***ALTER*NATION CALL FOR PAPERS**

**THEME: Religion/ Spirituality and Wellbeing in Africa**

**Summary**

Internationally, numerous scholars of religion and spirituality argue that religion/ spirituality has direct implications for human wellbeing. Research has shown, that the same is true with regard to Africa. Across Africa, religion/ spirituality remains a factor that influences and shapes the wellbeing of many Africans. But the role of religion in Africa has not always been constructive and clear-cut. Affirmatively, religion has contributed to the struggle against colonialism, for national independence, the fostering and support of modern democracies, and the establishing of independent nation states. Negatively, religion(s) has, at times, and in some contexts, also contributed to endorsing and perpetuating postcolonial autocratic life-denying tendencies among politicians, patrimonial autocratic and oligarchic systems, and the denial of human rights, for a wide variety of minority groups, not aligned with the hegemonic power structures. The question is whether, and how religions and religious formations in Africa have intentionally positioned themselves as forces for wellbeing, safety and security, or, for ill. How have they engaged the individual, as well as social challenges that African people face? How do they function for the continuous improvement of the quality of life and wellbeing of people? OR: if they do not function in this way, what roles do they play in society in general, but also specifically, and practically. Acknowledging that there have been some valuable research focusing on particular contexts, there is inadequate scholarly literature which specifically explores the interplay between religion/ spirituality and wellbeing, or its opposites.

**Description**

Scholars have argued that in Africa, religion/ spirituality in all its various manifestations is a seminal, ingrained, aspect of life, identity construction, social practice and reality construction and interpretation. They argue that religion/ spirituality should not be regarded as separate from the totality of human life in Africa. For all intents and purposes, it saturates the lives and cultures of African people. Concomitantly, religion/spirituality and its related practices, are perceived as a social and humanistic resource for African cultural, moral-ethical, political and economic functioning, but also development and advancement. This perception of religion/ spirituality, is usually endorsed by views from John Mbiti, who, in his *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969) described Africans as “notoriously religious”; Fabien Boulaga (1984), who embedded all of African life – “self-transcendence, nature, earth, sex, anything that moves” – in religion; Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar (2004), who argued that “it is largely through religious ideas that Africans think about the world today, and that religious ideas provide them with a means of becoming social and political actors”; and, more recently, Trinitapoli and Weinreb (2012), that Africa is “the world’s most religious continent”. This form of the essentializing, if not erroneous idealisation, of the importance of religion/ spirituality, or of a broad-based religious world view, for Africans, is obviously contentious.

Given the myriad of challenges and struggles Africans face on a daily basis in all spheres of life, in all the sociocultural, -political, and -economic dimensions, and societal levels of a rapidly – if also very unequally – modernising continent, we need to move beyond the simplistic and idealistic understandings of the significance of religion/ spirituality in Africa.

Moreover, the scholarly homogenising assumptions, common generalisations, and generic intellectual simplifications about African life and culture, not only obfuscate and befuddle very complex issues, as these differ from context to context, and country to country. They also mask a lack of the equal recognition of the wide diversity of people, as well as religions and spiritualities on the continent, and their fluid functioning, and impacts.

Against the background of these primary misconceptions, African social life should rather be fully recognised and studied with regard to its complexities, its fluid and experimental practices, and the inherent, and often tacit contestations of power and privilege, as these are present in its numerous sociocultural contradictions embedded in the articulations of the person and community; religion and the secular; health and disease; and democracy and un-democratic hegemony; as these grow, and at times collide. This means there is a need to ask about Africa’s experiential questions. In this context, it is important to better delineate the significance of religion and spirituality for African life and culture, and if not, how this is the case. Finally, can one distinguish between the nature and impact of religion and spirituality that add to the wellbeing of people, in specific contexts, and that which is to their disadvantage, and detriment. And, what do African people regard as the religion or spirituality that serve them and their wellbeing, and what not.

Amongst others, this Special Issue of *Alter*nation seeks to clarify these key issues, as briefly outlined above, with a primary focus on the ways in which religion/ spirituality contribute to wellbeing as understood by Africans themselves in various contexts – local, national and continental or, cosmically/ environmentally. By explicating the concepts and researching the nuances of the wide variety of relationships between religion/ spirituality and wellbeing in Africa, from indigenous African perspectives, this issue will hopefully add to our discourse and knowledge production in this very important interdisciplinary area. It is also hoped that it will open up more possibilities and directions for future research, and research-led teaching and learning.

**Proposed Themes Alphabetically Organized**

Religion/ Spirituality, the Ancestors and Wellbeing

Religion/ Spirituality and Children

Religion/ Spirituality, Conflict and Peacebuilding

Religion/ Spirituality Consumerism and Materialism

Religion/ Spirituality, Corruption and Politics

Religion/ Spirituality, Death and Dying

Religion/ Spirituality, Democratisation, Autocracy and Patrimonialism

Religion/ Spirituality, Dialogue, Meaning, Identity, and Integration

Religion/ Spirituality and Economics (Capitalism)

Religion/ Spirituality and Employment

Religion/ Spirituality and/ in Education

Religion/ Spirituality and the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Religion/ Spirituality and Health Systems

Religion/ Spirituality, Human Dignity and the Integrity of Creation

Religion/ Spirituality, HIV Testing and Condoms

Religion/ Spirituality, the Holy Spirit and Wellbeing

Religion/ Spirituality and Masculinities

Religion/ Spirituality and Marriage (e.g. abortion, childlessness (barrenness), pregnancy and birth)

Religion/ Spirituality, Moya and Wellbeing

Religion/ Spirituality and Natural Disasters (e.g. drought, famine, earthquake, etc.)

Religion/ Spirituality and Old Age

Religion/ Spirituality and Public Policy

Religion/ Spirituality and Poverty

Religion/ Spirituality, Public Health and Epidemics (e.g. HIV and AIDS, ebola, malaria, cholera)

Religion/ Spirituality, Sexuality and Gender

Religion/ Spirituality and Squatter Camp Life

Religion/ Spirituality and Urban Life

Religion/ Spirituality and Village Life

Religion/ Spirituality and Wealth Creation

Religion/ Spirituality and Youth

Academic Research in Religion/ Spirituality/ Theology and Policy Intervention

Research Grants and the Study of Religion/ Spirituality/ Theology (How are research grants informing the study of religions/ spirituality and theology in Africa, and how could they advance such research?)

**Timeframe**

Title and Abstract Friday 01 June 2018

Article Submission Friday 31 August 2018

Review Feedback Friday 14 September 2018

Final article Friday 12 October 2018

Final Editing Friday 11 January 2019

Submission to Press Friday 11 January 2019

Please submit the proposed titles of your articles, as well as a brief abstract of about 150 words, to the guest editors: Dr. Chammah J. Kaunda (ckaunda@hsrc.ac.za) and Prof Roderick Hewitt (hewitt@ukzn.ac.za). Please do so by 01 June 2018. (Late submissions may be considered.)

Please use the *Alter*nation Guidelines for Contributors, and style format for submissions. Cf. below, and Guidelines for Contributors at: <http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/submissions.aspx>

We request the submission of full articles, for the review process, by 31 August 2018.

*Alter*nation is a fully accredited, peer-reviewed South African Department of Higher Education and Training journal. It is edited by Prof J.A. Smit, former Dean and Head of School, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, and published at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, on an Open Access platform. All articles are subject to peer-review by at least two independent peer reviewers. All articles that pass the review process, and that are accepted for publication, will be published online, at: <http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/archive.aspx>

The *Alter*nation homepage is available at: <http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/Homepage.aspx>

**References**

Eboussi Boulaga, F. 1984. Christianity without Fetishes: An African Critique and Recapture of Christianity. Barr, R.r. (trans.). Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Ellis, S. & G. ter Haar. 2004. *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa.* London: C. Hurst and Co.

Mbiti, J. 1969. *African Religions and Philosophy.* London, Ibadan, Nairobi: Heinemann.

Trinitapoli, J. & A. Weinreb 2012. *Religion and AIDS in Africa.* New York: Oxford University Press.

***Alter*nation**

**Guidelines for Contributors, and *Alter*nation Style**

Manuscripts must be submitted in English (UK). If quotations from other languages appear in the manuscript, place the original in a footnote and a dynamic-equivalent translation in the body of the text or both in the text.

Contributors must submit one computer-generated copy of the manuscript to the editor(s). The computer-generated copy must be in Word for Windows, and must have an Abstract and Keywords. It must also be submitted in the *Alter*nation style.

Manuscripts should range between 5000-10000 and book reviews between 800-1200 words. However, longer articles may be considered for publication.

Attach a cover page containing the following information: The corresponding author's full name, address, e-mail address, position, department, university/ institution, and telephone/ fax numbers. A brief summary of the biodate of all authors must be attached too.

Maps, diagrams and posters must be presented in print-ready form. Clear black and white or colour digitised photos (postcard size) or diagrams in pdf or jpeg may also be submitted.

Use footnotes sparingly. In order to enhance the value of the interaction between notes and text, we use footnotes and not endnotes.

Authors may use their own numbering systems in the manuscript.

Except for bibliographical references, abbreviations must include full-stops. The abbreviations (e.a.) = 'emphasis added'; (e.i.o.) = 'emphasis in original'; (i.a.) or [...] = 'insertion added' may be used.

The full bibliographical details of sources are provided only once at the end of the manuscript under **References**. References in the body of the manuscript should follow the following convention: Mkhize (2017:14) argues .... or, at the end of a reference/quotation: .... (Ngwenya 2017:20f).

The surname and initials of authors as they appear in the source must be used in the **References** section.

Review articles and book reviews must include a title as well as the following information concerning the book reviewed: title, author, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, number of pages and the ISBN number.

In the text as well as the **References**, all book, journal, newspaper and magazine titles must be in italics.

The format for the **References** section is as follows:

**Journal article by one author**

Fulela, B. 2008. Checking the Post: Derrida and the Apartheid Debate. *Alternation* 15,2: 11 – 37. Available at: <http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/Files/docs/15.2/02%20Fulela.pdf>. (Accessed on 08 May 2017.)

**Journal article by two authors**

Mkhize, N. & N. Ndimande-Hlongwa 2014. African Languages, Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), and the Transformation of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Higher Education. *Alternation* 21,2: 10 – 37. Available at: <http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/Files/docs/21.2/02%20Mkh.pdf>. (Accessed on 08 May 2017.)

**Book by one author**

Moran, S. 2009. *Representing Bushmen: South Africa and the Origin of Language.* Rochester: University of Rochester Press. (Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora, Book 38.)

**Book by one editor**

Smit, J.A. (ed.) 1999. *Body, Identity, Sub-cultures and Repression in Texts from Africa.* Durban: CSSALL.

**Book by two editors**

Dhunpath, R. & R. Vithal (eds.) 2012. *Alternative Access to Higher Education: Underprepared Students or Underprepared Institutions?* Cape Town: Pearson Publishers.

**Chapter in an edited book**

Smit, J.A. & J. van Wyk 2001. Literary Studies in Post-apartheid South Africa. In Zegeye, A. & R. Kriger (eds.): *Culture in the New South Africa after Apartheid.* Volume 2. Cape Town: Kwela Books & History on Line.

**Translated book**

Foucault, M. 1977. *Discipline and Punish.* Sheridan, A. (trans.). New York: Pantheon.

**Online resource**

Jansen, J. & P. Vale (Co-chairs.) 2011. Consensus Study on the State of the Humanities in South Africa. Status, Prospects and Strategies. Pretoria: Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf). Available at: <https://www.assaf.org.za/files/2011/09/2011-Humanity-final-proof-11-August-2011.pdf>. (Accessed on 08 May 2017.)