

**Pitshou Moleka**

# Epistemological Foundations of Christian Social Work. The Intersection of Faith, Knowledge and Practice

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**PITSHOU MOLEKA, PhD**

**EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN SOCIAL  
WORK: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF FAITH, KNOWLEDGE,  
AND PRACTICE**

## **About the author**

Pitshou Moleka has extensive expertise in the fields of social work, theology, leadership, governance, education and workplace spirituality as a pastor, executive, and researcher. He is qualified to write about workplace spirituality because he has a PhD in organizational leadership. He is a lecturer at the Botswana Bible and Training Institute (BBTI), a reviewer at the Academy of Management, an expert at the International Institute of Executive Careers Business School, the legal representative of Communauté El Shaddai (a Missionary community), a member of the International Missionary Training Network (IMTN), and the national representative of MRAN (Managing Research African Network) in DR Congo.

One of his publications, "The Scientific Foundation of World Spirituality: A Multidisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Perspective," is regarded as an important contribution in this field. He is also one of the authors of the forthcoming Palgrave handbook on Ubuntu.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Christian social work is an interdisciplinary field that integrates the principles of Christianity with social work practice. It seeks to address the holistic needs of individuals, families, communities, and societies, guided by faith-based values and ethical frameworks (Harris, Yancey, Myers, Deimler & Walden, 2017). The epistemological foundations of Christian social work explore the intersection of faith, knowledge, and practice. Understanding how these dimensions intertwine is crucial in developing effective approaches to social work within a Christian context.

Social work, as a profession, is rooted in the values of social justice, dignity, and the well-being of all individuals. The integration of faith into social work practice has a long history, with faith-based organizations and individuals playing significant roles in providing compassionate care and advocating for marginalized populations (Cnaan & Boddie, 2002). However, the specific epistemological foundations, or ways of knowing, that underpin Christian social work have not been extensively explored.

This book aims to address this gap by delving into the epistemological dimensions of Christian social work. It seeks to understand how the integration of faith and knowledge influences social work theory, practice, and research within a Christian context. By exploring the intersection of faith, knowledge, and practice, we can gain insights into the uniqueness of Christian social work and identify potential areas for further development.

### **I. Background and Significance of the Study**

Christian social work is rooted in the belief that faith and spirituality play a vital role in promoting social justice, compassion, and holistic well-

being. Throughout history, numerous Christian thinkers and practitioners have contributed to the development of this approach, advocating for the integration of Christian principles into social work theory and practice (Payne, 2014; Cnaan et al., 2003). However, there remains a need to further explore the epistemological foundations of Christian social work to better understand how faith-based perspectives intersect with professional knowledge and practice.

Understanding the epistemological underpinnings of Christian social work is crucial for several reasons.

Firstly, it allows for a deeper comprehension of the theoretical frameworks and methodologies employed by Christian social workers, shedding light on the distinctiveness of their approach. Secondly, it contributes to the ongoing dialogue within the field of social work regarding the role of religion and spirituality in professional practice (Schmid & Sheikhzadegan, 2022).

Thirdly, it has implications for social work education, as it provides insights into how Christian social work can be integrated into curriculum and training programs (Taylor, 2015). Lastly, it contributes to the professional identity of Christian social workers, providing a foundation for ethical decision-making and practice (Reamer, 2013).

## **II. Objectives**

The objectives of this book are:

- 1° To critically examine the theoretical frameworks and models employed in Christian social work, exploring the integration of Christian perspectives.
- 2° To analyze the influence of Christian epistemology on the acquisition and production of knowledge in social work practice.

3° To explore the ethical considerations arising from the integration of Christian values with professional ethics in social work.

4° To examine the manifestation of Christian social work in practice and its implications for diverse populations and cultural contexts.

5° To provide insights into the implications of Christian social work for social work education, policy development, and the professional identity of Christian social workers.

### **III. Contribution of the book**

This book seeks to bring innovation and make outstanding contributions to social work theory and practice by exploring the epistemological foundations of Christian social work. Through an interdisciplinary approach that combines social work theory, theology, anthropology, leadership and philosophy, this research has the potential to develop new frameworks, concepts, and models that can enrich the field of social work. Some areas of innovation and contribution include:

1° Frameworks for integrating faith-based perspectives: This book aims to develop frameworks that provide a comprehensive understanding of how faith-based perspectives can be integrated into social work theory and practice. By examining the theoretical foundations of Christian social work and exploring the complexities of integrating Christian principles with social work models, new frameworks can be proposed that offer practical guidance for social workers seeking to incorporate faith-based perspectives into their practice.

2° Conceptualization of Christian epistemology in social work: This research aims to delve into the unique ways in which Christian epistemology influences the acquisition, production, and application of

knowledge in social work. By exploring the role of faith, revelation, and scripture in shaping Christian social work knowledge, new concepts will be developed that shed light on the epistemological foundations of Christian social work and its implications for social work theory and practice.

3° Ethical considerations in integrating Christian values: This book seeks to examine the ethical considerations that arise from the integration of Christian values with professional ethics in social work. By analyzing the tensions and dilemmas faced by Christian social workers in navigating the intersection of faith-based values and professional ethics, new models can be developed that provide guidance for ethical decision-making in Christian social work practice.

4° Innovative practices in Christian social work: Through an exploration of the manifestation of Christian social work in practice, this research has the potential to identify innovative interventions, approaches, and strategies that can be adopted by social workers working within a Christian framework. By examining the role of spirituality and faith in the therapeutic process and evaluating the impact of Christian social work on client outcomes, new models and practices can be developed that contribute to the advancement of social work theory and practice.

These contributions have the potential to enrich the understanding of the integration of faith-based perspectives within social work, provide guidance for ethical decision-making, and offer innovative practices that promote holistic well-being and social justice.