

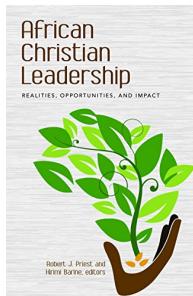
## African Christian Leadership: Realities, Opportunities, and Impact

Joseph Nunez\*

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*Robert J. Priest and Kirmi Barine. African Christian Leadership: Realities, Opportunities, and Impact.* Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2017. 299 pp.  
ISBN: 978-1-62698-242-0

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Robert Priest and Kirmi Barine complied a glimpse into the African context for readers from any cultural background within *African Christian Leadership*. The entire book promotes authenticity and credibility, because aside from Priest and Steve Rasmussen, African authors wrote the remainder of the book's contents, advocating a foundation that "largely rests on African scholarship" (22). Priest introduces the central thesis as how the book's existence relies upon: "important new contributions to understanding the realities of Christian leadership in contemporary African societies" (xv). Unified as the Africa Leadership Study (ALS), the 14 writing scholars and numerous project contributors assist the book's practical and easy-to-understand principles that exist for how African Church leaders developed in the past and how future leaders can garner the best results into the future.

Priest wrote Chapter 1's The Genesis and Growth of the Africa Christian Leadership Study," which introduces the survey's purpose, general statistics, and research indications. Beginning in November 2011, the ALS team formed, defined their "African standpoint" for the study purposes, and developed a research plan for practical implementation (4). The ALS study surveyed a "broad cross-section of active Christians" representing Angola, the Central African Republican (CAR), and Kenya (11). The group's focus also narrowed their results for surveying

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exclusively a literate audience, as many of the 93 questions inquired the participants' use of reading materials and technological habits (11). Priest explained where team members surveyed each country's specific cities, complied the information in various tables printed throughout the book, and analyzed the survey's results (12-21). Most complied results appear in Appendix B, with exceptions concerning information that revealed the anonymous interviewee content (241-278). Priest concluded his section by listing summaries for each preceding chapter.

David K. Ngaruiya wrote Chapter Two's "Characteristics of Influential African Christian Leaders," beginning with who the surveyors admired as the influencers of their faith. In his introduction, Ngaruiya asserted that when African leadership programs and courses develop, both the literature and understandings obtained from outside African resources occurs (29). While analyzing their results, ALS recognized the need for more frequent African authorship. Ngaruiya continued with showcasing the different characteristics Africans express and advocate as leaders. Those surveyed received instructions to name and rank certain leaders, which Ngaruiya gave multiple chapter examples for referencing purposes. Ngaruiya's aspects of his research permitted him to summarize how successful Christian leaders received "[exposure] to various social and cultural contexts both in and outside their immediate spheres of influence" (45). Ngaruiya then stated these leaders with these experiences then effectively possess the resources in "their 'problem-solving toolkit'" in service for and within their communities (45).

Wanjiru M. Gitau wrote Chapter Three's "Formation of African Christian Leaders: Patterns from the ALS Data," showcasing how those surveyed revealed their "interactive journey between context and relationships in a dynamic journey of growth and maturity" (49). Such variety included circumstances that participants faced, potentially including religious oppression, financial hardships from educational pursuits, sex trafficking, and/or drug usage (51). Through such results, Gitau advocated how African-context churches serve and "add value to the life of a growing person" while participants face such listed circumstances (52). Gitau concludes how men and women in churches "deemed influential in their local communities" benefit the communities' continuing outreaching and leadership opportunities (61).

Steven D. H. Rasmussen, American senior lecturer at Africa International University, wrote Chapter Four's "Connected – The Role of Social Capital for Leaders with Impact," analyzing the different types of social capital and how Africans interact with human capital. Matching Chapter 3's focus, Rasmussen agreed in writing that church communities "provide many opportunities within the routines of congregational life for people to develop relationships" (68). Rasmussen additionally advocated for such relationship investments, "human capital through formal education and mentoring," and research, in that order (82).

Elisabet le Roux and Yolande Sandoua co-wrote Chapter Five's "Leadership Responses during Armed Conflict," showcasing tangibly how the ALS team handled post-interviews in CAR with the civil unrest (85-7). Despite losing sources who evacuated surveyed cities, le Roux and Sandoua explained how the Team replaced those lost sources with new sources (86). Despite the uncertain warfare circumstances' impact on survey results and residents' livelihood, both

authors indicated how faith leaders collaboratively “denounce acts of revenge and retaliation and to promote interfaith dialogue and tolerance,” as God helps (99-100).

Nupanga Weanzana wrote Chapter Six’s “Word and Deed – Patterns of Influential African Christian Organizations,” highlighting the impact of Christian organizations within Africa. Drawing from survey results, Weanzana discussed how the top organizations profiled from the trio of nations received an evaluation with “particularly effective” remarks (104). Weanzana also covered the trends and continuing work of these profiled organizations. Weanzana concluded by encouraging national Christian leaders to engage and “grapple with healthy postcolonial leadership patterns in the modern world” (112).

Michael Bowen wrote Chapter Seven’s “African Christian Organizations and Socioeconomic Developing,” acquiring initially whether “religious institutions contribute to the promotion of socioeconomic development” (115). Bowen’s answer later reveals his belief that faith-based organizations (FBOs), with their “significant impact” upon the general communities where they belong, “also have a socioeconomic purpose” (131). Sandwiched between this question and its answer, Bowen provides an in-depth perspective for how FBOs serve the public good in multiple African communities, through various means and difficult struggles.

Truphosa Kwaka-Sumba and le Roux co-wrote Chapter Eight’s “African Women’s Leadership – Realities and Opportunities,” revealing meaningfully how women historically and currently struggle in ministry. Both authors recall how their fellow female leaders received discrimination and marginalization, “both within the church and in society in general” (150). Combatting gender stigma, currently women successfully find equipping each other through mentorship as most effective, so the mentors’ past battles once fought and won can assist the mentees’ fighting and winning too in similar-looking situations (148). Ultimately, the seven women leader accounts as highlighted and their collective history as analyzed give opportunities for future female readers and leaders “to tell their stories” as a desired addition (146).

H. Jurgens Hendriks wrote Chapter Nine’s “Empowering Leadership – A New Dawn in African Christian Leadership,” revealing future trends and hope for African Christian Leadership as they rise up. One trend of choral ensembles, Hendriks beautifully described the unity found in “we are because we sing,” by earlier mentioning how “the yearning to belong and to share, to harmonize, and to enjoy the beauty and message of a song” motivates African choirs into continuing existence (161). Another trend concerning technology, Hendriks showcases Edward Munene’s insights in utilizing social media, “not in the way social media often functions, as the creator and builder of his own image” (163). Munene further continues his online ministry through recognizing “the calls for help of those who contact him and how he gets involved in their lives and pain” (163). Hendriks’ comprehensive approach reveals new insights from multiple subjects and approaches, all leading towards strengthening future African Christian Leadership.

Priest, Kirimi Barine, and Alberto Lucamba Salombongo co-wrote Chapter Ten’s “Reading and Leading – Challenges for African Christian Leaders,” presenting the data gathered and the perspectives gained when polling, and how the surveyed read in their daily lives. This

chapter heavily analyzes the content, presenting necessary conclusive thoughts listed here. First and second, the importance of writing and reading influences how then a culture “must be supported and fostered” (194). Third and fourth, the inclusion of more African Christian writers in this realm, alongside a stronger “Christian publishing and book distribution in Africa,” enhances both the coverage and discussion taking place concerning these leaders’ accomplishments for future learning contexts (194).

John Jusu wrote Chapter Eleven’s “Developing Transformational Leaders – Curricula Implications from the Africa Leadership Study,” discussing the need and “quality of instruction in formal institutions of learning” (199). Jusu encouraged that educational habits formulate ideally in the students’ homes before they arrive at schools (200). Jusu also indicated from past success stories that the number of African Christian leaders “involved in a variety of arenas frequently related to social justice and rehabilitation” strengthens the contributions that the leaders offer towards freedom, mentorship, discipleship, and raising up new leaders (201). Drawing on the importance of education, Jusu emphasized this book’s efforts in providing groundwork “for the conceptualization, design, development, and implementation of curricula for transformational leadership formation” of future leaders (213).

Mary Kleine Yehling wrote Chapter Twelve’s “Engaging Africa – The Tyndale House Foundation’s Story,” presenting the historical background for the formation of ALS (220-21). Yehling gratefully recalls how the Taylor family’s devotion for God and missions brought the necessary resources to Africa with Scripture and eventual church leadership efforts, along with affirming the ALS survey work and results.

*African Christian Leadership* concludes with a comprehensive evaluation of “survey results, interviews, and reports,” in a trilingual online format in English, French, and Portuguese, along with the ALS Purpose Statements and the Survey Questions and Results themselves (231-39, 241-78). As a novice learner to Christians leading in African contexts, the reviewer fully endorses this book for its attainable and clear principles, along with acknowledging that while much unworked potential still exists within this African context, the rising leaders presents him with hope that this potential’s transformation towards reality surely suggests future attainability.