churches (WCC), particularly in the context of the HIV pandemic, resulting in Chitando publishing reassuring and hopeful narratives for the HIV affected and infected individuals and communities, one of which is the church community.

Having discussed the role that Chitando has played and continues to play in ensuring that religions get a decent study through transitioning phenomenology of religion as both a method and theory the following sections are illustrations of how Chitando applied religion to address human existential challenges.

Religion, Gender, Masculinities and Pandemics

Religion has been accused of perpetrating and perpetuating gender inequalities and toxic masculinities (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2012; Barker & Ricardo, 2005). Yet it is by the same religion that issues around gender, masculinities and pandemics can be addressed, thanks to those who came before Chitando but not forgetting his insights in several of his works. One such illuminating work is his co-edited *Redemptive Masculinities: Men, HIV and Religion*. This is a book that brings to the fore that religion, in its various forms, can be applied (applied religion) to address issues of gender and masculinities. Due to the patriarchal nature of most African communities, pandemics such as HIV & AIDS, and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affect women and girls. The tendency has been and continues to be leaving out men and boys in addressing some of the issues that affect women and girls like gender-based violence, child marriages, genital mutilation, etc. The tendency is to focus on the survivor and not the alleged perpetrator. According to Chitando & Chirongoma (2012) and Barker & Ricardo (2005), it is prudent that if communities want to squarely deal with social ills that hit women and girls the hardest, they need to involve those who perpetrate and perpetuate the social ills, men and boys. Leaving them out of the advocacy backfires in that the perpetrators remain unchanged. They must be shown how life-threatening their actions are towards women and girls for them to transform. This can be achieved through the same religion that men and boys use to justify their life-denying actions.

It is quite instructive that Chitando & Chirongoma (2012:17) admit that “religion is a double-edged sword in relation to masculinities in the face of gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS”. For them religion, on one hand, reinforces dangerous masculinities, while on the other hand it has an enormous potential to transform masculinities. Chitando, among other scholars like Musa Dube (2004), Musimbi Kanyoro (2004) and Gerald West (2006), question some readings of the bible which support male dominance and supremacy over women. Their position is that there is a need to re-read those scriptures that perpetuate the stereotyping of women. For the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (the Circle) culture needs to be interrogated in order to weed out those beliefs and practices that dehumanise women. The fault lines found in religion that disproportionately affect women and girls should, can and must be queried in order to make religion safe for all. This is what I can refer to as ‘applied religion’. Feminist male scholars who include Ezra Chitando and Tinyiko Sam Maluleke contributed a lot towards ensuring a gender-sensitive religious space where issues of toxic, life-denying masculinities are interrogated in order to bring about transformative or rather redemptive masculinities. The involvement of male feminists is no mean achievement towards ensuring that religion is indeed an inclusive space for all. Examples of incidents and scriptures from different religions have been used to promote gender-sensitivity and redemptive masculinities. This is a case of from phenomenology of religion to applied religion. Certain religious beliefs and practices are applied in order to enhance human flourishing.

Chitando’s works *Troubled but not destroyed: African Theology in dialogue with HIV & AIDS* (2009) and the co-edited *Compassionate Circles: African Women Theologians facing HIV* (2009) are examples of what religion can do in addressing human existential challenges. Religion is called upon during stressful times such as the HIV & AIDS and the COVID-19 contexts. At the peak of the HIV & AIDS pandemic in Zimbabwe and Africa by extension, Chitando, through a number of works, demonstrated that on one hand religion has faulty lines that exist which disproportionately affect women and girls. On the other hand, he demonstrates that religion can be used to redress the same challenges women face in the context of HIV & AIDS. For instance, his co-edited book with Nothando Hadebe, *Compassionate Circles: African Theologians Facing HIV*, contributors (Ambasa-Shisanya, 2009; Akintunde, 2009; Siwila, 2009) bring to the fore the religious and social conventions that make

women suffer in the face of the HIV & AIDS pandemic. The contributors do not only bring to the fore these factors but also suggest how the factors can be changed to improve the conditions of women (Pillay, 2009; Labeodan, 2009). For instance, Pillay (2009) challenges women in leadership positions to transform the church by confronting sexism and patriarchy. In other words, Pillay is asking women in leadership positions to use their power to create compassionate churches that take care of each other. When this happens religion would have been used to create “a community in the context of HIV and AIDS” (Pillay, 2009:95).

In *Troubled but not destroyed: African Theology in dialogue with HIV and AIDS*, Chitando (2009) challenges African theologians to do more on the development of social and personal mechanisms to cope with the HIV & AIDS pandemic utilizing the various strands of African theology. He yearns for the vibrant and militant African theology of the 1960s and 1970s which managed to deal with existential challenges of those times, such as colonialism, apartheid, and racism, just to mention a few. If religion could be employed to deal with such challenges, equally the same theology can be harnessed to deal with 21st century dilemmas like HIV and COVID-19. When religion can be applied in this manner, then religion becomes an important cog for human flourishing. This importance of religion is also stressed by Adogame (2007) who accuses international and African discourses on the HIV & AIDS pandemic and intervention of neglecting the role of religion and religious organisations. Adogame (2007:475) argues thus, “social science perspectives in tackling health and disease neglect religious doctrines and faith central to worldviews and praxis of religious groups”. Through writings by Chitando and other scholars of religion this neglect has been challenged as religion, in its various facets, has become a lived reality for most of the African people, especially in times of crises. The foregoing points to “the changing role of religion in the public sphere” (Bompani, 2010:307, Clarke & Jennings, 2008).

The other books that are co-edited with Chitando are *Religion, Women’s Health Rights, and Sustainable development Volume 1* (2022) and *African Perspectives on Religion and Climate Change* (2022). In *Religion, Women Health Rights, and Sustainable development: Volume 1*, Chitando and his co-editors continue to argue that without considering women in any discourse, it is very difficult to talk of sustainable development. The theme of the need to consider and include women in all human endeavours

keeps recurring. In an introduction to this book Chirongoma, Man-yonganise & Chitando (2022:1) clearly set the mandate of the book when they say “Without paying attention to women’s sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR), the Sustainable Development Goals will remain a mirage or an expression of wishful thinking”. This is a clear reference to SDGs 3 and 5. This resonates with earlier views on women by Chitando (2009), especially in the context of HIV & AIDS. We can argue that having exposed how women are disproportionately affected by pandemics, this volume pushes the inclusion and empowerment of women even in matters that concern their sexualities. The matters that have been regarded as taboo, sexuality in general and women sexual reproductive health rights in particular are brought into public domain for the promotion of human flourishing. This is a feat that this volume must be applauded for and Chitando with his co-editors and chapter contributors dare speak of the traditionally taken to be unspeakable, more so in public for public consumption.

To demonstrate that religion is no mean discipline, Chitando (2022:3) in Chitando, Conrade and Kilonzo’s *African Perspectives on Religion and Climate Change* argues that inasmuch as HIV & AIDS as well as Climate Change can be addressed from the perspective of science, this is not enough. He proposes the multi-sectoral approach which include religion. Chitando calls for all stakeholders who include religious and traditional leaders to come together and implement strategies to counter climate emergency. While on one hand religion can be said to promote climate change through insistence on human dominance over nature, on another hand, more liberating approaches to religion/ theology are possible. The use of taboos to protect the environment can be such a liberating approach. Humanity is forbidden to wantonly exploit the environment without recourse to ensure sustainability.

It is also prudent to acknowledge that in a bid to make religion alive in people’s livelihoods, Chitando has come up with book chapters in book projects where he instructively intersects religion and development with a view to demonstrate that while religion can be associated with negativity such as its promotion of patriarchy (Rubaya, 2022; Oduyoye, 2001), it is, too, developmental. In doing so, Chitando et al. (2022, 2023) discuss the positive role of religion in people’s health and well-being. It is within this context that religion plays a developmental role, especially when it dis-

cards gender inequalities perpetrated and perpetuated by toxic masculinities. The section below looks at religion and development as presented by Chitando in some of his works.

Religion and Development

There has been a traditional thinking that religion has nothing to do with development. This myth has had a negative attitude towards religion, especially on African Independent Churches (AICs) but surprisingly Bompani (2010) demonstrates beyond doubt that AICs from a South African perspective are indeed development oriented. They engage in livelihood changing projects that benefit societies like “saving clubs, lending societies, burial societies and *stokvels* (informal saving funds) (Bompani, 2010:307). This does not only transform people’s livelihoods but contributes immensely to the fiscal coffers of South Africa’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). While religion and development may need unpacking here, due to limited space and time, I will gloss over them without necessarily getting into the complexities of the two terms. The two terms are not easily understood and do not mean the same thing to different people. Simply put, religion is associated with established traditions, characterised by a supreme being and codified in sacred texts (Clarke & Jennings, 2008). For purposes of this discussion, I will leave it at that but the definition Clarke and Jennings offer falls far too short of what religion entails. The scholars assume that for religion to exist there must be codified sacred texts, a position taken by only those who believe that Christianity and Islam are the only religions. Defining development is again contentious but I will simply conceptualise it as ‘growth-oriented’ development. For Gardner & Lewis (1996) development should attend first to the primary material needs of those living in poverty. Sen (1999, 2009) and Nussbaum (2000) add that development should lead to an expanding of people’s capabilities, enlarging their choices, and allowing them to lead full lives and to meet their potential. Suffice to mention is that both religion and development are human-centred and are bent on wanting to promote human flourishing.

Given the foregoing, religion was and in some circles still continues to be matters of faith with nothing to do with development. Inasmuch as this may be the case, works by theologians have demonstrated beyond doubt that religion and development are intertwined. A study by Thompson

(1977) revealed that there are prerequisites that are needed for development to take place. The study revealed the prevailing thought of the time: that people cannot develop politically if other forms of development, including 'development of faith and belief' are not attended to. It is evident that with the influx of world challenges such as poverty, pandemics, and natural disasters, religion has been found to be an essential component of efforts to address such eventualities. For instance, Chitando has co-edited books on religion and COVID-19, and religion and climate change. In some of the books like *Religion and the COVID-19 Pandemic in Southern Africa*, Chitando has a chapter in the book titled: 'Religion and COVID-19 in Southern Africa: implications for the discourse on religion and development'. This is the concluding chapter of the book. In the chapter Chitando (2022:246) argues that despite secularization and modernization theories, "religion has stubbornly persisted and remains vibrant across diverse contexts, including the so-called 'developed' countries where it was expected to become less influential". It is more important to note that Chitando, in the chapter, illustrates the role of religion in international relations, where in the context of COVID-19, religion calls upon nations of the Global North to share vaccines with the Global South. The World Council of Churches was at the fore of this call. If ever we have witnessed faith-based organisations contributing to community transformations, it was during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Faith-based organisations were seen to be at the thick of things, providing essential information, facilities and counselling services in a bid to curb the pandemic. It must also be admitted that while we can talk of the positive side of religion in ensuring that COVID-19 was curtailed, Chitando (2022) talks of both positive and negative positions of religion and argues that religion can either be positive or negative towards development, but not both. While this is the position he takes, the 'either/ or', not both, more important to note is that there can be some aspects of religion which can be negative towards development, for instance patriarchal biblical interpretations, while at the same time, the same religion can be positive like charitable giving of resources to enable human flourishing.

In a co-edited *Prophets, Profits and the Bible in Zimbabwe* (2013), Chitando, Gunda and Kügler urge African scholars in biblical and religious studies to be contextually relevant by focusing on religious phenomena found in Africa, Zimbabwe in particular. This call came at a time when the Zimbabwean religious arena was witnessing the grip of 'prophetic craze' (Chi-

tando et al., 2013:9). The book is a caution against being duped by unscrupulous prophets. Similarly, in an edited *Prayers and Players: Religion and Politics in Zimbabwe* (2013), Chitando showcases that religion can be abused for political expedience where politicians come to religious gatherings towards elections seeking to be voted for. In a more recent co-edited *Religion-Regime Relations in Zimbabwe: Co-operation and Resistance* (2023), Chitando and others seem to argue, too, that religion and politics “are two fundamental dimensions of human society, and yet they are often at loggerheads” (Turner, 2013:1). Chitando and others have managed to demonstrate that religion transverses politics and other dimensions of life, it “permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it” (Mbiti, 1969:1).

Suffice to say is that Chitando and others seem to be saying that religion devoid of masculine perpetuated gender inequalities is pro-development contrary to traditional views. Faith-based organisations have moved from being confessional to being pragmatic. This shift to praxis has been achieved through scholars of religion who have persistently and consistently showcased the positive side of religion. These scholars have moved from phenomenologically studying religion to practical religion. Religion is no longer viewed as an abstract reality but a lived reality that humanity leans on and utilizes wisely when the need arises.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has illustrated Ezra Chitando’s contribution towards the role of religion, both positive and negative, in a bid to demonstrate that approaches to human existential challenges that ignore religion are not only limiting but deny human ingenuity enshrined in their faiths. The chapter has made a trajectory survey of the works that Chitando and colleagues have written on the role of religion in development in general. All the works emphasise the centrality of religion in human existence, revealing religion as a lived reality, without which humanity diminishes. The chapter also celebrates the enormous contribution that Chitando has made towards applied religion and in nurturing young academics. His commitment to women wholeness, and liberation has not only encouraged women scholars but has made them realise their potential. The likes of Sophia Chirongoma, Molly Manyonganise, Susan Kilonzo, and many oth-

ers are traversing the domain of religion with aplomb, thanks to Chitando's mentorship. These feminists now speak about HIV & AIDS, speak out against gender-based violence and many social ills through getting support from male feminists like Chitando. Chitando, as a writer and leader, has become a model for us to emulate. We now challenge harmful cultural practices and we question the sacred texts which have been used to suffocate women and girls. This chapter salutes Ezra Chitando who has taught women and men alike that when "You strike a woman, she bleeds" as opposed to when "You strike a woman, you strike a Rock" (Sprong, 2012). He has achieved this by transitioning from phenomenology of religion to applied religion, where religion engages with African realities in different contexts.

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