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A Brief Review of the Anyike *Kituba*, its claims as expressed in its front matter and, an examination of specific translation-neé-interpretive choices, along with an analysis of the claims made in the precipitating correspondence, press release and PDF file of the volume.

First, a word of context. I am a woman of African descent whose ancestors passed through the crucible of slavery extending from the West Coast of Africa to the East Coast of the Carolinas. I come from a people whose literacy was revolutionary, whose illiteracy was inscribed in law. A people for whom the scriptures were the manifesto of liberation. A people who were regularly fed pernicious interpretations and misinterpretations of scripture and notoriously abridged canons of scripture with liberatory texts excised. The project under review brings that history.

I also come from a family who cherishes education. And also from grandparents with incomplete primary education. And from parents and aunts and uncles, virtually all of who went to college, many of them acquiring post-secondary and terminal doctoral degrees.

Those are the two strands of my DNA as a black biblical scholar whose practice of translation and biblical interpretation is deeply rooted in more than 30 years studying and teaching biblical Hebrew, philological, semantic and lexical work in Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Syriac, supported by linguistic work in Akkadian, Ugaritic, Arabic and Latin. To make it plain, I do not lift a finger to craft a translation, lecture, lesson plan or sermon without having read all of the texts in their original languages and, as necessary, in the span of ancient witnesses. I begin with the Masoretic Text and immediately consult the associated Dead Sea manuscripts, the Septuagint and, (Aramaic) Peshitta. And then I begin literary crafting a translation that preserves the alliteration and assonance of the text as well as the syntactical flow of the original.

May this brief autobiography explain the strength of my response and reaction to and, review of, the following; including, ultimately, my repudiation of the project.

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On 24 September 2026 I received an email solicitation from a person unknown to me including a press release – I am not press – and equally unsolicited, the full PDF manuscript of something called, *The Kitabu Cha Imani Version of the Holy Bible (KCIV)*: ***“This wonderful Africentric version presents a literal interpretation while maintaining the same theological and text critical commitments of most Biblical scholars.”***

As the sales pitch alarmed me with its many untenable claims including, “the first Bible ever interpreted by a Black author,” I emailed the person who styled himself as *interpreter and author* of this idiosyncratic canon and, as having *written* it, James Anyike, D. Min. Said canon includes only the Torah and New Testament, based on some *christological* formulation and, “the Holy Spirit.”*

This review began as an analysis of Anyike’s responses to my queries upon receipt of this unexpected email and unsolicited manuscript. My questions and concerns multiplied. I determined a review of the production was necessary to counter the claims being made and, inform and warn the general public – anyone considering the purchase or use of the Kitabu as a Bible.

Lastly here, it is critical to note Anyike is, conveniently, the publisher of this offering through his own publishing house, Popular Truth Publishing – raising questions about standards and procedures, namely peer review. If submitted to a publisher, the first question would be what credentials and qualifications do you have to write this book. And, the manuscript would be sent to experts in the field to evaluate for the publisher whether it was an appropriate for the publisher – with its reputation – to publish. Or, the reviewers might advise the publisher of the number and nature of corrections to be made before being considered. There is no evidence of any of these standard professional practices having been observed.

The following review is based on readings in the Torah and New Testament, including those with complex linguistic, text critical and redaction issues. The review is also based on claims made in the solicitation email and, introductory pages of the Kitabu itself. *included in PDF.*

Kitabu: Front Matter

The project is repeatedly described as Afrocentric/Africentric, the primary evidence of which is the use of Kiswahili names for the Divine and, visuals featuring Black persons. Of the two terms, the author leans heavily into the latter framing, Africentric. This Africentrism is subordinated to Christianity, the true ideological framework of the endeavor. Anyike repeats the much critiqued pattern of the *First Nations Version of the Bible*, using the sacred names of divine figures from one nation or tribe to replace the divine language of for a whole people or continent. This hegemonic choice evokes the colonial imposition of language and suppression of cultural and religious identity by Christian missionaries – and slaveholders. And as did Christian translators of the scriptures, the author erases the culturally specific names of the characters, dispensing with their names in their languages in their sacred stories.

Early in the front matter there is a list of “facts about the Bible” which is truly a horror to a professor of Hebrew Bible. It is difficult to identify the most nescient and fallacious claim

however, “It covers the total span of human history, historically...” certainly makes a case for the incompatibility of the project with religious education at the graduate level in a fully accredited institution. The list also asserts a sixty-six book canon, period, full stop. (He will modify this and the claim of first Black interpreter of the Bible in the attached correspondence found in *Appendices A and, B.*)

Lastly, the lack of citations in a supposed biblical edition advertising itself as “text critical” is astounding and further marks this creative endeavor as a pet project and not a serious representation of biblical scholarship or even the biblical texts themselves. (There are two footnotes in the front matter, providing phonetic pronunciations, but ***there are no sources anchoring any of the claims nor are there in the scriptural material sent me, a single footnote, text critical or other.***

Kitabu: Genesis 1:1

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ :

Anyike’s “when time first began” fails to address the lack of a definite article in the Masoretic Text (MT) – which appears not to have been consulted for the project at all or, the Septuagint (LXX), similarly unconsulted. The introduction of “time” before the governors of time, i.e. the celestial bodies, is not in a court with either the content or argument of the passage. Given the christological framing of the project, one is left wondering if “when time *first* began” indicates a successive beginning of time in accordance with a particular Christian theology. The (intentional?) mistranslation of the bound infinitive בְּרֵאשִׁית as an ordinal number is not a literal reading of the text nor, does it events any critical engagement with it.

Kitabu: Deuteronomy 32:8

בְּתַנְחַל עֲלֵיוֹן גּוֹיִם
בְּתַפְרִידוֹ בְּנֵי אָדָם
יַצֵּב גְּבֻלַּת עַמִּים
לְמִסְפַּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל :

The Kitabu translation of Deuteronomy 32:8 preserves – without comment or analysis – the theology of the MT, the God of Israel divided human beings proportionally so that there would be one foreign nation for each Israelite ensuring they would be perpetually outnumbered at scale: **When the Most High apportioned the nations, when he separated the children of humankind, he set the boundaries of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.**

There are dissents among the textual witnesses indicating a trail of emendations clarified by the Dead Sea scrolls, the oldest and most complete biblical manuscripts at hand; the relevant scroll in this case is 4QDeut¹, (the tenth letter – J – manuscript of Deuteronomy found in cave 4, in order of discovery). The term on which this text turns is, בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, or rather, what lay there prior to multiple rounds of redaction:

MT: בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, children/sons of Israel (*beney Yisrael*)

LXX: ἁγγέλων θεοῦ, angels of God (*theou aggelon ≈ beney elohim*)

DSS: בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים, children, sons of God (*beney elohim*)

A text critical reading of this passage would recognize the difficulty of the Hebrew in the MT, understand the LXX and DSS to make the same articulation in their respective languages and, the theological difficulty there. Biblical scholars look at how this passage is preserved in the other textual (manuscript) witnesses. Study of the differences in the same text across manuscripts and the resulting differences in meanings, reduction criticism, takes seriously the theological claims of the text here and how its first hearers and that its redactors (editors) made changes for theological as well as grammatical reasons but, do so sparingly and conservatively for the most part. (The margins of the MT and the space below the main text are full of these, called Masora.)

In addition Deuteronomy has different authorship (*not singular*) than Genesis in which divine messengers occur more than a dozen times; however, they do not appear in Deuteronomy – absent the case under consideration – and are not consistent with its theology.

Bearing these things in mind, a pattern emerges.

- 1) An early/original text with אֱלֹהִים, *elohim*, meaning God (the likely intent) *or gods* (a unwelcome possibility).
- 2) Modification to avoid the inherent polytheism of אֱלֹהִים, *elohim*, by adding בְּנֵי, yielding בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים, subordinating any other divine beings. (However, this expression is only native to Genesis, no doubt leaving some scribes or editors uncomfortable.)
- 3) A further emendation replaced the (original) problematic אֱלֹהִים all together with, יִשְׂרָאֵל, Israel resulting in the theologically tortuous בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, the children of Israel, the Israelites.

Lastly, there is a grammatical error in the “literal interpretation” of this passage one might expect to see among first semester Hebrew students. In his solicitation the offer provides it very brief list of general translation choices including, “...refers to the Gentiles as other races...” In the passage under discussion, the author mistranslates, “peoples,” plural, as *the people* and, seemingly misinterpreting them as the Israelites.

Kitabu: Narrative

The first narrative I attempted was the story of Hagar and Sarai in Genesis 16. I only made it through three verses. First, Hagar’s girlhood enslavement is erased and replaced with a job; in v 1 she is a “servant-girl.” While conserving the convention of replacing “woman” in the Hebrew text with “wife” to accord with the conventions of Western readers, Anyike went further with an invented category, “concubine-wife.” Before going further, I must iterate: ***At no point in the history of the translation of the Hebrew Bible has נָשָׁא ever been translated with the anachronistic discredited “concubine” reserved, however inappropriately, for פְּלִגְנָא – which is never used for Hagar.*** (Not even in the anti-Hagar rhetoric in the writings of Paul.)

The term for woman, נָשָׁא, denoted a primary wife while the term, פְּלִגְנָא, denoted a secondary or low status wife, either separately, or in combination as in the horror story in Judges 19 – where the description of the familial relations include “father-in-law” and, “husband.” Despite the internal reading of the text, “concubine” remained in most biblical translations until

the 20th and 21st centuries when biblical scholars, notably womanist and feminist, began contesting the choice and argued convincingly there was no concubinage in ancient Israel.

There *was* a two-tier status system for women in conjugal pairings. There were primary or high status women/wives whose children were deemed legitimate heirs entitled to their father's holdings and, there were secondary or low status women/wives whose children were similarly legitimate but, not entitled to their fathers holdings upon his death. Hagar and Sarah were **both** primary wives as was Abraham's third wife, Keturah; he gave inheritance it to all of the sons born of these unions but, according to Genesis 25:5, to the children born of his low status wives, "he only gave gifts."

Having demonstrated an appalling ignorance of the primary language of the text of which the author claims to have provided a "literal interpretation," he next displays a gross ignorance of the cultural context that makes the content comprehensible: *Sarah trafficked Hagar to Abraham to forcibly impregnate, to produce the hoped for heir who could only be born of a woman with primary status, like hers.*

Intertextuality

Numbers 15:38, Deuteronomy 22:12, Matthew 9:20 and Luke 8:44

וַעֲשֵׂי לָהֶם צִיצִת עַל-פְּנֵי בְּגָדֵיהֶם
וְגָדִילִים תַּעֲשֶׂה לָּךְ עַל-אַרְבַּע פְּנֵפוֹת כְּסוּתָךְ

Num 15:38 LXX: ποιησάτωσαν ἑαυτοῖς κράσπεδα ἐπὶ τὰ πτερύγια τῶν ἱματίων αὐτῶν

Deut 22:12 LXX: Στρεπτὰ ποιήσεις σεαυτῷ ἐπὶ τῶν τεσσάρων κρασπέδων τῶν περιβολαίων σου

Matthew 9:20: ἤψατο τοῦ κρασπέδου τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ

Luke 8:44: ἤψατο τοῦ κρασπέδου τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ

Numbers 15:38 expresses the first phase of the commandment for the Israelites to wear צִיצִת, fringe, on the corners (עַל-פְּנֵי) of their garments. Deuteronomy calls for a second, further step, for גָּדִילִים, tassels, to be attached to the fringe. The LXX preserves the distinction between fringe and tassels: κράσπεδα and Στρεπτὰ, respectively. The Matthean and Lukan accounts of the woman with the vaginal hemorrhage mirror the LXX; that is, the woman touches the *fringe* on the garment of Jesus. However, in the *Kitabu* Anyike uses "tassels" for both gospels. He goes further and embellishes Matthew 9:20 by inserting the descriptor, "at the bottom," in Matthew 9:20, suggesting to this weary reviewer that Jesus was decked out like a lampshade.

The inability of the author to maintain lexical fidelity, should the author of the project be aware of such combined with the absence of any text notes or footnotes whatever further belie the claim this broken Bible-for-sale is in anyway rigorous, scholarly or meet for use by the people of God.

Conclusion

The art and science of rigorous, critical – and even imaginative – biblical translation and interpretation require a more-than-functional working knowledge of the languages of scripture. None is indicated here. Whether for collegium, classroom or congregation, the translation and interpretation of the Bible require knowledge of the ancient textual witnesses and their relevancy.

After reading multiple passages from both testaments **my assessment is, this “literal interpretation” simply re-words common biblical translations according to Anyike’s own, untutored/unlearned preferences and, evinces no critical textual scholarship within any academic discipline.** Further, the project more than amply demonstrates the folly of looking up words to pick, plug and play without any understanding of the cultural and linguistic rationales for their semantic ranges (or even, whether any or all are applicable to the verse under consideration). The claim in the solicitation email, “maintaining the same theological and text critical commitments of most Biblical scholars,” is false to the point of maliciousness. With the selling price of some editions at \$450, mercenary incentives may explain this **gross fiction masquerading as a Bible persons of African descent can trust to faithfully convey the ancestral scriptures of their faith.**

The Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, 2026

What follows are excerpts from the email soliciting sales for this project, my immediate queries for the author, the relevant text of his responses with my analysis in line; all superseded by the preceding review. Full text of the first round of correspondence provided as Appendices B and C.

Appendix A: Precis of Correspondence

Project Description and Correspondence

<<Dear Friends,

A new translation of the Bible is “hot off the press.” It is the *Kitabu Cha Imani Version of the Holy Bible (KCIV)*, interpreted by Dr. James C. Anyike. It is the first Bible ever interpreted by a Black author...

This wonderful Africentric version presents a literal interpretation while maintaining the same theological and text critical commitments of most Biblical scholars...

The word usage in the *Kitabu* is accurate, literal, and poetic...>>

Note: I have elected not to reproduce or share the solicitation email or its attachments, a press release and the unsolicited manuscript.

Primary Questions in My Response (see Appendix B for full text)

These inquiries were made, affording Anyike an opportunity to explain more clearly what specific academic practices, sources and theories undergird the Bible he advertises, (which PDF he sent to me, unsolicited, in breach of commonly accepted academic and professional etiquette).

<< My questions for you are one, what do you mean by “the first Bible ever interpreted by a black author”?...

As a subset of the previous question, two, what do you mean by “interpretation”? You refer to a “literal interpretation. “A literal interpretation of what text? What biblical manuscripts did you use?...

An obvious next question would be your philological and philosophical underpinning for the claim that there is the possibility or reality of such a thing as a “literal interpretation.”>>

Anyike’s Responses

Here I address Anyike’s email reply to my response to his solicitation and its claims. Below I interweave excerpts of his response to my reply; his responses are in plain font, **my previous questions and comments in bold font** and, any *new comments (mine) are in bold italic font*. These interchanges occur broadly in the order of their appearance in his second missive and occasionally require breaking paragraphs in order to group the most responsive material together. The full text of his reply, Appendix B, concludes this document. (The “new comments” are for the benefit of readers of this review.)

One (1)

Anyike: <<I have answered all questions at the risk of further exposing my ignorance, more than I did in the information I sent you earlier.>>

Gafney: Absolutely not. “Responded to” and “answered” are not at all the same thing.

Two (2)

Gafney: ...what do you mean by “the first Bible ever interpreted by a black author”?

Anyike: <<When I wrote that the *Kitabu Cha Imani Version of the Holy Bible (KCIV)* is the “first bible ever interpreted by a Black author,” let me say several things about that statement...

This does not minimize or ignore the works of so many wonderful and knowledgeable biblical scholars. It actually means that the KCIV is the only bible where it offers an interpretation in entirety...

To the best of my knowledge, you and other great scholars have interpreted verses, pericopes, and books of the Bible...>>

Gafney: Take note of the categorization, “in entirety,” in the above response (1).

Three (3)

Gafney: ...what do you mean by “interpretation”?

Anyike: <<In this claim I use the word “interpreted,” because it means to explain or translate the meaning of something. It is to make something clear and understandable. This is what I have done in the KCIV...>>

Gafney: Take note of the facile definition of “interpretation,” above, its equation with “translation.” Further not all primary texts can be made “clear and understandable” for reasons such as lost nuances, humor, euphemisms and the use of intentionally coded language intended for specific (ancient) audiences with all the requisite knowledge to comprehend the material.

Four (4)

Gafney: You refer to a “literal interpretation.” A literal interpretation of what text? What biblical manuscripts did you use?

...An obvious next question would be your philological and philosophical underpinning for the claim that there is the possibility or reality of such a thing as a “literal interpretation.”

Anyike: << I claim that the KCIV is “literal.” By this I mean, the words are interpreted based on what they mean in their original context. There are isolated instances where my interpretation of some words are not “word-for-word,” which I did to replace them with words that fit the effort to make the KCIV more contemporary and relevant to its readers. But, for the most part, I researched the words based on their original languages and meanings before deciding how to interpret individual words and phrases. To do this, I used several different commentaries, bible versions, and etymological sources.

Gafney: Take note of:

- a) the complete lack of original language manuscripts used,**
- b) the lack of specific named resources used, but only “for the most part,” (and, apparent lack of understanding such resources themselves are acts of interpretations leading to the interpretation-of-an-interpretation effect comparable to the fax-of-a-fax effect),**
- c) the lack of grammatical, lexical or philological resources in the above list, with no indication of linguistic competence in the relevant languages – rather the opposite,**
- d) lack of identification of the Bible versions used that although the KJV was excluded as specified in the attached correspondence.**
- e) no indication of knowledge base to determine “original context” of individual words and phrases and,**
- f) no indication of knowledge of the grammatical characteristics of biblical languages, in which gloss definitions of lexemes are insufficient to determine translation; Hebrew particular**

with its distinctive Semitic sevenfold conjugation structure, lack of a present tense, etc., necessary to properly utilize lexical and other resources.

Five (5)

Gafney: Does your Kitabu reflect the dominant canon of the ancient and continuing Church?

Anyike: <<In all presentations of the KCIV, I clearly state that this version of the bible has 32 books. It is inclusive of the Pentateuch, and the 27 books of the New Testament. Someone may argue that since the whole Hebrew Bible is not included, it is not a bible. I would disagree, because the bible is not only whole when there are 66, 81 or 88 books, but when the covenants of God are offered in whole...>>

Gafney: Again, take note of the preceding categorization, “in entirety” from response one (1).

Six (6)

Gafney: I have made a separate discussion point out of part of the proceeding response as it puts the nature of this “interpretation” into its proper light.

Anyike: <<...the bible is not only whole when there are 66, 81 or 88 books, but when the covenants of God are offered in whole. It is when the full story of salvation through the risen Christ is given...

...the heart of the author being led by the Holy Spirit, in writing the Kitabu.>>

Gafney: At last the true nature of this project is revealed. It is the “author’s” Christian imagination of what the Bible should say and therefore making it so, counter to claims of fidelity to “original context” and “literal interpretations.” Anyike’s Kituba is a creative writing project in the form of Christian apologia strapped onto the Torah – itself strapped onto the Christian New Testament – excluding the rest of the Hebrew or Greek First Testament. By designating himself the author, he illuminates the distance and discontinuity between himself and trained biblical translators and interpreters who do not refer to ourselves as the authors of the biblical text we render.

Appendix B

Dear Dr. Anyike,

It is my practice, in general, to delete unsolicited manuscripts and block the senders.

However the claims articulated in the first few sentences would make this edition of interest to me as a biblical scholar who has published my own unique translations of the biblical text and, publishes in translation studies among other sub fields Hebrew Bible and Hebrew biblical studies for the past three decades.

I must confess, some of your claims appear at odds with the established record of scholarship in biblical studies and biblical translation. However, I would like to hear from you, in case I have misunderstood your claims in this advertisement.

My questions for you are one, what do you mean by “the first Bible ever interpreted by a black author”? Obviously every interaction with the biblical text, sermon, Bible study, scholarly article, translation notes, etc., is an act of interpretation as is the publishing of Bibles by African-American scholars such as Dr. [Cain] Hope Felder and Tony Evans.

As a subset of the previous question, two, what do you mean by “interpretation”? You refer to a “literal interpretation.” A literal interpretation of what text? What biblical manuscripts did you use? Or, have you done a rewrite of an established translation such as the King James with all of its inaccuracies and lacunae not sufficiently addressed until the discovery of the Ugaritic material and, some would say even later, the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls - for example to address the gap in the first chapter of 1 Samuel or the much larger one between chapters 10 and 11 of 1 Samuel – leading to 90 some odd corrections to the text. Have you accounted for and addressed those?

An obvious next question would be your philological and philosophical underpinning for the claim that there is the possibility or reality of such a thing as a “literal interpretation.” But I will forbear that question and ask you the following, lastly:

Three, Does your Kitabu reflect the dominant canon of the ancient and continuing Church in its subsequent branches, i.e., the majority of Christians at every point in Christianity have and continue to use a Bible with at least 80 books and, in some cases, more; or, is your project a reproduction of the protestant recension birthed in English in 1782 along with the birth of this American nation?

I look forward to your responses and will consider reviewing your project pending your responses to these inquiries.

Best,

The Rev. Wil Gafney, Ph. D.+

Appendix C

Dr. Wil Gafney, I can't thank you enough for the questions you raised in the letter you wrote. I am elated that you wrote, and I truly appreciate the critique you offer. Voltaire said, "He must be very ignorant, for he answers every question he is asked." I am not one who likes to give long answers, so my answers will be as brief as possible. But, I have answered all questions at the risk of further exposing my ignorance, more than I did in the information I sent you earlier.

When I wrote that the *Kitabu Cha Imani Version of the Holy Bible (KCIV)* is the "first bible ever interpreted by a Black author," let me say several things about that statement. In this claim I use the word "interpreted," because it means to explain or translate the meaning of something. It is to make something clear and understandable. This is what I have done in the KCIV. If it pleases you, I would love to have your thoughts about whether I accomplished this in the KCIV.

I also claim that the KCIV is "the first bible" of its kind. This does not minimize or ignore the works of so many wonderful and knowledgeable biblical scholars. It actually means that the KCIV is the only bible where it offers an interpretation in entirety. In all presentations of the KCIV, I clearly state that this version of the bible has 32 books. It is inclusive of the Pentateuch, and the 27 books of the New Testament. Someone may argue that since the whole Hebrew Bible is not included, it is not a bible. I would disagree, because the bible is not only whole when there are 66, 81 or 88 books, but when the covenants of God are offered in whole. It is when the full story of salvation through the risen Christ is given.

To the best of my knowledge, you and other great scholars have interpreted verses, pericopes, and books of the Bible, but none have published a more entire version of the bible. You referred to Dr. Cain Hope Felder's *African Heritage Study Bible* and Dr. Tony Evans' *Tony Evans Study Bible*. It will interest you to know that neither of them generated their own unique versions of the bible. Dr. Felder used the *King James Version* for his bible, and Dr. Evans uses the *New American Standard Bible* and the *Christian Standard Bible*. In both cases they add their own commentaries to the text.

I claim that the KCIV is "literal." By this I mean, the words are interpreted based on what they mean in their original context. There are isolated instances where my interpretation of some words are not "word-for-word," which I did to replace them with words that fit the effort to make the KCIV more contemporary and relevant to its readers. But, for the most part, I researched the words based on their original languages and meanings before deciding how to interpret individual words and phrases. To do this, I used several different commentaries, bible versions, and etymological sources. But, because mama [and daddy] didn't raise no fool, the KJV was never one of my sources.

As for your final question about whether the KCIV reflects the "dominant canon of the ancient and continuing Church" or "if it is a reproduction of the Protestant recension," in general my answer is no to both. No, in the sense that the KCIV only has the 32 books, and I didn't write with any commitment to following the models/bibles of the Protestant recension. This is where the unique approach of generating a version that is Africentric/Afrocentric is important. The Africentrism of the KCIV is represented in the words used, the 27 images, the commentaries, and the heart of the author being led by the Holy Spirit, in writing the *Kitabu*.

If I failed to answer any of your questions, let me know and I will do so. If there are any mistakes or errors in interpreting anything in the KCIV, I welcome correction and will make corrections so that the KCIV will be the best it can be.