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Ntlha's "Out of the shadows of African traditional religion: Christ's deliverance of a Sangoma" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Ntlha, M. (2017). *Out of the shadows of African traditional religion: Christ's deliverance of a Sangoma*. Grand Rapids, MI: Hippo Books. 89 pp. \$12.99. ISBN 9789966062291

Ntlha penned this book to provide clarity and encouragement to his fellow Africans still mired in traditional pagan beliefs or struggling with syncretism. Ntlha also provides readers inspiration in the compelling conversion story of Francinah Boloji, an example God's grace and redemption abounding to an unlikely candidate. Francinah was not a Christian, but an avid adherent of African traditional religion and a third-generation sangoma, popularly known as a "witch doctor," who served her clients by such practices as healing the sick and countering spells and curses.

Ntlha, General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA) and a leader of Freedom of Religion South Africa (FOR SA), expertly explains the "distinct religious and cultural worldview" still prevalent among African tribes and families, where sangoma serve as the earthly representatives of the spirit world of *badimo* – deceased ancestors – who are intermediaries between the living and the "transcendent Other" (p. 17). It is a worldview not only profoundly different from that of the West, but one intentionally adverse and hostile to it, erecting a formidable obstacle to the gospel.

But God can make a way where there is no way. In the narrative's pivotal moment, Jesus Christ appeared to Francinah and silently stretched forth his hand and drew out "like a magnet" the seven demonic spirits that possessed her. Stripped of her "guardian spirits," Francinah was no longer a sangoma. "She felt robbed and alone," Ntlha writes, "yet strangely, she also felt a sense of freedom" (14). And thus begins in earnest Francinah's soul-stirring testimony.

Ntlha skillfully weaves exposition through Francinah's story, leaving readers both informed and inspired. This book is most suitable for libraries serving African Christians or missionaries to Africans seeking to understand better African traditional religion in order to offer freedom from its clutches.

Reviewer

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