ENGAGING AFRICA

Prospects for Project Funding in Selected Fields

A study prepared for the John Templeton Foundation and the Issachar Fund

By Joel Carpenter and Nellie Kooistra

Nagel Institute of Calvin College
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# Table of Contents

**Introduction** .................................................................................................................. 4

**I. African Higher Education** ................................................................................................. 8
   African Universities .............................................................................................................. 8
   Theological Education in Africa ......................................................................................... 13

**II. Capabilities in Relevant Disciplines** .............................................................................. 17
   Anthropology .................................................................................................................... 17
   Psychology ........................................................................................................................ 21
   Philosophy .......................................................................................................................... 25
   Social Science (Primarily Sociology) ................................................................................. 29
   African Studies .................................................................................................................. 37
   Religious Studies ............................................................................................................. 41
   Theology ............................................................................................................................ 47

**III. Project Ideas: State of Play** .......................................................................................... 57
   African Values .................................................................................................................... 57
   African Spirituality: Traditional and Contemporary ....................................................... 60
   Forgiveness and Reconciliation Studies, in African Context ............................................ 63
   Religious Freedom and the Rule of Law in Africa ............................................................. 69
   Character Formation Curricula and Assessment ............................................................... 73
   Positive Psychology in African Contexts ......................................................................... 74
   Science, Health, Technology, and Creation Care .............................................................. 76
   Christian Theology: Engaging African Realities ............................................................... 84

**IV. Project Recommendations** ............................................................................................ 94
   Grant-making Recommendations ....................................................................................... 95
   Next Steps ......................................................................................................................... 99
   An Institutional Dream ....................................................................................................... 101

**Appendix** .......................................................................................................................... 102
   Contact Information for Selected Leaders and Agencies ................................................. 102
   Selected Bibliography ....................................................................................................... 109
   Index .................................................................................................................................. 122
Introduction

In the late summer of 2013, the John Templeton Foundation (JTF) published a report on its first twenty-five years of grant making. In a quarter century's time, a small organization that started in a room above Dr. Jack Templeton's garage in suburban Philadelphia has grown into a major foundation that makes 175 grants per year, totaling $100 million, for projects and programs in dozens of nations. Sir John Templeton was keen to reach out, the report says, to foster good work around the world. The humble approaches to learning that he favored implied a willingness to discover new contexts and to investigate new territories. Just as he had encouraged a worldwide hunt for investment bargains, so too, Sir John wrote, should we all be “wide-eyed and open-minded enough to discover new areas for research.”

As the twenty-fifth anniversary report makes clear, however, the patterns of grant making at JTF have yet to reflect the global coverage that Sir John envisaged. By 2012 JTF had made 1,613 grants in North America, but only 9 in Latin America, 34 in Asia, and 25 in Africa. So in 2013 JTF staff engaged in strategic consultations on grant making in each of these three regions. The document you are reading was commissioned by JTF and a partner organization, the Issachar Fund, to explore and weigh the prospects for grant making in sub-Saharan Africa.

Across that vast region, with its scores of nations, hundreds of institutions of higher education, and thousands of community-based agencies, there have been only a handful of JTF-funded projects. Yet several themes under which the foundation makes grants would seem to find fertile ground for investigation in Africa, where religiosity is pervasive, higher education and business enterprise are growing rapidly, and many thoughtful inquirers seek answers to the puzzles of human flourishing.

In order to equip JTF and Issachar Fund (IF) officers to pursue work with African partners, an exploratory project was coordinated by the Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity, an agency of Calvin College. IF and JTF officers participated in a four-day

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3 The Issachar Fund, based in Grand Rapids, Michigan, “is a private operating foundation that serves the church by offering programs for scholars, leaders and organizations that seek to charitably engage, patiently reflect upon and thoughtfully dialogue with the norms, practices and values of our scientifically-minded culture.” [http://issacharfund.org/](http://issacharfund.org/)
consultation in Accra, Ghana, on August 11–14, 2013. They met with eighteen distinguished African leaders who came from the realms of anthropology, community development, geography, philosophy, physics, psychology, public health, theology, and a variety of Christian endeavors, including peace and reconciliation ministries, churches and denominations, and higher education. This meeting was co-convened by Lamin Sanneh of Yale University, Michael Murray of JTF, and Joel Carpenter of Calvin College.

The consultation was very productive. From it came nine areas of potential grant making:

1. African values: tradition, modernity, and the cultivation of virtue
2. African spirituality: traditional and contemporary
3. Forgiveness and reconciliation
4. Humanity, nature, and agency
5. Religious freedom and the rule of law
6. Character formation curricula and assessment
7. Positive psychology
8. Science, health, technology, and creation care

It is one thing to discover some germane and needful topics, but quite another to find agents and networks ready to do effective work. So the Nagel Institute staff has conducted a broad-ranging research effort to scout the relevant fields of inquiry, the scholars who work in them, and the institutions that host them. Nagel researchers have gained a sense of each topical field by asking:

- Who has been working in or near these fields already, and what is the character of their work?
- What is the status of the instruments for work in this field: journals, publishers, electronic media, networks, and agencies?
- What fields, institutions, and agents appear to be especially ready to mount projects?
- Are there agencies, either in Africa or the North Atlantic region, that are prepared to serve as intermediaries in order to advance these fields’ development?
- What is the funding context? Are there other major funders already at work in or near to these areas? Might some of these become partners? Are there specific funding lacunae that JTF or IF need to address?

This investigation became wide ranging, but it also has some important limitations. First, it became evident early on that given the vast amounts of intellectual and organizational territory we needed to cover, we could focus on research and scholarship or we could focus...
on the application of new insights to daily life. We chose the former option, with the understanding that while JTF and IF have supported work in both of these modes of endeavor, we could hope to find out more in a short time about how life’s big questions were addressed in research than in practical action. Even so, the investigations we read about frequently were observing the work of agents on the ground. So knowing about the state of inquiry in these fields is a good first step toward knowing the state of play in practical engagement.

Our second limitation was to focus on these questions largely within the context of Christian faith, thought, and practice. Sub-Saharan Africa is both intensely religious and religiously plural, with Christianity, Islam, and traditional African beliefs and practices constituting the three most widely followed faiths, in that order. Some studies that we found look at our nine themes and topics inter-religiously, especially focusing on how Christianity related to traditional religions. Studies of Islam, however, were more likely to stand alone, and were not so abundant in the region. We decided to focus on Christianity by and large and reserve a focus on Islam for future study.

How did we go about our search? We did initial investigating of two North Atlantic networks that regularly engage Africa: private philanthropies and university-based African studies programs. Most of our attention, however, has been focused on understanding the state of development, in Africa, of a variety of fields of study, and the extent to which they took up the nine topical areas identified in the Accra conference. The fields of study we investigated were:

- Theology
- Philosophy
- Anthropology
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Religious studies
- Development and environmental studies
- Higher education, including theological education

We pursued our search in three ways. First, we worked with some major database search engines, looking primarily for articles and books written by Africans in the topics and fields of inquiry listed above. We used the EBSCO, JStor, WorldCat, and ATLA research databases primarily for these purposes. Outside of ATLA, which covers theology and related fields, the results were fairly thin; JStor, for example, does not index many journals from Africa.

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4 We also surveyed the fields of economics and political science in search of work pertaining to our nine topical areas, but found little, so we decided not to include reports on them in the second chapter, on capabilities in relevant disciplines. Some of what we found in these disciplines, as well as in development studies, was incorporated into the “social science” section with sociology.
Fortunately, we were able to supplement this literature search by means of a very useful website, African Journals Online (AJOL), a nonprofit agency based in Grahamstown, South Africa. AJOL makes available more than 460 African-published journals that range across many fields, including the ones we identified. Here especially we saw the heart and center of African academic discourse.

Even so, we discovered that there are university-based and freestanding African journals that are not included in the AJOL database, and this led us to suspect that there might be additional dimensions to African research and scholarship that we might be missing via the standard “literature search.” After some hesitation, we decided to go straight to the web pages of African universities to assess the relative strength of their research and scholarship on our selected themes. We constructed a search of the more salient state-sponsored universities in sub-Saharan Africa, supplemented by a list of Christian universities on the continent. After checking the viability of these universities’ web pages and the accessibility of information on faculty research, we ended up with a working list of eighty-five African universities with which we could inspect the research and scholarship of university departments and faculty members. Searching the African university websites was exhausting, but it gives us confidence that we know African scholarly capacity in some detail.

In order to set our findings in context, we begin our report with an overview of higher education in sub-Saharan Africa, notably its universities and theological schools. Then we look at the relevant disciplines that carry on work in our selected topical areas. We trace their rise and development in sub-Saharan Africa, and we note their current status and capacities, their institutional networks, publication outlets, and thematic emphases. What might they bring to the topical areas we have selected?

What follows thereafter is the heart of this report—the state of the conversation in each of the nine topical areas we have selected. Some of these topical areas, we were surprised to discover, have very little intellectual activity to offer just now, while others are full and rich with decades of development behind them. Most intriguing, perhaps, are the areas where we see some lively pockets of investigation and conversation that seem ripe for development. Our recommendations will follow, and we will make the case for concerted grant-making initiatives in two areas, while giving mention to other areas where some exploratory work might prove rewarding.

At the report’s conclusion, we will sketch a vision for a longer-term, developmental approach to these recommended fields of inquiry.

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5 http://www.ajol.info/
I. African Higher Education

African Universities

Today there are some 1,500 tertiary institutes, colleges, and universities enrolling 11 million students across Africa, in which enrollments have nearly doubled since 1999. In the early 1960s, however, as new African nations were emerging, higher education was virtually nonexistent in many places. There were only 41 institutions and 16,500 students in all of Africa. African universities today are emerging from a turbulent half-century of existence. The immediate postcolonial context of the 1960s and early 1970s was an atmosphere of new beginnings and high hopes, with supportive governments and massive international investment in the form of foreign aid, philanthropic grant making, North-South interuniversity collaboration and co-accreditation, and hundreds of scholarships for undergraduate exchanges and fellowships for postgraduate professional development.

By the mid-1970s and throughout the 1980s, however, African universities suffered deep financial cuts as many countries experienced a crash of commodity prices and the rapid increase of energy prices, resulting in crippling national debts and austerity budgets. World Bank and IMF restructuring programs advised debtor nations to reallocate education spending from higher education to primary and secondary education. Political instability added to the universities’ woes as African nations in the 1980s experienced twenty-one successful coups, and authoritarian regimes became the norm. Rulers suspected their flagship universities of being hotbeds of subversion and slashed their budgets further while building new regional universities to serve favored constituencies. At the same time, European and North American government aid for African universities, which had amounted to scores of millions of dollars over the years, was being sharply curtailed, and so were some major philanthropic efforts. The Rockefeller Foundation, for example, ceased making comprehensive investments in the University of East Africa Project, including Makerere University and the universities of Nairobi and Daar es Salaam, which had amounted to $20 million from 1960 to 1980. Rockefeller actually increased its grant making in Africa in the 1990s, but much

6 Compare that total to that of India, which has a comparable total population—and roughly ten times as many higher education institutions!
8 Institutions in North Africa experienced many of the same dynamics as those in sub-Saharan Africa over the past fifty years, but the focus of this summary is tropical and southern Africa.
of it was focused on research projects rather than on capacity-building, and it was concentrated in two fields: medicine and agriculture.¹⁰

By 1990, even the finest of African universities were in crisis. Makerere University in Uganda, once the pride of East Africa, was in a sorry state. According to one report,

Makerere University exhibited in extreme form the resource constraints facing universities throughout Africa. No new physical structures had been built and no maintenance carried out in twenty years. Journal subscriptions had declined to zero, as had chemicals for science laboratories. Supplies of electricity and water were spasmodic, cooking and sewage facilities were stretched to their limit. Faculty members received the equivalent of US$30 per month and were forced by this so-called “leaving” wage to depart the country or seek any available paid employment for most of their day. Student numbers remained low, the government subsidy small and research output minimal. A “pillage” or survival culture prevailed which put at risk to private theft any saleable and removable item, from computers and telephones to electric wires and door fixtures—and sometimes the doors themselves! In a situation of limited transport, few if any working telephones, and the absence of needed equipment and stationery, it is remarkable that university managed to remain open throughout this period.¹¹

These problems continued throughout the 1990s, and to compound them, the World Bank and IMF-predicated emphasis on supporting primary and secondary education was resulting in a surging demand for tertiary enrollments. Governments acceded to political pressure and crowded more students into the older universities. To meet the unrelenting demand for increasing enrollments, many nations founded new regional institutions and upgraded older tertiary technical colleges to university status. By 2010 Nigeria, for example, had founded a total of fifty-one federal and state universities.¹² The pressures of popular demand for higher education, on a continent where fewer than 5 percent of the college-age young people are enrolled, have been relentless. They have added the burden of ever-increasing numbers of students to already damaged African academic institutions and systems. Because in most African nations the students paid no tuitions, and large portions of the national higher education budget was spent on student living stipends, more students did not necessarily mean more revenue for university instructional budgets.

¹⁰ James S. Coleman and David Court discuss these overarching grant-making patterns in University Development in the Third World (New York: Pergamon Press, 1993).
¹¹ Samoff and Carroll, 70.
As a result, African universities commonly experienced “serious shortages of published materials of books and journals, the lack of basic resources for teaching, the absence of simple laboratory equipment and supplies (such as chemicals) to do research and teaching, and, in some countries, delays of salary payments for months.” These conditions proved to be intolerable for thousands of African academics and exacerbated the “brain drain” syndrome as the continent exported talent to wealthier nations. As of a decade ago, according to one report, two-thirds of all instructional positions in Nigeria were declared vacant, and some 10,000 Nigerian academics were residing in the United States. Faculty members frequently went on strike for higher wages, while students protested inadequate services. It was becoming clear that the old social contract in higher education—which African governments inherited from the European colonial nations—had broken down. No longer could governments afford to offer free tuition and subsidies for room and board to all who qualified on their matriculation exams. And these problems were commonly aggravated by universities maintaining large and cumbersome non-academic staffs and infrastructure.

So what was to be done? In an important symbolic measure in 2001, the World Bank publicly relented on its policy of prioritizing primary education over university education, and it re-emphasized the critical role that universities play in national development. After years of relative neglect, international foreign aid programs, such as USAID and the Norwegians’ NORAD program, circled back to supporting higher-education initiatives in Africa. African governments also began to charter nongovernmental universities and technical schools. In Ghana, for example, there were just two private universities in 1999, but only a decade later there were 11, plus another 19 private polytechnic institutes. Their students totaled 28 percent of national tertiary enrollments. Over the same period, Nigeria chartered 41 private institutions. Of these, 21 are

17 *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise* (Washington: World Bank, 2000).
African public universities also began to incorporate some “privatizing” reform measures as well, such as charging modest tuitions on all students and differential tuitions for programs with heavy demand, such as business administration, engineering, and computer science. Private funders have stepped up as well; one prominent instance was the Partnership for Higher Education, involving seven major American foundations working with universities in nine African countries. Between 2000 and 2010, these foundations invested $440 million for core institutional development.

“Partnership,” indeed, has become the byword for the current era, as American and European universities’ schools and departments have formed bi- and multilateral working relationships that include faculty and student exchanges and support for research, innovative teaching, technical support and service initiatives at African institutions. Even if more stable governments have meant more predictable budgetary allotments, most African institutions still have little or no capacity via their regular funding sources to engage in these initiatives. But via a variety of focused and internationally funded initiatives, their faculty members and students found ways and means to engage in research and community service.

One of the largest drivers of research across the social sciences has been the massive infusion of funding to address Africa’s HIV/AIDS epidemic. Another huge industry across the continent is research consultancies in the social sciences. Hundreds of sociologists, anthropologists, social psychologists, development economists, and environmental studies professors do evaluation research as consultants to the legions of health care and economic development NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa.

So a visitor to an African university today will see a somewhat brighter picture than what was common even a decade ago. The newer private universities, many of them with church sponsorship, often enjoy attractive facilities, decent equipage, and peaceful and orderly student living. Some of them have developed faculties of distinction as well, such as at the Catholic University of East Africa in Nairobi and Covenant University near Lagos. At the University of Ghana, a flagship public university, one sees new dormitories going up and recently constructed

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20 The Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Kresge Foundation.
buildings for the schools of business, engineering, and agriculture. There are some decent computer labs, too, and even the older facilities now enjoy fresh paint, clean hallways, and neatened landscaping. There are an increased number of exchange students from North America and Europe. Professors have seen salary increases in recent years. And office buildings on the fringes of campus bear signage that reflects external partnerships. Yet the scars of the older crises remain. The libraries still look depleted. While some laboratories serving interuniversity partnerships or externally funded projects are well equipped, others lag behind. And many thousands of students crowd into the less well-funded social science and humanities programs because they cannot gain (or afford) admission into the favored programs, which charge differential tuitions. Professors still take on side jobs and take in boarders to make ends meet. And in August of 2013 the university’s semester was again disrupted by a two-week faculty strike over pay that had fallen in arrears.

In South Africa, however (as this report will note more than once), the situation is rather different. The nation’s higher education system emerged from the apartheid era in the mid-1990s with some three dozen universities that were highly stratified in basic standards and quality as well as in race. In the universities created solely for Blacks, mostly situated in the remote “homeland areas” of the nation, the struggle against apartheid had resulted in major disruptions of education in institutions that were already quite fragile. In the flagship institutions designed for white students, such as the University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University, standards and structures looking to northern Europe prevailed, even though they were damaged by European and American academic boycotts.

The new, multiracial government mandated major changes in the South African university system, such as shrinking the overall number of universities to twenty-three by merging some of the black institutions with predominantly white ones. Other reforms included affirmative action enrollment and hiring programs and giving priority to programs that were deemed most likely to feed national economic development, such as those in science, information technology, engineering, and applied mathematics. Many social science and humanities programs have contracted, and pressure has been exerted on the university faculties of (Christian) theology to serve a broader clientele under a “religious studies” rubric. As a result of these dynamics, remarked one of the nation’s most distinguished academic leaders, higher education remains “one of the most contested terrains in post-apartheid South Africa, spanning across a broad spectrum of interests and imperatives.”


Nevertheless, we found that South African university faculties in our targeted fields are outproducing the best of faculties in other African nations. Eighty-five of the 468 journals listed at African Journals Online are South African, and a number of the nation’s best journals are not listed there because they are regularly available via the major global North databases. South African educators rue the fact that only 16 percent of their nation’s college-age young people enroll, but this is nearly five times the continental average. South Africa is a remarkable power base in African higher education and scholarship.

**Theological Education in Africa**

Christianity is one of the most dynamic forces on the African continent today. Its current position as the majority religion of sub-Saharan Africa is really quite recent. In 1900, there were only about 9 million Christians in all of Africa. A half-century later, near the end of the colonial era, this number had tripled, to about 30 million. By 1970, the number of Christians nearly quadrupled, to over 117 million. Today the number has more than quadrupled again, to an estimated 520 million Christians in Africa. Christianity in Africa is amazingly varied. The Roman Catholic Church is the largest Christian communion on the continent and is growing robustly in many nations, especially in Anglophone Africa, where it had no colonial privileges. There are also many millions of Orthodox believers (mainly in Ethiopia and Egypt), members of historic Protestant denominations derived from European origins (e.g., Methodists, Mennonites, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Anglicans), revivalist evangelicals with American links (e.g., Assemblies of God, Church of the Nazarene, and various Baptists), and many millions worshipping in African-instituted churches, of both the older Zionist and Spiritualist varieties and the newer African Pentecostal movements.

Specialized theological and ministerial education is a quite recent phenomenon. There were only a handful of pastoral education programs or theological schools across Africa—perhaps 70 or 80—in 1950 when the International Missionary Council surveyed the situation. By the mid-1970s, however, there were about 350 theological schools on the continent. Today the most comprehensive directory lists 1,468 institutions. African instituted and Pentecostal churches’ ministerial training is quite fluid and dynamic, as there are new pastoral and lay training institutes springing up all around, many of them founded


by new urban megachurches and operated on the premises. The Perez Chapel, for example, a newly constructed megachurch complex near Accra, Ghana, operates the Word Miracle Ministerial College.

Seminaries, Bible colleges, and training institutes, however, are not the only places where Christian theology is studied. Universities in some African nations, both state- and church-founded, have faculties of theology, most notably in South Africa’s state universities and in a number of Francophone nations’ Catholic universities. Other universities have faculties of religious studies, sometimes combined with philosophy. Unlike their counterparts in the United States, however, these religious studies courses are frequently taught not on religiously neutral terms but with normative “insider” perspectives: as Christian theology, traditional religious practice, or Islamic law. While these courses were originally designed to educate teachers of religion for nations’ primary and secondary schools, in some universities the majority of the degree students in the “Christian studies” tracks are pastors of Pentecostal and other revivalist churches.

Like African universities, these various theological and pastoral studies institutions have operated under straitened circumstances. Even with rapid church growth, they have had to endure in cash-poor contexts and serve students who could not bear much of the operating costs. Sponsoring churches have a great need to increase the numbers of educated clergy but very limited means to support increased enrollments. So typically these institutions have remained small and unable to benefit from economies of scale. Student-faculty ratios of only five or six to one are not uncommon, even while the faculty members might need to teach five or six subjects per term to cover the curriculum. Libraries have been chronically undersupplied; a study published in 1990 found that the average-sized theological library had fewer than 5,000 volumes, while only 2 percent of the continent’s theological libraries held 15,000 volumes or more. In Francophone Africa, the Protestant institutions tend to be fewer and farther apart, and even less well equipped. A survey of these schools in 2011 revealed that “unlike the Catholic institutions, the Protestant


32 Bowers, “New Light.”
ones are marked by abject poverty in key domains: infrastructures, academic staff, libraries, research and publication.” Internet access has come slowly across the continent; most theological institutions now have connections, but service can be slow, many places experience power outages, and students must wait to use lab computers or to plug their laptops into wired outlets. Western database sources for journal articles and e-books, such as JStor and ATLA, have become available to institutions across the continent at highly discounted rates or for free, but in some settings, local network servers were not powerful enough to run them.

The main theme that runs across recent reviews of African theological teaching and curriculum has been relevance, in the broadest sense of the term. Syllabi, textbooks, and instructors and their education often bear the marks of Euro-American contexts, even while the number and percentage of expatriate instructors in Africa continue to decline. Meanwhile African pastors are expected to guide parishioners’ spiritual navigation at the confluence of old and new in African cultures, and to provide civic leadership in turbulent times. For two or three generations now, African Christian theologians have yearned for and pursued genuinely African modes of theological thinking and learning. Yet due to the difficulties of publishing, convening, and collaborating, these conversations seem to have lost some traction in recent years. Those who have the advanced education and critical skills to work out new patterns of thinking and learning seldom have the time or space to do it. The harvest is plentiful and the laborers are few, so the most talented academics often have several church-appointed tasks and are called on to be administrative leaders, too.

Even so, the African theological education scene looks quite different now than it did twenty years ago. One huge change was the opening up, after the end of apartheid, of South African university faculties of theology to increasing numbers of students from other nations. The faculties at the University of KwaZulu Natal and Stellenbosch especially have welcomed international postgraduate students, and so has the University of South Africa (UNISA), the massive distance education agency whose theology faculty has well over one

Those who have the advanced education and critical skills to work out new patterns of thinking and learning seldom have the time or space to do it.

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34 See, e.g., Isabel Apawo Phiri and Dietrich Werner, “Editorial: Handbook of Theological Education in Africa,” in *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa*, xxvii–xxix. This new handbook is an astonishingly broad and comprehensive resource, with 113 articles, 100 contributors, and 1,100 pages. It was co-sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the All Africa Council of Churches and published in the Studies in Global Christianity series of Regnum Books.
hundred members, making it undoubtedly one of the largest in the world. Catholic theological institutes and Catholic university theology faculties have made major strides in capacity and scholarly productivity. And a number of Protestant theological schools outside of South Africa, mostly of the more conservative evangelical kind, have developed doctoral programs.\textsuperscript{35}

A surprising new factor in African theological education has been the founding of fifty or more new Christian universities in the past twenty years.\textsuperscript{36} Most of these, Catholic and Protestant, have faculties of theology. Indeed, at least a dozen of them are built on the foundations of older theological schools. Two prominent examples are St. Paul’s University in Kenya, built out from St. Paul’s Theological College, a century-old ecumenical Protestant seminary, and Uganda Christian University, built upon the old Bishop Tucker (Anglican) Theological College. These more comprehensive Christian universities are worrisome to veteran theological educators, who fear secularization because of the preponderance of “secular” subjects. Yet the new universities, each with several thousand tuition-paying students, have made the continuing faculties of theology much more sustainable, even more robust. St. Paul’s faculty of theology enrolls only 300 of the university’s 3,000 students, but this is twice as many divinity students as it enrolled in the old days as a freestanding theological college.\textsuperscript{37} Another critically important result of this move from seminary to university has been the development in some of these new universities of more advanced programs of theological studies, including for the PhD degree.\textsuperscript{38}

**Conclusion**

African universities and theological schools have been through some critical times, and many still show the after-effects. Yet one sees improved general standards of institutional support for teaching and learning and an increase of scholarly engagement and productivity. And South African institutions, despite the issues they contend with, are by far the strongest. Even so, the pressures on professors caused by low pay, heavy teaching loads, intermittent disruptions, and scarcity of research and teaching resources are important factors in how one designs and conducts grant-making for intellectual projects in Africa.

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\textsuperscript{38} See, e.g., Esther Mombo and John Chesworth, “From St. Paul’s Divinity School to St. Paul’s University—A Story of Theological Education from Kenya,” *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa*, 893–901.
II. Capabilities in Relevant disciplines

Given the trials and limitations of higher education in sub-Saharan Africa, it is all too easy to dwell on the problems. Yet our explorations of African universities and of African theological discourse revealed something more heartening as well. Not everywhere, but in many places we saw individuals and clusters of scholars who were vigorously engaged in scholarly projects. It is humbling to see how much some scholars have been able to achieve, given the obstacles they face. The proliferation of publishing outlets that we discovered at African Journals Online was one indicator of this vigor, and once we explored the websites of various university faculties, we found even more evidence of scholarly initiative. We turn next to the contexts for that evidence: the disciplinary fields of inquiry we identified as the likely sites for work in the nine areas on which this study focuses.

Anthropology

With potential grant-making interests in African values, spirituality, health, character, and concepts of humanity, this project simply had to inquire into the state of anthropology in Africa. The story, we found out, is a complicated one, owing to the particular roles that anthropology played in colonial Africa and the debates that have erupted around it in postcolonial times. Yet the field is showing new resourcefulness as African practitioners find the ways and means to make their contributions to “social knowledge and social reform” in contemporary Africa.39

Africa has been central to the development of anthropology as a discipline. Ever since the cultural observations of colonial-era travelers, traders, soldiers, and missionaries began to attract the interest of Victorian-era intellectuals, Africa and Africans were prime subject matter. By the early twentieth century, anthropology was developing into a concerted academic discipline with scholarly institutes, a place within European universities, and its own theoretical disputes. By the 1940s and 1950s there were research centers on the African

continent as well, funded by colonial regimes and helping to shape colonial governmental and social policies.\textsuperscript{40} Ironically, some of the first Africans to receive advanced education in anthropology, including Kwame Nkrumah, founding president of Ghana, and Jomo Kenyatta, first president of independent Kenya, found ways to use anthropology to discover and reclaim an African identity over against colonialism. Even so, many postcolonial African intellectuals have condemned anthropology as an essentially colonialist enterprise of studying African societies in order to control them and disparaging them as “primitive” and “tribal.”\textsuperscript{41}

Yet the discipline has survived in African universities, often as a subunit in departments of sociology.\textsuperscript{42} And in recent years, the other social sciences have made way for it is a means of addressing national developmental interests in health care, education, wealth creation, and ethnicity. The advice provided by other social scientists about institutional and economic processes and structures was still leaving questions of why some developmental efforts succeeded and others failed. Could it be a matter of cultural values or worldviews? Then call for the anthropologist!\textsuperscript{43}

Unlike the still-large and very influential “Africanist” realm of European and North American anthropologists who study Africa, Africans in anthropology tend toward practical approaches and show a strong commitment to acquire knowledge for the sake of social improvement. African anthropologists are often sharply critical of their “Africanist” counterparts, who are much better supported by research funding and who might use knowledgeable African graduate students and postdocs to staff their projects. Yet the Africanists from the global North rarely share credits equally with their African co-laborers in the final “theoretical” phase of project analysis and publication. Western debates about

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{40} See, e.g., Lyn Schumaker, \textit{Africanizing Anthropology: Fieldwork, Networks, and the Making of Cultural Knowledge in Central Africa} (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001). It tells the story of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) in the 1950s.
\item \textsuperscript{43} See, e.g., a summative contribution to such a project made by one of Africa’s most distinguished anthropologists, Paul Nchoji Nkwi: “The Impact of Cultural Practices on the Spread of HIV/AIDS: An Anthropological Study of Selected Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa,” \textit{Discovery and Innovation} 17 (2005): 21–35.
\end{itemize}
theory advance, say African critics, but of what benefit is that to the people of Africa? In South Africa, where anthropology once supplied knowledge to the apartheid regime and where much of the research and argumentation continues to follow “Africanist” patterns, these tensions are very much in play.

African anthropology has persisted, both through all of these critical attacks and through the turbulent and penurious recent history of African universities. Low salaries, overcrowded classes, lack of access to even basic teaching tools and supplies and research literature, much less travel and research funding, has driven many African anthropologists out of academe or overseas. Others who have stayed on have “drifted into consultancy work with international organizations.” This kind of research, featuring tightly framed funding periods and succinct, to-the-point reports, is not conducive to the traditional anthropological modes of multiyear field research sojourns and careful and nuanced “deep description.” Even so, it affords African anthropologists the opportunities to make contributions to the health, education, economic development, and good governance of their nations that they so desire to make. In the past 25 years, African anthropologists have taken the initiative to surmount some of the isolation many feel from fellow Africans with the formation of the Pan African Anthropological Association (PAAA), founded in Cameroon in 1989 and holding annual meetings since. PAAA began publishing the African Anthropologist in 1995, which in 2005 was taken into the formidable Council for the Development of Social Science in Africa (CODESRIA), in Dakar, where it is now available free online.

In sum, African anthropology seems to be on an upward trajectory regarding its university enrollments, and it now has an enduring, viable network in the PAAA. Yet it is rarely organized into single-discipline faculties in African universities; its dedicated journals on the continent are few; and thus the dissemination of anthropologists’ research is scattered

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Engaging Africa

across the scores of interdisciplinary journals on the continent and beyond. Research opportunities in anthropology are more promising than in the recent past, but they are more dependent than ever on serving projects in health care, community economic development, education, and environmental protection. African anthropologists have found ways to be useful and to serve the needs of national development, but their research and intellectual traditions and cultures have been seriously cramped.

For the sake of the topical fields for potential grant making that this study is assessing, African anthropology’s pattern of widespread consultancies is actually an asset. Anthropologists have become accustomed to participating in interdisciplinary teams. “African Values,” as we shall see, are treated in rather essentialist terms by philosophers and psychologists; they would benefit from the anthropologists’ resolutely local and particular emphases: Which Africans’ values? In what place? Under what circumstances? Likewise, further work on “African spirituality,” often conducted by religious studies scholars, would benefit from these tests of generality as well. Philosophers’ inquiries into African ontology, epistemology, and agency already draw on anthropological work, but it probably could stand some serious updating. The same is true for African Christian theology, whose literature on “inculturation” tends to harken back to traditional and rural societies rather than to the contemporary African scene, where increasingly the anthropologists are now working. And for work at the juncture of faith and science, particularly in health and healing and creation care, anthropologists are already proving their worth in relevant projects across the continent.

But how amenable is the field to hosting an initiative of its own? The one significant network and potential organizing base for something more concerted in anthropology per se is the PAAA and its journal, *African Anthropology*. Evidence from prior PAAA initiatives, most notably its masterful anthology, *African Anthropologies: History, Critique and Practice* (2006), suggests that any such initiative would benefit greatly from the cooperation of CODESRIA, arguably the most influential international scholarly center on the continent.

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50 Full bibliographic citation available in fn 39, above.
The study of psychology in African universities made a slow start as a discipline. In Ghana, for example, teacher training colleges offered courses in counseling and school psychology in the early twentieth century, but the University of Ghana offered its first course in 1963, within the department of sociology. Five years later, it became an independent academic discipline there. According to A. Bame Nsamenang’s 1995 historical survey of the field, “Even by the mid-1980s not more than 20 African universities had a psychology department, and less than 10 had a history of research that extended beyond 10 years … Whereas post-graduate studies in psychology began in Zambia in 1984, the University of Yaounde, Cameroon, still offers psychology as a minor under philosophy.”51 Today, however, psychology has grown in popularity and availability across the continent. Of the African universities in our search, 41 percent had faculties or departments of psychology.

Psychology, like other disciplines, suffered through the trials of African universities in the 1980s and 1990s. The environment for research was daunting indeed, since conferences were rare and travel costs could exceed monthly pay; scientific societies were not strong and did not exist in many nations. In Zambia, the psychological association went five years at one stretch without meeting. In Cameroon, another such national society, founded in 1987, had not met once, as of a year ago.52 Many nations, even ones with rather vigorous university psychology programs, still do not have state-mandated programs of licensure and accountability for clinical or counseling practice.53 Lack of basic infrastructure such as secretarial support or computing technology made research more difficult, as did the inability of libraries to sustain journal subscriptions. Research topics “were often chosen by convenience rather than according to correct sampling methods and scientific rigour.” As a result the research scene by the mid-1990s was “remarkable by its uncoordinated, uninteresting, and stereotyped nature.”54

For those who did manage to have interesting discoveries to report, the selection of journals focusing on African research has remained fairly thin. African Journals Online lists sixteen journals in the psychology and psychiatry category, but of these, three are psychiatric in nature (treatment of mental illness), eight are on interdisciplinary topics that sometimes include African psychology articles (e.g., the *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*), and


52 Nsamenang, “Cameroon Black Psychologists,” 308.


that leaves only five focused on psychology per se. Of these, two are from South Africa and three are from Nigeria. Several others appearing on the list have evidently ceased publication.\textsuperscript{55} Even so, African psychologists with findings and reflections to convey have found publishing outlets. Some published in journals situated in Asia/Pacific regions. Others found their way into the burgeoning world of independently organized (for profit?) pay-to-publish online journals, some accessible through the standard database indexes, others not. And some who gain the attention of Western scholars write invited chapters for edited volumes. The result, therefore, even for those who are energetic in research and publication, is a scattering and hiding of knowledge and a great difficulty in sustaining a community of conversation.

In spite of these problems, psychology has continued to grow as a university course of study in various parts of Africa. It is one of the most popular courses in Ghana, say professors there. At the University of Ghana, with a total of 30,000 students, 4,000 are psychology majors.\textsuperscript{56} In South Africa, all 17 public universities offer psychology, and it claims 12 percent of all students enrolled in the humanities and social sciences.\textsuperscript{57} Nigeria seems to be the one place outside of South Africa that has a vigorous, multi-institutional research, teaching, and associational web of discourse. Nigerian federal universities—Ibadan, Ilorin, and Obafemi Awolowo—all sponsor journals, and their faculty members in psychology report many publications. Covenant University, a Pentecostal institution founded near Lagos in 2002 and now with some 7,000 students, names 15 faculty members in psychology, including 12 who list multiple publications.

Psychology in South Africa provides both contrasts and continuities. The discipline there had a very early start, with the first professors of psychology appearing at the universities of Stellenbosch and Cape Town in 1917 and 1920, respectively. The field grew rapidly and has been increasingly robust, with a strong practical uptake in education, management, and health care. South Africa has a highly developed and state-regulated professional counseling practice, several sources of robust government funding for psychological research,


longtime national associations of psychologists with well-attended annual meetings, and long-running journals. But until very recently, whites dominated the field, and it was more attuned to trends in Europe and the United States than in Africa. And during the apartheid regime, some of its early luminaries were important advisors for government racist policies in education, labor and social relations more generally.\(^{58}\)

During the years of struggle against apartheid, deep divisions grew in the South African profession between those whose research had backed the apartheid regime (or perhaps politely dissented but still enjoyed its privileges) and those who sided with the black people in their struggle. The national professional association split over the issue of admitting black members in the 1960s, and a third “alternative” association grew up to promote what it called “critical psychology.” This outlook has endured and it calls the profession to “transcend narrow positivist scientific imprisonment and offer a more African face to South Africa.” It also critiqued psychology’s “Eurocentric and individualistic … supreme ’I’ running counter to the ‘we’ that most African communities have historically embraced.”\(^{59}\)

Indeed, this issue of how to “Africanize” psychology has resonated across Africa, from Dakar to Nairobi to the Cape. How can a field conceived in Europe and rapidly advanced in North America, which has been characterized as the “science of the individual,” hope to make a difference in Africa? Africans are not noticeably individualistic, and “science” assumes objectivity, neutrality, and universality. Yet this field of inquiry, like so many from the global North, is deeply inculturated there. It is a creation of the post-Enlightenment rationalism, individualism, and secularity of that realm in the modern era. So across Africa, many psychologists voice a protest that there must be a way to make an African psychology that works from a distinctly African ontology and epistemology, and with a spiritually charged worldview.\(^{60}\) Hear, for example, Prof. Nsamenang, an eminent early childhood developmental psychologist from the University of Yaounde, Cameroon:

> Psychology is an ethnocentric science, cultivated mainly in the developed world and then exported to sub-Saharan Africa … [where] training, research, and practice are driven by Eurocentric theories, epistemologies, and methods [that] undermine, ignore, or exclude folk psychology and local issues. Africa has her own frames of reference and social reality; these differ in some remarkable ways from the Euro-American. Efforts to indigenize psychology or to use

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\(^{59}\) Cooper, “Africanizing South African Psychology,” 220.

it to solve the multiple problems Africa faces have merely begun, and need to be hastened.  

So how is the “Africanizing” project doing around Africa? According to a noted South African observer, Johann Louw, the quest “remains an elusive one. Despite regular calls to develop such forms of psychology … this endeavor struggles to get off the ground. The future of this movement remains open-ended, and difficult to call.”  

What we have seen in our continent-wide search, however, is that African psychologists are not simply calling for change anymore but taking steps to do and see things differently. Prof. Nsamenang, who directs the Human Development Resource Centre, a research and service facility in Bamenda, Cameroon, cites a variety of his own studies on African children’s cognitive development, and those conducted by others elsewhere, to suggest that there are empirical building blocks to use, garnered from carefully conceived field research, to investigate “specific domains of psychosocial development” and attempt “Africentric measures of cognitive abilities or intelligences.” And at the University of Nigeria’s Enugu campus in the 1990s, a team of psychologists developed a counseling therapy patterned after the methods that they had observed with local healers, which they called “Harmony Restoration Therapy.” This therapy took seriously the experiences felt by many patients that the various life forces that moved in and through them were out of balance, and they sought to restore them in harmonious relationship. In a recent special issue of *IFE PsychologIA*, a journal published by a psychological study center in Ile-Ife, we noticed that another Nigerian team was proposing a measurement scale to assist in such therapy. Evidently the therapeutic experiment worked well enough for Nigerian psychologists to continue to use it.  

Across the continent we see active, engaged psychologists, teaching large and growing numbers of students, experimenting with ways to “Africanize” their discipline, and developing, here and there, the methods and materials to do such work. They face continuing frustrations operationally and they put up with spotty, disjointed communication. But it seems that there are enough creative clusters of scholars who with some convening, encouragement, and support could make progress in understanding African values, perceptions, and behavior and make a valuable and enduring contribution to the broader world of inquiry into the human psyche. In looking at their publications and bibliographies, however, it seems clear that not only is it a struggle to engage the conversations in psychology, but they have limited knowledge of what other African scholars are doing in related fields:

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religion, anthropology, and philosophy. What citations they do make in these fields reflect a process of gleaning from what (or who) might be close at hand. We believe they could profit from more intensive exposure to what these other fields are engaging in their parallel quests to map the traits of "African minds" and enduringly robust African religiosities.

**Philosophy**

The field of academic philosophy in Africa also has been dominated by a quest for African authenticity. Philosophy was commonly taught, mostly by European expatriates, in the new colleges and universities that began to spring up in mid-twentieth-century Africa—sometimes in “classics” departments that included Greco-Roman literature, and sometimes in departments of religion and theology. The emerging generation of nationalist intellectuals in Africa, however, was eager to ask new questions of philosophy. The great challenge, African philosophers believed, was to find out whether pre-colonial Africa had traditions of wisdom and critical thinking that would enable them to remake philosophy along authentically African lines. This seemed critical to them at a time when they were declaring their independence from European colonizers. Just as the African anthropologists claimed some early nationalist heroes as their progeny, so too the philosophers: Leopold Senghor of Senegal and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. Each of these founding heads of state proclaimed a national “philosophy” harkening back to traditional African values, notably Senghor’s embrace of “Negritude” or Nyerere’s familial socialism, “Ujamaa.”

At the heart of a seventy-year conversation about the meaning and mission of “African philosophy” has been a built-in ambiguity in the meaning of philosophy itself. On the one hand, says Bruce Janz, an American participant-observer of the African scene, philosophy “designates … a set of reflective practices rooted in culture and reason, which rigorously and critically explicate a life-world, and on the other a discipline in the university, with a set of codes, standards, recognized practitioners, and customs.” More than any other world site of this discipline, Janz argues, “African philosophy has struggled with the similarities and differences between these two senses of philosophy. For some, there can be no philosophy without the disciplinary structures … . For others, there can be no disciplinary structure without critical engagement in a life-world… .”

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This postcolonial quest for African philosophical identity was at heart a struggle for legitimacy. European anthropologists and other intellectuals had been asserting, well into the twentieth century, that Africans were generally incapable of rational thought. But in *Bantu Philosophy* (1944), Father Placide Tempels, a Franciscan missionary to the Belgian Congo, argued that the people of the Congo had a coherent philosophy, which he extracted from myths, proverbs, and folk stories. This “ethnophilosophical” approach gained a fairly strong early following and was emulated by a pioneering generation of African philosophers and theologians, such as Alexis Kagame of Rwanda, Bolaji Idowu of Nigeria, and John Mbiti of Kenya.\(^67\)

It did not take long, however, before other African philosophers began to raise objections to these views. Was this really philosophy? Europeans had premodern popular oral traditions too, but these did not count as philosophy. Philosophy had some necessary tools and methods—it was analytical, critical, and systematic. Folk wisdom is just handed-down tradition; it is not self-critical or dialogical, they argued. And could one have philosophy without the kinds of precision that come with putting arguments to paper—texts and literary traditions? A French-educated philosopher from Benin, Paulin Hountondji, was particularly sharp in his criticism. Any African philosophy worthy of the name should draw from “the tradition of scientific discourse as a recorded, systematized, and integrated form of knowledge.”\(^68\) By contrast, he argued, Tempels’ “ethnophilosophy” represented uncritical, static tradition, not philosophy. If Africans wanted to compete with the rest of the world in this realm, Hountondji insisted, they had better get on with the modern, scientific enterprise. African philosophy, he argued, was Africans doing modern philosophy according to established international norms.\(^69\)

A number of African philosophers took up this challenge. Odera Oruka of the University of Nairobi employed a rather creative approach. He developed a more nuanced kind of ethnological approach that sought out African traditional philosophers. He looked for those who were doing more than merely passing on traditional wisdom. Even while still working in oral traditions, they were interrogating these traditions, sifting through them analytically and developing a more critical approach in their search for wisdom. Oruka called them “sages” and began to develop, in dialogue with a number of them, what he argued was an

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indigenously grounded humanistic philosophy. He acquired many critics, however, who said that the ideas that emerged in these dialogues were more his ideas than his partners’ and that none of his sages were in fact purely immersed in tradition, without modern influences.\textsuperscript{70} Even so, Oruka has been influential and deeply appreciated in his home environs of East Africa.\textsuperscript{71}

Another school of African philosophizing took Houtondji’s critique to heart but also wanted to anchor their work in African culture. They employed the methods of linguistic and conceptual analysis from Anglo-American analytic philosophy to interpret basic philosophical concepts in indigenous African languages. One classic study of this sort was Ghanaian Kwasi Wiredu’s analysis of the concept of truth in the Akan language.\textsuperscript{72} Others following this principally West African school of linguistic-analytical philosophy include the Ghanaian Kwame Gyekye and Nigerians Olesugun Oladipo and Sophie Oluwole.\textsuperscript{73} This school of thought was not without its critics, mainly to the point that it seemed to be trying to extract timeless and noncontextual meanings from language, which is notoriously contextual, pliant, and susceptible to change.\textsuperscript{74}

A fourth approach in recent African philosophy has been the application of hermeneutical methods favored in continental European and postmodern philosophy. It seeks a deeper understanding of texts and artifacts by interpreting their social and historical contexts, and uncovering layers and nuances of meaning that are often concealed within symbols. Instead of uncritically accepting ancient African wisdom, or seeking to capture the essence of this or that concept, this approach can show the dialectical and constructed nature of older narratives and artifacts. These are, say the hermeneutists, products of reflection and critical debate. To insist, as the early twentieth-century anthropologists and philosophers did, that African cultural expressions were the products of uncritical minds, is absurd.


\textsuperscript{72} Kwasi Wiredu, \textit{Philosophy and an African Culture} (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980).


\textsuperscript{74} Owolabi, “The Quest for Method,” 150–151.
absurd. Some of the proponents of this field are the Eritrean Tsenay Serequeberhan75 and the Nigerians Theophilus Okere76 and Raphael Madu.77

Given the mandates of this study, one must be curious about the institutional conditions under which these lively debates and scholarly achievements have taken place, but the philosophers are unusually quiet about their habitation. We did find one extended discussion of it, however, now more than fifteen years old, but still illuminating, offered by Moses Akin Makinde, now emeritus professor of philosophy at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. In terms now familiar to the reader, he described the “great enthusiasm” of philosophy’s early days, through the late 1970s. Nigeria, he said, was especially a philosophical hotbed with several journals and several strong departments of philosophy. But following military coups, inflation, and austerity budgets, conditions worsened, most of the expatriates left, and many of the more accomplished Nigerians were being drained off too. By 1990, Makinde says, “there were not more than six” senior professors of philosophy left in the nation.78 At his university, he was the only full professor to stay on. During the 1990s, journals came and went. Regional and continent-wide philosophical associations, once active with annual meetings and publishing journals, were dying too. In 1998, as he spoke, neither the Nigerian Philosophical Association nor the Philosophical Association of Kenya “were in good health,” and they seemed to be “as good as forgotten.”79 Similar conditions hindered the discipline elsewhere, and so at least half of the leading philosophers cited above left Africa for posts in the United States.

Things are a bit better now. Thought and Practice, the Kenyan association’s journal, is operating again after a publishing hiatus and is accessible through African Journals Online. Several more journals have sprung up, including Sophia: An African Journal of Philosophy, published by the University of Calabar in Nigeria. Yet the volatility continues. Quest, a philosophical journal published from the University of Zambia since 1987, ran into hard times and finally accepted support from abroad, moving its offices to the University of Leiden, Netherlands, in 2002. Even so, it went into hiatus in 2009, opening again only by the fall of 2013. And the Journal of Philosophy and Culture, a new venture starting in 2002 at the University of Cape Coast, in Ghana, ceased publication in 2006 after publishing only four volumes. These journals have been available electronically, but more common even today is the locally published journal, not circulated far beyond its own home university,


on an irregular schedule.\(^{80}\) With all of this volatility, it is remarkable that the philosophical enterprise continues across the continent.

The philosophical endeavor hums along in South Africa, despite national mandates to favor the disciplines deemed most “useful” for national economic development and the continuing decline of enrollments in the humanities. Once again, as in other fields of inquiry, South African philosophers follow a different agenda than their counterparts elsewhere in the continent. The *South African Journal of Philosophy*, the discipline’s premier national journal, perhaps with these national higher education mandates in mind, seems in recent issues to lean toward social ethics and political thought—and not at all in “disinterested” terms. Authors offer sharply critical perspectives on national mandates and social debates. In recent years the journal has been publishing more articles by persons of color. *Philosophical Papers*, another South African journal, now copublished by UNISA Press and an international for-profit publisher, Taylor & Francis, couldn’t be more different. It publishes articles mostly by authors with European surnames and on topics that give no hint of an African provenance.

That kind of approach, presuming the universality and centrality of Western philosophical approaches and topics, is a far cry from the main thrust of African philosophy. If there is one feature that is true of African philosophy, at least as it is pursued north of the Limpopo River, it is that ideas and reasoning are situated; they cannot be separated from their contexts. They see this to be as true for philosophy as for anthropology or psychology. If African philosophy can manage to consolidate its gains and enjoy a steady state of discourse, perhaps that is its gift to philosophy worldwide: It is determined to be critically engaged in the culture that gives it life.\(^{81}\)

**Social Science (Primarily Sociology)**

The career of the social sciences in Africa has been deeply entwined with the hopes and travails of the continent. The field, both in its history and its self-understanding, exists to address social problems and to propose reforms of society and governance. If anthropologists were thought to be the servants of the European colonizers, originally hired by them to develop the knowledge of rural and traditional Africa needed to rule it, the sociologists were eager to serve the new national governments by helping them address

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\(^{80}\) For evidence of this situation, see the list of African philosophy journals located in the “African Philosophy Resources” website of Prof. Bruce B. Janz of the University of Central Florida: [http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~janzb/afphil/afjour.htm](http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~janzb/afphil/afjour.htm).

\(^{81}\) We are indebted here to Prof. Janz, who closes his fine overview of the field (cited above in fn 66) with such thoughts.
the problems of national development, using their tools for analyzing societies in order to move them in modernizing directions. National unity and rapid social, economic, and political development were the orders of the day, and early on, the new national universities of Africa rapidly developed departments of sociology to form the line of march. In Nigeria, for example, the University of Ibadan developed a separate unit for sociologists in 1960, and the new University of Nigeria at Nsukka, formed in partnership with Michigan State University, founded the first department of sociology in the new nation that same year. The Ford and Rockefeller foundations generously supported these and other pioneering social scientists’ postgraduate education overseas, mostly in the United States and Canada. In these heady early years, social scientists were confident that their studies of extreme poverty, changing mores, governance, and education would result in policies that would help build their new nations.

Early on, African social scientists resonated quite positively with the “nonaligned” socialist ideologies of many of the new national regimes, appropriating Marxian theory to critique the colonizers and resist “neocolonial” attempts to maintain control of Africa. The social scientists often were apologists for the state, arguing for one-party rule as a more authentically African, consensual model of governance and for the need for impoverished nations to forgo the “decision costs” of working in more democratic modes. The new governments saw the universities’ social science departments as the training grounds for the new technocrats who would staff their government ministries and the formal economy, but, says the Malawian-born historian Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, they succeeded too quickly, given that the national scale was in most places far too small to continue to absorb more graduates each year. And as we have seen, things fell apart. Economic growth began to slow and even reverse as commodity prices fell; leaders became more authoritarian and corrupt, and military coups put dictators into power; while in the 1980s and 1990s austerity budgets were put in place, precipitating a crisis of sustainability in the universities. Says Zeleza, these changes served to “undermine the autonomy of academics and the capacities of the universities to support basic research.”

So how did social scientists manage in the “lost years” of the 1980s and 1990s? Professors became increasingly critical of their governments, and in a number of places, they paid dearly for it. In Senegal, sociology was banned for a time. In Malawi, political science was banned. If President Banda was the font of all wisdom for governance, what need was there

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for political science? In other places, certain research themes, such as the one-party state, were declared off-limits. Salaries remained static while inflation roared; in Nigeria, faculty saw no wage hikes in six years while inflation climbed over 100 percent. In Ghana, a full professor took home only about $183 per month in 1994. At the same time, enrollments continued to climb, and professors found much less time or energy between their teaching loads and moonlighting to maintain their professional capacities. The Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association, which had been launched in 1971 with a journal following in 1974, had difficulty sustaining regular meetings and publications. Evidently the association managed to meet only four times between 1989 and 2010, and its journal was published “from time to time subject to the availability of funds.”

Governmental leaders had become suspicious of academics, and officials relied increasingly on expatriate experts to consult on development models and evaluative research. Thousands of social scientists left their teaching posts—some for nonacademic work, some for more lucrative posts in petro-states nearby, and many for Europe and the United States. A World Bank study in 2000 estimated that one-third of Africa’s most highly qualified professionals were living abroad.

The majority has stayed on, however, and has shown remarkable resilience and resourcefulness. As state support diminished in the 1990s, the role of foreign donors increased rapidly. Funding for research, conferences, equipment, books, and project direction came principally from foreign aid agencies and private foundations. In the 1990s alone, the Ford Foundation spent nearly $53 million in 15 African countries. This was largely for applied research—policy studies organized by NGOs and economic development research. The “golden rule,” as Africans were wont to say, applied to such work: “He who has the gold, makes the rules.” So professors’ ability to define their work was nudged by what funders

Professors became increasingly critical of their governments, and in a number of places, they paid dearly for it. In Senegal, sociology was banned for a time. In Malawi, political science was banned.

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88 Ogundipe and Edewor, “Sociology and Social Work in Nigeria,” 44.
89 Zeleza, “Politics of Historical and Social Sciences,” 12.
were mandated to support, and scholarly writing was redirected toward project reports, executive summaries, and findings and recommendations.

At its worst, donor-driven work has reduced some African social scientists to what Zeleza calls “consultancy hustlers.” Consider, for example, the home page of the “Socio-Economic Data Centre, Ltd.,” founded in 1996, whose “core business is providing consultancy services in formative research for designing projects and programmes, baseline and mid-term reviews, impact assessments/end of project/programme evaluations, policy formulation, strategic planning, institutional capacity assessments and various other organizational development related tasks.” We found this outfit via a link from the pages of the sociology department of a prominent East African university. A captioned photo of the centre’s founder shows that he is the chair of the sociology department.

There is much more to this story, however. The same stresses and disruptions in African social sciences and the donor-driven projects climate that produced this kind of consultancy and short-term contract work have a genuine upside as well. They have also produced what Prof. Zeleza calls “an intellectually vibrant and autonomous” academic and humanitarian NGO sector, which generates much of the kind of socially responsive and nation-building research and service that social scientists initially envisaged. Our searches through the more recent research literature of the field revealed, as was the case in both anthropology and psychology, dozens of published studies on the social dynamics of HIV/AIDS, on postconflict reconciliation and public-sector transition and reconstruction, on environmental sustainability, and on the many initiatives across the continent to alleviate extreme poverty. It revealed the rise of homegrown institutes and centers alongside the many international NGOs, many of these new agencies initiated by prematurely retired and part-timed professors.

The most ambitious and influential of these NGOs are research and development agencies designed expressly to strengthen the social sciences. The two most prominent are the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), located in Dakar, Senegal, and the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern Africa (OSSREA), located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

A group of East African social scientists founded OSSREA in 1980. It is, according to its mission statement,

a regional membership-based and donor-supported research and capacity-building organization whose mission is to promote dialogue and interaction between researchers and policy-makers in Eastern and Southern Africa with a view to enhancing the impact of research on policy-making and development planning.

91 Zeleza, 17.
93 Zeleza, 17.
OSSREA currently offers a number of research support programs:

- A senior scholars research grant competition and
- Training and research support programs in five areas:
  - Employment and migration
  - Social policy and social development
  - Gender in political and economic arenas
  - Natural resources and rural development, and
  - Governance and conflict management

OSSREA also has competitive sabbatical grants and postdoctoral fellowships. In addition, there is a themed research grant competition for younger scholars; its current theme is “social science and gender issues.” Probably the most prized of OSSREA’s programs is its workshops in research methods. With a region-wide shortage of senior professors, it provides much-needed support to postgraduate degree programs in the social sciences.

OSSREA also has publications—a newsletter and a journal, the *East Africa Social Science Research Review*, and about ten to fifteen books and shorter reports each year. These projects and programs are funded by members’ dues, book sales, and international funding, such as from the Ford Foundation, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, SIDA (the Swedish International Development Agency), NORAD (the Norwegian Agency for Development), and Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

CODESRIA began in 1973, but in response to the 1990s crisis of the universities, it became increasingly ambitious in scale and important to African social science research. Its scope of work is truly amazing. CODESRIA publishes, for example, eleven journals, available online, notably the *African Anthropologist*, *Afrika Zamani* (history), *Africa Development*, the *African Sociological Review*, the *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, and the *African Journal of International Affairs*. *CODESRIA Bulletin* reports on research projects, conferences, and seminars continent-wide, and carries on important theoretical discussions. It reaches 5,000 subscribers across Africa and beyond in Arabic, English, and French. CODESRIA publishes ten to twenty books and research reports per year, which are principally the products of its research programs and conferences. At any given time CODESRIA may have a dozen active team research projects going, plus themed conferences, topical research methods and writing seminars, and policy panels. It is difficult to think, by way of comparison, of many US-based research or policy think tanks that carry on work at CODESRIA’s scope. To support this work, CODESRIA raises close to $6 million per year. Its two largest funders, by far, are SIDA and NORAD.
Currently CODESRIA operates a variety of research working groups—multinational, national, and transnational (intercontinental)—all addressing topical themes that emerge from the agency’s triennial general assemblies. Topics are named, literature research and analyses are performed and published, team leaders are named, and then requests for proposals are issued. Each applicant is proposing a research project germane to the stated topic; each one chosen receives a research grant from CODESRIA; and each group is convened to share ideas and in many cases to participate in advanced methodological workshops. These team projects drive much of CODESRIAs publishing agenda. Five ongoing mandates set the frames for possible topics:

- The Gender Research Programme
- The Child and Youth Studies Programme
- The Economic Research Programme
- The Academic Freedom Programme
- The African Humanities Programme

Some of the current projects and programs under these mandates include:

- Higher Education Leadership Programme
- Governance Monitoring Programme in West Africa
- Responsive Forest Governance Initiative Research Programme
- South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development

Each of these has a variety of subprojects currently running. The Governance Monitoring initiative, for example, has monitoring teams in eighteen countries applying a common set of criteria to their governments’ performance. The Higher Education Leadership Programme, to cite another, has four projects running in different nations and enjoys funding from the Carnegie Endowment.

CODESRIA’s research monographs series documents the wealth of research conducted under its aegis, as these titles from 2013–2014 illustrate:

- *Land and Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe: Beyond White-Settler Capitalism*. Edited by Sam Moyo and Walter Chambati.
• Values and Development in Southern Africa. Edited by Hans Müller, Pinkie Mekgwe, and Marvellous Mhloyi.

There are other social research centers in Africa, notably the Southern African Political Economy Series (SAPES) Trust, established in 1987 in Harare, Zimbabwe, and the Centre for Basic Research founded that same year in Kampala, Uganda. In addition to these NGOs, a South African governmental agency, the Human Sciences Research Council, with a staff of 500 and many active research programs, is a major funder for social science research in South Africa, but also with some programmatic reach into the rest of the southern Africa region. Together these research centers account for some of the best work produced by social scientists on the continent.

Speaking of South Africa (and we must), social research first arose there to a major extent as academics and policymakers sought to address a uniquely South African social problem, the suffering of poor whites in the aftermath of the wars between the British and the Afrikaner settlers. Many poor whites, mainly Afrikaners, migrated to the cities and settled in racially mixed neighborhoods, much to the consternation of the Afrikaner elites. With support from the Carnegie Corporation in New York, a “Carnegie Commission on the Poor White Problem” conducted a major investigation in 1929–1932, and its manifest usefulness inspired South African academics to invest in sociology. The universities of Pretoria, Stellenbosch and Cape Town established departments of sociology in 1931, 1932, and 1934, respectively, and four other universities followed suit by 1937. Two of the founders of South African sociology, Henrik Verwoerd of Stellenbosch and Geoffrey Cronjé of Pretoria, became principal architects of the doctrines and policies of apartheid, with their protégés in the 1940s and 1950s following suit as policy researchers. The discipline continued to grow along with the formation of new South African universities in the 1960s, and as the struggle over apartheid began to heat up in the 1960s, it began to diverge into conservative Afrikaans-speaking and liberal or radical English-speaking factions, each represented by competing associations and journals.

After the end of apartheid, the differences between these groups began to fade, and eventually they merged in 1992, with a new journal, *Society in Transition*, appearing five years later. The journal of the former critical/progressive faction, the *Southern African Sociological Review*, was reconstituted as a continent-wide journal in 1997, renamed the *African Sociological Review*, and published out of CODESRIA. South African social researchers have a variety of other journals to disseminate their work as well.97

One of the main trends of South African sociology—especially at the white, English-speaking universities and at the apartheid-era’s universities for Blacks, Coloureds, and Asians—was toward liberationist-oriented and Marxist sociology. This approach critiqued the established understanding of South African society, which argued for the centrality of the problem of managing the clash of civilizations at various stages of human development. No, the leftist sociologists said, South Africa’s central social problem is driven by the class stratifications imposed by imperialism and industrialization (e.g., mining). This stratification has been racialized, but its main dynamic is the exploitation of labor.98 During the struggle against apartheid, South African left-progressive social scientists became allies to the struggle, and many became activists as well, working with the anti-apartheid movements and pro-democracy NGOs. In recent years this activist impulse in the discipline has suffered because of the fragmentation and decline of social and political movements in the wake of the ANC’s victory.99

Even so, argues Mokong Simon Mapadimeng of North-West University, the study of social problems in South Africa has not so much dissipated as proliferated. One common theme is the increasing inequality of income under the new regime, but studies of HIV/AIDS, migration, urban and rural studies, marriage and family, gender, employment, criminality and policing, education,  

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98 Jubber, 536–538.

and environmental degradation all flourish as well. With major support from external funders and from the Human Sciences Research Council, social research in South Africa is vigorous and engaged. Even in an era where the so-called STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields are favored with funding and the South African universities are increasingly pressured to concentrate on these allegedly more useful fields, social research in South Africa maintains a strong argument for its relevance.

Across the continent, social research, particularly in but not limited to sociology, is on an upswing. In part this is due to the relatively more livable conditions for work in many of the continent’s universities. But the main factor behind its recovery has been the increase of external funding for research. The massive funding flowing in to help Africans address the HIV/AIDS epidemic, we have seen in our searches, has financed the publication of scores of recent articles on the social dimensions of the disease and its treatment. The same is true for studies of extreme poverty and economic development, or the social dimensions of environmental sustainability, or the particular roles of women and/or men on any of these fronts. Scholars might bemoan the NGO-ization of their disciplines and yearn for a time when they can simply follow their scholarly curiosity and imagination with the assurance of university funding. But from the earliest days social research in Africa has been driven by “social problems,” and sociologists have wanted to make contributions that are relevant, for the sake of “building the nation.” They have, especially in recent years, found plenty to do.

**African Studies**

Across the social sciences and humanities, African scholars are deeply aware that they are not alone in their scholarly interests. Indeed, the field of African studies in the global North is a vigorous scholarly industry. Intellectual fascination with Africa and Africans has a fairly lengthy history, involving both academics and colonial officers in Europe, while in the United States the first “Africanists” were the nation’s black intellectuals, such as those gathered at Howard University.

But the contemporary African studies movement also owes much to the growing sense in the United States that the nation’s emergence as a world power after World War II brought with it a responsibility to learn more about the rest of the world. Many if not most of the major African studies programs in the United States came into being with support from the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and several acts like it following, which provided for the development of “area studies” programs in American universities. The core disciplines involved in the emerging African studies programs were anthropology, history, and

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political science, but Africa-focused scholars in other social science and humanities fields soon followed.  

We looked at twenty-eight prominent university-based African studies programs located in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands. These programs typically have a core faculty with regular teaching responsibility in the department, and they also list as affiliates a number of additional scholars from a wide array of disciplines: sociology, economics, development studies, geography, literature, languages and linguistics, media studies, performing arts, public health, biomedical research, agriculture, and education. Attention to religion, with religious studies scholars involved, seems more common in the British and European programs than in the United States.

The African Studies Association (ASA), founded in the United States in 1957, has become a major convener of “Africanists,” and its journal, the African Studies Review, is a prime spot for their communication, although they have access to a large and varied international collection of discipline- and Africa-specific journals as well. Indiana University Press, the University of California Press, and Ohio University Press all have prominent portfolios in African studies, but the Africanists regularly publish in the university presses of Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Yale, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Cornell as well. The ASA publishes quarterly abstracts of articles, chapters, and books in the field, and it shows a very lively trade indeed, totaling 250 to 400 entries each quarter. Africanists complain of their marginalization from the disciplinary power corridors of European and North American scholarship, but from an African perspective, they suffer mainly from an embarrassment of riches.

As several veteran observers of this scene, North and South, make clear, the basic organization and orientation of this field is a remnant of the colonial era. Areas and topics of study that in African universities are distributed across the social sciences and humanities become “African studies” in Europe and North America, where Africa remains, observes historian Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, subject to “the study of the colonial and post-colonial ‘other.’” Until recently, African intellectuals were very rarely glimpsed in these studies; their scholarly descendants working in Africa have not been included as full partners in the Africanist enterprise. The tensions between African-situated scholars and the Africanists in the global North have existed for decades, and during one dramatic evening about eighteen years ago, they came spilling out.

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In 1996, a senior Malawian economist, Thankdika Mkandawire, who was in that year a distinguished Fulbright visiting fellow in the United States, was asked to give a plenary lecture at the African Studies Association’s annual meeting. Prof. Mkandawire, who was then the executive secretary of CODESRIA, gave a full and anguished account of the problems that social scientists in Africa faced. Then he turned to his hosts and opened up a salvo: “We are extremely dissatisfied with our presence in the international arena of the study of Africa.” He said that there was nary a space in the current North-South relationships “which nourishes mutual respect and allows us to engage in a common exercise.” He made several specific charges. First, the Africanists were frequently consultants to the world powers that were still seeking to dominate the African continent. This posture was hardly conducive of Africans’ trust. Mkandawire also charged that the Africanists’ gatekeeping of publication and research funding deeply disadvantaged the Africans. And he mentioned the unequal division of labor that brought Africanists to Africa with research funding, allowing them to employ local field researchers but to reap the publications for themselves, reducing the Africans, he said, “to nothing more than barefoot empiricists.” Even though African organs like CODESRIA and its journals gave bountiful evidence of African scholarship, Africanist scholarship tended to be self-referential and paid little notice to the findings of the Africans. Finally, he said, Africans had come to resent the unrelentingly deep “Afro-pessimism” that characterized Africanist rhetoric about the continent in the 1990s. This “semantic onslaught,” he said, “has obfuscated rather than illuminated” African societies and in the process, “obliterated grounds for mutual comprehension.” And yet he wanted to see something better happen, to see each group know the other’s work better, and to find a more equitable way forward as a community of scholars.105

More recent assessments of these relationships are more hopeful. What has happened to mitigate the tensions? There were two things in particular. First, ironically, the “brain drain” seems to have had an upside in the social sciences and humanities. With increasing numbers of Africans (estimated at 20,000 to 25,000) joining university faculties in the United States alone, the longstanding gap between these two communities was narrowing. In 2002 Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, the Malawian historian who had come to the United States in the 1990s and quickly became a rising star in the African Studies Association (eventually serving as its president in 2009), noted that the diaspora Africans afforded rich possibilities for forging new links with their colleagues back home. They might copublish electronic journals with Africans, enhance and accelerate student and faculty exchanges, and help

disseminate African-published scholarship, such as that issuing out of CODESRIA. A dozen years later, some of Zeleza’s hopes seem to be coming true. Africans in the North American academy are becoming more visible as well as more numerous (e.g., philosopher Kwame Appiah), and given the possibilities afforded via accelerated communications and travel, interuniversity traffic flowing south has increased, much of it being brokered by the expatriate Africans.

The Africans also helped to bring new intellectual challenges to African studies. Much like the African philosophers discussed above, several African diaspora historians, sociologists, and political scientists were making a “hermeneutical turn” in their scholarship, which interrogated the objectivism of their disciplines, revealed more of the contingent and constructed nature of their findings and the subjective, participatory nature of their scholarly work. One of the pioneering advocates for this new approach was V. Y. Mudimbe, the Congolese philosopher, poet, and literary scholar who first came to the United States in 1979. His seminal work, *The Invention of Africa* (1988), has been compared for its influence on African scholarship to that of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) on Middle East studies. Mudimbe revealed Africa’s continuing fabrication as a concept within Western colonial and neocolonial imaginations. Increasingly, from the 1990s forward, African studies became home to postcolonial interpretations of past and present, feminist critiques of all of the prior approaches (including Marxism), and closely focused interdisciplinary observations (participations?) of contemporary “African realities.” Yet Zeleza cautions that even this postmodern turn has not brought reconciliation between the Africans and the Africanists. While the Africanists publish sophisticated postcolonial books about Africans’ subaltern resistance and subversive art and speech acts, African scholars still struggle under adverse conditions to help with the building or rebuilding of their nations. And some of them worry that postcolonial studies might tend to trivialize their experiences of oppression, liberation, and reconstruction, which, says Zeleza, “were, and continue to be, written in pain and suffering, sweat and blood.”

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This discussion may seem like a bit more than one might need to know about the study of Africa from outside of the continent, but anyone intending to work with African scholars needs to understand the character of their relationships with the Africanists of the global North. The great gap between them has been mitigated in recent years, largely on account of the mediating role of the Africans expatriates in the North, but the relationships are still not all that close or collegial. African intellectual history over the past fifty years has been a struggle for cultural and intellectual autonomy, fully as much as its political history has been the struggle for independence.

Religious Studies

The academic study of religion has been an important field of inquiry in modern sub-Saharan Africa, but even more than some of the other humanities and social scientific fields it has struggled to gain basic identity and respect. Ezra Chitando, a Zimbabwean scholar, says that he recalls seeing students on campus at the University of Zimbabwe in the 1980s sporting T-shirts that advertised their courses of studies—engineering, economics, law and medicine, even literary studies—but not religious studies. There has been in fact a popular stereotype of the religion student becoming stuck, perhaps by his or her own modest abilities, in a field of marginal social utility and salary-paying value. And within the religious studies discipline worldwide, says Chitando, the contributions

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111 No one has done more to build bridges, perhaps, than Paul Tiyambe Zeleza. See, for example, the two volumes of essays by African and Africanist scholars that he edited in partnership with CODESRIA: *The Study of Africa. Vol. 1: Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Encounters* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2007) and *Vol. 2: Global and Transnational Engagements* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2007). But here is a telling detail: A researcher using standard American database search tools for finding works in the humanities and social sciences, say JStor and EBSCO, will not find these books. The invisibility of African scholarship continues.


of Africans have been largely sidelined. That is changing, however, due to a number of recent developments: 1) the ongoing rapid growth of Christianity in Africa, especially some kinds that are African-originated; 2) the revival, growth, and in some sectors, radicalization of Islam; and 3) the achievements of both European and of diaspora African scholars in the field, many of whom studied and taught for a time in African universities.

Religious studies programs in African universities are largely products of Anglophone Africa, where among its original roles, religious studies was to prepare instructors to teach the topic in the schools. Francophone Africa followed French secular educational policy, however, so that there was no such role to play. Consequently, religious studies have not developed in the state universities there. An early and continuing location of great vigor in the field is in Nigeria, where the University of Ibadan’s program, led at first by the distinguished British scholar Geoffrey Parrinder, pioneered the field. Just after leaving the University of Nigeria at Nsukka due to the Biafran War, another pioneer, Andrew Walls of Scotland, founded a seminal journal for the field, the *Journal of Religion in Africa*, in 1967. Other early centers were the University of Ghana, Makerere University in Uganda, and the University of Nairobi. The most distinguished and widely acknowledged early work in this field was on indigenous African religions, and two Africans probably did the most to shape this field early in the 1960s and 1970s: the Nigerian, Bolaji Idowu, and the Kenyan, John Mbti. But they were challenged early and vigorously by Okot p’Bitek, a Ugandan poet and social anthropologist, who charged that Idowu and Mbti, as Christians, were influenced by missiological perspectives and erred in making African spirituality and religious practice resemble that of Christianity. So the debate was begun, and a lively conversation over the character of African religions continues to the present. An emerging leader in that field is Jacob Olupona, a Nigerian scholar now teaching at Harvard.


In recent years the study of African religions has been joined by an increasing interest in the development of Islam and especially of Christianity in Africa. Of particular interest have been the newer “African instituted” churches, which had arisen during the colonial era when African Christian seers and prophets came out of mission-founded churches to found new bodies, based on their own spiritual promptings and reading of scripture.\(^{120}\) In more recent times the dramatic rise of Pentecostal churches in Africa has garnered more attention.\(^{122}\) One of the ongoing debates in the study of African Christianity is the extent to which Christianity remains an imported Western religion with recurring “extraversion” of ideas and emphases from abroad, or whether it is in fact undergirded by African primal spirituality and becoming ever more African in postcolonial times.\(^{123}\)

The study of Islam is part of many university religious studies programs in Africa, but according to Jacob Olupona’s 1996 examination of religious studies in West Africa, there are no “Christian studies” subprograms in the universities of predominantly Muslim northern Nigeria. Our recent survey of university religious studies programs bore that out. At the University of Jos, Nigeria, in the contested “Middle Belt” area of the nation, Olupona noted that both Christianity and Islam were taught, but in fairly sealed subdepartments.\(^{124}\) Indeed, during a visit there in 1990, I (Carpenter) found that students declared a major in one or the other religion, and took no courses in the other religion. The same

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121 Bengt Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa (London: Lutterworth, 1948) was the pioneering work, written by a Swedish scholar who had been a missionary in South Africa. Many have followed. For a contemporary discussion of interpretive issues and a helpful bibliography, see Retief Müller, “Historiography and Cross-Cultural Research into African Indigenous Christianity (AIC): A Challenge to Human Dignity,” Studies in World Christianity 19:1 (2013): 5–24.
situation seemed to be the case when I visited the religion faculty at Makerere University in Uganda in 2007. The most distinguished work on Islam, states `Deremi Abubakre of the University of Ilorin, took place in West African universities that were situated in more pluralistic contexts.\textsuperscript{125}

African religious studies programs differ markedly from those in Europe and North America in a very important sense. In those Northern realms, religious studies are deemed to be nonconfessional and religiously neutral. Their tradition is to study religion “scientifically,” as pioneered in the German universities of the early nineteenth century, and to tend not to accept a religion’s supernatural or doctrinal claims. Indeed, the underlying orientation has tended to be a naturalistic worldview that appraised such claims skeptically.\textsuperscript{126}

Most African scholars who engage religious studies, however, tend to be religious themselves. They might accept the idea that their departments are nonconfessional, but not the idea that they should be religiously neutral or even skeptical. Some argue, in fact, about how firm a division there should be between religious studies and theological studies. Even those who argue that these fields should be demarcated do so by arguing for the usefulness of studying religion via the methods (if not all of the naturalistic assumptions) of history, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, and phenomenology. They do not insist, as do secular-minded religious scholars in the global North, that theological perspectives have no place in the academy. Indeed, says Chitando, a rejection of theology and theological perspectives within religious studies is untenable in Africa.\textsuperscript{127}

We found, for example, that the religious studies department of the University of Ghana underscores this “both and” approach in its mission statement: “The Department is dedicated to the promotion of the scientific study of religions but also continues with the promotion of high quality theological education for a just, peaceful, and humane society.”\textsuperscript{128}

As we surveyed the publications of religious studies professors in universities across the continent, it was common to see quite conventionally theological studies being performed for the instruction of the faithful. We saw, side by side in Nigerian religious studies departments, for example, Christian biblical commentaries, advocacy for traditional African methods of healing, and discourses on Islamic law. In East and Southern Africa for two generations now the most accomplished Christian theologians have taught at the flagship state universities.

In South Africa these debates over identity and methodology in religious studies have been more sharply etched. During the years of apartheid, South African universities had

\textsuperscript{125} Abubakre, “The Academic and Non-Academic Study of Islam,” 265.


Christian faculties of theology that included a few religious studies professors, but since the transition to democracy in 1994, several of these faculties were “converted” to religious studies programs, arguably to serve the public’s need for religious knowledge more broadly and inclusively.\textsuperscript{129} Even so, religious studies and theological scholars in South Africa freely mix and copublish, for example, in the nation’s two most prominent theological journals, the \textit{Journal of Theology for Southern Africa} and \textit{Missionalia}.

The political and fiscal crises of the 1980s and 1990s that wreaked havoc through other university disciplines had similar effects in religious studies. First the European scholars left, and then Africans fled for more viable situations as well. Journals came, went, tried to come back, and disappeared. Ezra Chitando read off the honor roll of the many outstanding scholars who had graced the halls of religious studies where he works at the University of Zimbabwe. It was a veritable who’s who of African religious studies, featuring expatriates Adrian Hastings, Carl Hallencreutz, Jan Platvoet, Martin Prozesky, James Cox, and Paul Gifford; plus Zimbabweans Temba Mafico and Canaan Banana (who went into politics).\textsuperscript{130} It is sobering to recognize that all have left, even if for just over the border in South Africa. Chitando, like Elijah, has reason to complain: “only I am left.” Across the discipline it seems that the most outstanding scholars of African religion were all serving in the global North. Lamin Sanneh, of the Gambia, who has earned great distinction in the history of both Islam and Christianity, once taught at Ghana and Ibadan but is now at Yale University. Afe Adogame of Nigeria had taught in Nigeria but is now in Edinburgh. Jacob Olupona, also a Nigerian, is teaching at Harvard.

Publishing on the continent has remained a problem too, outside of South Africa, where in addition to a half-dozen prominent theological journals that also publish religious studies articles, there is the \textit{Journal for the Study of Religion}, published by the Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa. Journals elsewhere in Africa remain few; in addition to the one just mentioned, the African Journals Online site named just five others. Two were theological journals from South Africa; one was the South African-based \textit{Journal of Islamic Studies}, and two were from Nigeria: the \textit{Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies}, from the well-established program at the University of Ilorin, and the \textit{Journal of Religion and Human Relations}, recently started at the Department of Religion and Human Relations of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, which was founded in 1991 in Anambra State, southeast Nigeria. The


\textsuperscript{130} Chitando, “Emerging Perspectives,” 279.
University of Ibadan’s old and distinguished journal in religious studies, *Orita, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, is listed on the university website, but the link shows only a blank page. Since we could not locate current or recent issues of it online, we assume that it is in abeyance just now, that all-too-common pattern for African journals. The *Journal of Religion in Africa* remains the leading journal for the field, but it has been published all these years in the global North, which means that it is too expensive for most libraries ($375-415) and individual scholars ($170) on the continent. Our inspection of its issues over the past five years shows that only 10 percent of its articles have been written by African authors.

These problems take a toll on the religious studies scholars, says Chitando. As a result of their isolation from the field’s current discourse, they find it difficult to get their articles published in [non-African] scholarly journals in religious studies. A perusal of the leading journals of the discipline [he names European and American titles] … testifies to the absence of African voices in global religious studies. Referees operating from relatively comfortable environments in Europe and North America are quick to dismiss articles from African scholars who would have battled against formidable odds to put their ideas together. How does one write a brilliant article when one has not been paid for three months? [131]

Over the past two decades, however, some important ventures involving African expatriates and European former professors in Africa have begun to remedy the effects of brain drain and the shaky infrastructure of the discipline. The main one, which helps to make other collaboration possible, has been the formation of the African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR). While there have been viable Nigerian and Southern African associations for religious studies, many regions had none, and there was no overarching network to span the continent. But in 1992, the International Association for the History of Religions met for the first time in Africa, at Harare, Zimbabwe. The conferees voted unanimously to form the African Association for the Study of Religions, naming Prof. Jacob Olupona (then at the University of California, Davis) as coordinator and Dr. Rosalind Hackett of the University of Tennessee (but who had taught in Nigeria) as treasurer, with council officers from Europe, North America, and each region of Africa as well. The association continues, maintaining a website, publishing a regular news bulletin, and holding large international conferences in Africa every two to four years, with publications following. [132] One might hope for more communications and institutional nodes to sustain networks across the continent, but it is encouraging to see a commitment to ongoing interaction across the distances—cultural, geographic, and economic—in this field.

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Theology

Some of the most creative work emanating from African university departments of religious studies is being done in Christian theology. Theology in modern Africa shares common concerns with the other disciplines we have explored thus far. African theologians, like other Christian theologians, engage in the basic task of their field, which is to do disciplined thinking about God—and particularly God’s ways and God’s will in relation to humans and the rest of creation. But they, like the philosophers, the psychologists, and other African intellectuals, have had an abiding concern to discover and establish what is distinctive about their thinking—in Africa and as Africans. And beyond that, they want to do their part to make Christianity a faith that is at home in Africa and is authentically African.

Modern African theology, both Catholic and Protestant, arose in a context of anti-colonial and Africanist thought that grew among the educated elites of early to mid-twentieth-century Africa. It arose first, perhaps, with “Ethiopianist” Christian visionaries among Pan-Africanist intellectuals in Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and southern Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were in contact with eminent African Americans such as Bishop Henry W. Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, sociologist W. E. B. DuBois and a number of other academics at the new black colleges, and Booker T. Washington of the famed Tuskegee Institute. For African elites who were being subjugated to colonial rule, the sight of African American leaders publishing their ideas, founding their own institutions, and acquiring wealth and property was a powerful tonic. And more often than not, their Pan-Africanist vision was expressed in Christian terms.\(^\text{133}\) In Francophone Africa, a new Africanist mentality animated the *Negritude* movement among African and Afro-Caribbean students in Paris in the 1930s. It sought to integrate the values and spirit of traditional Africa into modern arts, literature, and politics. Thus, wrote Harvey Sindima, a Malawian theologian, African clerics “joined the rest of the African elite in a struggle for a new identity in Africa.”\(^\text{134}\)

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African theologians, like ... other African intellectuals, have had an abiding concern to discover and establish what is distinctive about their thinking—in Africa and as Africans.


One of the more direct inspirations for the rise of a new African theology in the 1960s was the pioneering work of the Belgian missionary Placide Tempels, *La Philosophie Bantoue* (1945), which was also translated into English. By arguing for the coherence and wisdom of African traditional thought, Tempels opened a major entryway for Christian theologians to engage their faith with African thought, values, and spiritual sensibilities. Four pioneering theologians who ventured forth to build a conversation with African philosophy and eventually African religion were Harry Sawyerr, a Sierra Leonean Anglican theologian and educational leader; Alexis Kagame, a Catholic priest from Rwanda; Bolaji Idowu, a Methodist clergyman from Nigeria; and John Mbiti, a Kenyan from the African Inland Church who eventually became an Anglican. They were aiming to formulate a Christianity that would understand the scriptures and the gospel call to faith in Christ from within an African context and using African categories of thought and culture. Said Mbiti, “the only lasting form of Christianity in this continent is that which results from a serious encounter of the gospel with indigenous African culture.” What this has meant in practical terms, across the Catholic and older Protestant communions, has been liturgical reform and a more contextual approach to biblical studies. Yet there have been a variety of experiments with theological concepts as well, notably as in the field of Christology. Both Catholic scholars such as Charles Nyamiti of Kenya and Protestants such as John Pobee and Kwame Bediako of Ghana reflected on the biblical appellation of Christ as God’s “first-born and risen from the dead” (Col. 1:15) and the widespread African veneration of the ancestors, the virtuous living dead. Might the image of “ancestor” help African Christians understand the Christian doctrine of “the communion of the saints,” or Christ’s primacy and his mediation on believers’ behalf? Might it help to add to Christ’s appellations “Ancestor,” or as in Bediako, “Lord of ancestors”? 


Not all contemporary African theologians have been sanguine about finding parallels and bridges between traditional African religions and Christian theology. The more conservative evangelical wing of African Protestantism worries about incautious religious borrowing and blending—“syncretism”—or about taking steps toward “universalism,” as in granting salvific character to non-Christian faiths. The issue at point for them has been the extent to which there is spiritual and theological truth to be found in other faiths. They have been quite skeptical about finding such truth in the African religions. One of the exemplars of this ongoing suspicion toward the old religions was Byang Kato, a Nigerian theologian and church leader in the Evangelical Church of West Africa. Even though he died at age 39 in 1975, his writings have set the norms and the tone for much of conservative evangelical theological discourse in Africa ever since. These theologians affirm the need for Christian Africans to be authentically African, but insist that their allegiance to a culture-transcending set of cardinal Christian truths, drawn from inerrant scriptures, must come first.138

A much less polemical but still incisive inspection of the indigenizing impulse in African theology is a study by Diane Stinton, a Canadian theologian who taught for many years in Kenya. Her book, Jesus of Africa, points out what is perhaps a classic weakness of first-generation “contextual theologies:” they tend to be conceived out of the creative imagination of theologians, based on formal, textual studies of culture and of theology. They are rarely written out of in-depth consultations with “the faithful,” the ordinary believers and front-line activists in the churches who are forming a popular theology out of their own gospel-and-culture encounters. Stinton took some of the creative “African theology” approaches to Christology to focus groups of lay Christian activists in West and East Africa and asked them what they thought of various concepts. Christ as healer found widespread favor; Christ as ancestor did not. Evidently the latter was too much caught up in the rituals and spirituality of the traditional religions from which these Christians had distanced themselves.139

This indigenization or inculturation wing of contemporary African Christian theology experienced even sharper criticism from the left. Arising especially from the anti-colonial struggles in southern Africa, theologians of liberation, drawing on insights from Latin American predecessors, and Black theologians in South Africa, drawing on African American theologians, argued that the concept of culture was too static and traditional and insufficiently critical of Western aims and actions. To be relevant and powerful, they said, African theology needs to get critical leverage on the social, economic, and political realities of contemporary Africa. The Black theologians of South Africa in particular were adamant that rather than seeking to embrace the African condition, Christian thinkers and agents needed to seek to liberate it. Liberation, insisted Desmond Tutu, needed to be seen “as the inevitable consequence of taking the gospel of Jesus Christ seriously.”140


140 Desmond Tutu, Hope and Suffering (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 75.
This was a difficult criticism for the indigenizing theologians to take. Had they not sought, as John Mbiti had said, to apply

the message of the Gospel to our culture in the areas of human problem and needs, such as oppression, exploitation, poverty, starvation, injustice, destruction of human life, extravagant spoliation of nature, pollution and dangers to human survival? … How can the Gospel raise an alarm through our culture in the areas of urgent concerns?141

Another indigenizing theologian, Gabriel Setiloane, a South African Methodist, presciently cautioned his liberationist and Black theology fellow South Africans that it was relatively easy to be critical and prophetic when the adversary was someone else, such as European colonizers. But what of situations where it is not foreigners, but one’s own society, one’s own government, or church, or countrymen, who are the corruptors or oppressors? Being prophetic then is not so simple, and “the Church in any situation is never free of the evils of the society in which it finds itself.”142 African church leaders who spoke out against repressive regimes across the continent found out how exceedingly difficult that work was. Several in Kenya, for example, were killed during the regime of Daniel arap Moi. One who survived, Anglican archbishop David Gitari, gained wide notoriety for his prophetic preaching, collected into several well-traveled books.143 As Gitari seemed to understand quite well, knowing the deeper cultural context that church and state both share remains critically important, no matter who is in charge.

Liberationist African theologians echo many African social science colleagues in denouncing the “neoliberal,” international capitalist threat to African well-being.

143 Gitari, Let the Bishop Speak (Nairobi, Kenya: Uzima, 1988); David M. Gitari, In Season and Out of Season: Sermons to a Nation (Carlisle, UK: Regnum, 1996).
protection of human rights and economic development. Even so, Maluleke worried that they would forget the larger picture, whereby powerful world-systems such as capitalism and globalization threatened to impose neocolonial shackles on the continent. That sentiment continues strong, so in the present day, liberationist African theologians echo many African social science colleagues in denouncing the “neoliberal,” international capitalist threat to African well-being. A key case in point was African theologians’ leadership in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches’ Accra Confession of 2004, which “rejected neoliberal economic globalization as a death-dealing system and declared, ‘The integrity of our faith is at stake if we remain silent or refuse to act in the face of the current system of neoliberal economic globalization.’”

One of the more positive and evidently durable trends in contemporary African theology has been the rise of African women theologians. A Pan-African agency to serve the movement, the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians, began in 1989 and has attracted well over 500 members across the continent. One of its founders is Mercy Amba Oduyoye, a Ghanaian Methodist theologian teaching at Trinity Theological Seminary in Legon. She has also served as an executive with the World Council of Churches. Other leaders include Isabel Phiri, a Malawian Presbyterian now serving at the University of KwaZulu Natal in South Africa; Musa Dube, professor of biblical studies at the University of Botswana; and Philomena Mwaura, professor of religious studies and director of the Center for Gender Equity and Empowerment at Kenyatta University in Kenya. Unlike many secular feminists in the West, the Circle is ardently affirmative of motherhood, childbirth, and marriage. Like the liberationist theologians, Circle theologians are advocates for social justice, but they are bold to point out that patriarchal views and actions are pervasive in Christian academic circles, even among liberationists. Like the inculturation theologians, they find much to affirm in African traditional culture and worldviews, but they are keen to point out the gender oppression that was all too commonly part of African

Like the liberationist theologians, Circle theologians are advocates for social justice, but they are bold to point out that patriarchal views and actions are pervasive in Christian academic circles, even among liberationists.

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“traditional values.” Among their accomplishments has been an early and sustained theological and pastoral address to the scourge of HIV/AIDS.147

A women’s movement arose within the more conservative evangelical Protestants as well. It was more activist than academic, but it has been a force in the generation of evangelical Christian ideas and perspectives. The Pan African Christian Womens Alliance (PACWA) was formed in 1990 as an agency of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA) with the Rev. Judy Mbugua as PACWA’s head. During twenty-one years under her leadership, PACWA chapters arose in thirty African countries.148 PACWA’s stated aims are:

- To stop the tide of ungodly liberalism and secularism with its resultant materialism
- To assert the true dignity of women as found in Jesus Christ and contained in the Bible
- To inject into African society biblical morals and values through women, who are the mothers of any society
- To deliver Africa from decadence and ultimate collapse
- To make disciples of African nations for Christ in the continent of Africa149

National chapters and regional conferences flourished, and PACWA became one of the most outspoken of the AEA-type African evangelical groups in denouncing injustice and corruption and urging evangelical advocacy and engagement in political reform. In Zambia, PACWA leaders ran for public office with one serving as a city mayor and another as a member of parliament. There and elsewhere they were early engagers of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, organizing conferences and workshops to train women as health care volunteers

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in their communities. PACWA, in its heyday, was one of the most effective Christian networks in Africa. No wonder, then, that when its parent organization, AEA, needed an interim director in 2007, Mbugua was tapped for the job.

So we see that African theology has been a busy and fruitful field of inquiry over the past half-century. It shares many of the overall concerns that animate other academic fields in Africa: a desire to break free of a colonial intellectual legacy, to establish distinctly African approaches to its field of endeavor, and to see its work serve the common good of the continent in which it works. As we have suggested, many if not most of the leading theologians, especially on the Protestant side, are situated in state universities’ religious studies departments, with the attending problems that contemporary African university life poses. Yet they have managed to sustain lines of inquiry and debate over the years, and to produce a remarkable body of work.

That work does not circulate as freely as one might hope, however, for a variety of reasons. First, much of it is published outside of Africa and is not priced to sell there. Second, as in other fields (outside of South Africa), journals are few and far between, and every one of them, it seems, has experienced at least one significant hiatus in publishing. Third, as in the case of the other fields, African theologians have emigrated, and their work, which still engages Africa, often seems to reach Africans last.

Even so, there is a thin but serviceable publishing network in Africa today for theology. There are some fairly reliable journals with good theological content. Some of the steadiest of these today are the Ogbomoso Journal of Theology, published by the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomoso, Nigeria; the Journal of African Christian Thought, published by the Akrofi-Christaller Institute in Ghana; AFER (the African Ecclesiastical Review), a Catholic theological journal published at the Catholic University of East Africa in Nairobi; the Africa Theological Journal, published at Makumira University College of Tumaini University, a Lutheran institution in Tanzania; and AJET (the African Journal of Evangelical Theology), published at Scott Christian University in Machakos, Kenya. All of these journals are indexed for database searches via EBSCO and ATLA (American Theological Library Association). In South Africa, there are riches, comparatively speaking. The university-based theological faculties (e.g., at Pretoria, UNISA, Stellenbosch and KwaZulu Natal) have at least one journal, and the main journal of record in theology is the Journal of Theology for Southern Africa. Another fine freestanding journal is Missionalia, which is formally a missiological journal, but given the gospel-and-culture approach of much of the continent’s theology, Missionalia is a frequently used medium.

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150 Phiri, “Frederick Chiluba and Zambia,” 112–118.
Because these journals are now all indexed and most are available electronically, they provide a basis for common discourse, both on the continent and elsewhere.

Eastern and Southern Africa have trade presses that publish a fairly steady issue of African theology. In South Africa, there are Cluster Publications in Pietermaritzburg, the academic presses of the UNISA and Cape Town, and Lux Verbi, the nation’s oldest religious publisher. In Kenya, several publishers release a steady line of titles: Paulines Press, Gaba Publications, Acton, and Evangel are the main ones. In West Africa, theological publishing is much more problematic. There are plenty of local urban firms that like to publish works for megachurch pastors or textbooks for professors, but sources for more learned fare are rare and thin. Regnum Africa, an affiliate of Regnum Books in Great Britain, is edited at the Akrofi-Christaller Institute in Ghana and produces high-quality theological titles. Yet its capacity is limited so its portfolio is too. Asempa Publishers of the Ghana Christian Council has similar limits. In Francophone Africa, the options are exceedingly slender. Editions Clé, a French religious publisher with offices in Yaounde, Cameroon, has developed a line of theological titles, under the direction of Tharcisse Gatwa, a Rwandan theologian. Gatwa has also conducted writer’s workshops and topical seminars in order to build the stable of authors.151 One lively “offshore” option that many African theologians and religious studies scholars have favored lately is Africa World Press, published out of the United States, in Trenton, New Jersey. Its current list shows seventy titles in religion, most available for between $20 and $30—not cheap, but more accessible to Africa than some European academic trade presses, which may charge five or six times as much.

African theology has no comprehensive service centers to match CODESRIA and OSSREA in the social sciences. As we have seen, most African academics in theological fields teach in freestanding seminaries and Bible colleges, with small libraries and large varieties of courses to cover. Those teaching in secular universities must deal with huge enrollments per course, frequently no texts, and untrustworthy main libraries. A number of them have resorted to pooling professors’ spare books and starting to build departmental libraries kept under lock and key. After years of dysfunctional, non-meeting regional theological associations,152 these agencies, first established by the Theological Education Fund and the All Africa Council of Churches (AACC), have recommenced regular meetings.153 Dr. Andre Karamaga, the Rwandan Presbyterian who now heads the AACC, is determined, he says, to strengthen theological

Catholics in Africa have some of the best institutions and networks for theologizing.

151 Gatwa, “Theological Education in Francophone Africa,” 181.
thought and service on the continent. “For too many years,” he said, “the AACC seemed to favor ideology over theology—but no more.”

Catholics in Africa have some of the best institutions and networks for theologizing. Their evaluators speak of a too-rapid expansion of seminaries in order to keep up with the pastoral needs of the church, and the continuing need to call on missionary educators because of the shortage of African theologians. Yet the whole system rests on very strong pillars. First are the Catholic Faculties of Kinshasa, which owe their inheritance to the University of Lovanium, founded in Kinshasa in 1954 with the assistance of the University in Louvaine, Belgium. Second, the Catholic Institute of West Africa, in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, a postgraduate research center (f. 1975) with the nation’s best library; and the Catholic University of Central Africa (f. 1991), with campuses in Yaounde and Douala, Cameroon, Pointe-Noire in Congo Brazzaville, and planned campuses in Libreville, Gabon and Bangui, CAR. Add to this the best Christian university of Anglophone Africa, the Catholic University of East Africa. In reading through a sampling of the featured works of African theology over the past half-century, it is clear at least to this non-theologian that the Catholics’ investment in strong central institutions has paid off. In philosophical sophistication and breadth of theological reading, the Catholic thinkers have a clear edge on the Protestants. Even so, as we have suggested, their coverage with journals and higher end religious book publishing on the continent is no better.

African theology … seems to have built some momentum intellectually, but it could use some fresh rubrics, a more intent focus on contemporary African social realities, and a fresh infusion of discoveries and insights of other disciplines.


So theology in Africa has a broad scope and is practiced in a wide variety of institutions. Its institutional and disciplinary setting is no less fragile than some of the other disciplines we have explored, but it is much more widespread and diversified institutionally, and with huge constituencies. African theology needs to regain the focus and rigor of its pioneering progenitors, and it needs to find ways to sustain lines of discourse and disseminate its work better. It seems to have built some momentum intellectually, but it could use some fresh rubrics, a more intent focus on contemporary African social realities, and a fresh infusion of discoveries and insights of other disciplines. Even African theology’s more self-consciously innovative and theory-driven practitioners are more likely to draw their constructs from the global North than from fellow Africans.

**Conclusion**

Throughout these African intellectual and academic networks, sacred and secular, we see African thinkers seeking a distinctive voice and intellectual constructs that seriously engage their cultures, their values, and their current situation. There is widespread dissatisfaction with Western projects and paradigms, and intriguing experiments and debates, whether in psychology, anthropology or theology. Sustaining teaching and scholarship remains a struggle, even though the worst days are in the past. So what might the patterns in these fields of inquiry and service suggest for the nine topical areas for potential grant making identified at the Accra consultation? That is, after all the main question of this study, and it is met head-on in the next chapter.
III. Project Ideas: State of Play

At the Accra Consultation, the participants readily reached a consensus about nine topical areas to explore for potential grant making. In this section, we survey the current work in each of these areas and make recommendations as to what kinds of projects might be most ready to receive grant funding.

African Values

The issue that was discussed most often among our African participants was traditional African worldviews and values, the rites and institutions that fostered them, the social and personal behavior they seemed to induce, and their interaction with a rapidly changing society. So what was the state of play in African values across the fields we investigated?

Since philosophers were among the first of the postcolonial era, university-based African intellectuals to raise a conversation about the relevance of traditional ways and views, one might assume that a lively conversation about the issue is still percolating in philosophy. It is, but it seems to have migrated from the more basic philosophical questions of methodology and the classic categories of inquiry (such as epistemology) toward the fields of ethics and political philosophy. The question of how African values compare to the Western liberal tradition engenders lively discussion, for example on how J. S. Mill’s principle of liberty might relate to African communalism, or on how African conceptions of group interests and rights compare to Western liberal conceptions of human rights.\(^{156}\)

The much-discussed South African concept of *Ubuntu* continues to stimulate discussion about its value as a building block for modern African political thought.\(^{157}\) Others, however, want to emphasize that there are some less desirable attributes of African traditional values.

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in public affairs, notably social and political conservatism based on an uncritical veneration of African culture, communally reinforced authoritarianism, and initiative-inhibiting fatalism.\textsuperscript{158} And still others disagree about the desirability of incorporating traditional African institutions (chieftaincies, councils) into modern African governance.\textsuperscript{159}

African values certainly catch the attention of African scholars of gender, family, and sexuality. An abiding question is how do African traditional family structures and values respond to families being situated in urban environments?\textsuperscript{160} Gender relations raise questions about the persistence of traditional gender identities and their roles in contemporary life,\textsuperscript{161} while many studies in recent times on the spread, treatment, and prevention of HIV/AIDS also puzzle over the roles that traditional African values—or their breakdown—play.\textsuperscript{162}

The current scope of the “African traditional values” theme thus is quite broad. It factors into development studies, where various researchers see both promise and problems in the roles that traditional social, economic, and familial values play alongside attempts to enhance entrepreneurship and farming cooperatives.\textsuperscript{163} In management and leadership

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{158} E.g., Reginald M. J. Odor, “Mental Impediments to Desirable Social Transformation in Contemporary Africa,” \textit{Thought and Practice} n.s. 1:1 (June 2009): 1–29.
\end{itemize}
studies, David Lutz and fellow philosophers at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa developed an “African philosophy of management” based on the communal values of *Ubuntu*, while others puzzle over the interplay between African values and Western management norms: sometimes problematic, sometimes beneficial. In psychology, counselors wrestle over the sometimes competing aims they perceive between effective therapy and respect for traditional norms and worldviews. Christian theologians continue to work at the intersection of Christian faith and living with traditional African society and values.

In sum, contemporary African scholars’ interest, concern, puzzling over, and promotion of African traditional values is percolating across the academy. Such interaction, in fact, appears throughout the remaining topical areas.

With a topic that is so broad and nearly all pervading, how can one think of a delimited field for grants and projects? African scholars over the past two generations have sometimes expressed frustration at the ways that traditional values and institutions seem to hinder the full prospering of their communities. Yet there is a strong inclination, in these academic circles at least, to resist the Western narrative of modernization and progress. Africans must find their own methods to flourish. There must be ways to do well in the contemporary world without alienating one’s cultural roots, one’s deep being.

From the wealth of studies conducted in recent years that show the influence of “traditional values” in this or that line of endeavor—for good or for ill—African scholars could gather up what is being learned and develop fresh ways and means in various fields for putting these values to work in positive ways. For example, on a continent hamstrung by corruption in business and government, how could African values be advanced as part

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of the solution rather than, as many studies have shown, a source of the problem? So we could envisage grant making that encouraged the development of positive virtues that are grounded in African ways of thinking and doing, but also forward looking in order to enhance human flourishing in the urban and globalized Africa of today. We think this field has strong potential, both as an area of inquiry and of instruction and formation. We do not know of any current efforts to consolidate work like this, but as we have seen, there are a variety of people working on such ideas.

**African Spirituality: Traditional and Contemporary**

One simply cannot separate African traditional values from African spirituality, which suffuses human experience, animates the natural world, and richly populates all planes of existence. It includes gratitude and hospitality, and it attaches moral tints to one’s money. It involves dreams, prophecy and soothsaying, sorcery, exorcism, and healing. How have these traditional spiritual traits survived in the contemporary scene and modulated within Christianity? How might insights gained from a deeper understanding garnered from other disciplines provide “new spiritual information” for progress in both African and Western Christian thought and practice?

As we have seen in tracing the development of modern African theology, its reckoning with traditional African spirituality has been a central theme of its development. And the “Africanization” of African Christianity has become a prominent theme in its recent history. We are learning from African church historians that even though Western missionaries typically brought a postenlightenment Christianity featuring a thinly spiritualized natural world, Africans continued to see their world as thickly populated with spiritual entities and forces. And as Africans founded their own church movements, first with the older AICs and now the newer charismatic and Pentecostal ones, African spiritual sensibilities came back to the fore. This has also been the case in the older denominations, many of which have been suffused with charismatic renewal.

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Even as the Christian churches now constitute the majority religion across sub-Saharan Africa, the older spiritual practices that the churches do not accept are persisting. Traditional priests and shrines abound, and healers, using herbs and incantations, are very active across the continent. Accusations of witchcraft persist, sometimes coming in panicky waves, as we have seen recently in the deeply distressed societies of southern Africa.¹⁷⁰

So what is to be done here? Studies of traditional sacrifices, divination, and healers abound, since probably most of the religious studies departments in the larger African universities retain specialists in African traditional religions. The Nigerian universities in particular seem to be well supplied. In other places, South Africa in particular, the anthropologists add their interest. The interest in African Pentecostalism continues to grow. And the debates continue. The inculturationists engage the traditional African spiritualized world and see it as the chief distinctive and strengthening undercarriage of African Christianity.¹⁷¹ The liberationists see it as something of a distraction. What the church really needs, they insist, is to engage in critical political and economic analysis in order to make prophetic witness against the more earth-shaking principalities and powers of this world: capitalism and globalization.¹⁷² The more conservative evangelicals worry that a too-uncritical affirmation of African spirituality will limit the church’s ability to bring the deliverance from evil and transformed lives that they are called to bring.¹⁷³ And the Pentecostals both embrace a spiritualized view of the world and demonize most of its agents, promising healing and deliverance to those who believe. Their up-front engagement of African spirituality is a main cause, many assert, for their explosive growth in Africa.¹⁷⁴

So what might be done? For all the theological debates about African Christian spirituality, there is too little by way of grassroots exploration of it. What does it mean, in experiential terms, to be a devoted African Presbyterian, Catholic, or Pentecostal? How do ordinary Christians, probably to be heard via communicative lay leaders and activists, and in congregational studies, engage a spiritual life? What might there be to learn from their practice of it? How does one add some nuance to the well-worn adage that African Christianity is a mile


For this kind of research to flourish in Africa, there would need to be more cross-fertilization between African anthropologists and African theologians.

wide but an inch deep? We think it would be very helpful to have more studies of Christian “reception,” as theologians like to call it, including survey and focus group research akin to the remarkable study accomplished by Diane Stinton. So would more work akin to congregational studies, the ethnological technique so brilliantly practiced by American sociologists, anthropologists, and religious studies scholars to give a deeper understanding of contemporary American evangelical piety and practice. The most suggestive work of this kind thus far has been accomplished by European religious studies phenomenologists and by anthropologists of religion, such as Birgit Meyer’s studies of popular Christianity in Ghana. For this kind of research to flourish in Africa, there would need to be more cross-fertilization between African anthropologists and African theologians.

One place where this happens regularly is the Akrofi-Christaller Institute in Ghana, where Dr. Alison Howell, an anthropologist and missiologist, is now the academic dean. The ACI organized a major initiative on “Primal Religion as the Spiritual Undercarriage of Christianity” from 2007 to 2011, which convened a team of scholars researching the acceptance of Christianity by tribal people in many places of the world to share their discoveries and copublish. Two dedicated issues of the Journal of African Christian Thought, which is edited and published at ACI, conveyed their findings, and books are forthcoming. Projects of this sort, focused more intently on Africa, on congregations or other Christian agencies (e.g., campus Christian groups or bands of evangelists), and on the spirituality of their participants, could prove fruitful and perhaps engender broader interest and effort in this field.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation Studies, in African Context

As a major site for civil violence in recent decades, Africa has much at stake and much to offer for those who want to learn more about the barriers and pathways to conflict resolution and social reconstruction. Political scientists, psychologists, and theologians are making various inquiries, but few are in dialogue. Even so, African pastoral leaders seem keen to learn from them, to share what they have learned, and to apply best insights and practices.

Some earlier research on this front that we conducted for JTF discovered that while there is a goodly amount of frontline intervention in peacemaking and postconflict work at reconciliation and restoration of relationships in Africa, the scholarly literature on the topic, at least as accessed via searches in standard Western databases, is fairly thin outside of South Africa,\(^\text{180}\) which has become a center for such work.

Our more intensive tour of the African university landscape, however, surfaced a variety of research and publishing projects percolating up across the continent. We found that a variety of social scientists—psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and development studies scholars—were showing a lively interest in the topic. They pursued studies, for example, of the role of churches and civic organizations in peacemaking.\(^\text{181}\) We also found studies of the role of forgiveness

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and of additional Christian virtues—notably hope and testifying to truth—and the role of gender, especially women, in conflict resolution.

Across the continent, religious studies and theological scholars engaged the topic as well. In Kenya, for example, Susan Kilonzo of the University of Maseno wrote on Muslims’ and other ethno-religious minorities’ roles in the postelection violence of 2008, while in Uganda, Therese Tinkasiimire and Christine Mbabazi Mpyangu studied the role of religion and rituals in reintegrating female “child soldiers” abducted by the Lord’s Resistance Army in the northern part of their country. Theologians from conflict-ravaged regions wrote biblical studies of forgiveness and conflict transformation. Burundian Isaac Mbabazi wrote on the role of interpersonal forgiveness in the Gospel of Matthew, while Nigerian Priscilla Adoyo applied biblical principles of conflict transformation to the violent outbreaks in Jos and Kaduna, in northern Nigeria.

While we made no intensive search for interventions and engagement in conflict transformation work around the continent, we found instances of it nonetheless. For example, the UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa lists a half-dozen peacemaking NGOs in Liberia, which is still struggling to recover from a decade of civil war: the Africa Peace Mission, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, the Liberian National Students Union,

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the Mano River Women’s Peace Network, the Student Christian Movement of Liberia, and the Perry Center for Peace, Security and Development.¹⁸⁷

In another war-torn region, we see a different set of institutional examples: In the eastern reaches of the Congo, two evangelical Christian universities have sprung up as responses to the need for peace-building and holistic community restoration. The Christian Bilingual University was founded in Beni, the epicenter of the fighting in the eastern Congo, in 2007 by Musiande David Kasali, a Congolese theologian and former head of the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology. One can hardly imagine a more impossible place to build a university, but Kasali said that he and his countrymen had heard God’s call: “We must rebuild our nation,” Kasali insisted: “We need Christian leaders who will serve God’s reign. Surely we have seen enough of Satan’s hand in our land.” One of the core emphases of the university that all students must engage is peacemaking and conflict transformation. Bunia, in the far northeastern corner of the Congo, is home to Universitaire Shalom, which was built in 2007 on the organizational foundation of a pre-existing theological school. Shalom’s president, Robert Bungishabaku Katho, explains that 50,000 people died in the fighting in and around Bunia in the Congolese civil war, but the theological school was a place of refuge. It seemed natural, then, to name it Shalom, Hebrew for peace and well-being. And today its students and staff are peacemakers in a still-tense environment.

Of all of the African locations for work on forgiveness and reconciliation, none can match South Africa. There are three freestanding NGOs that are particularly productive, influential, and operating in various parts of Africa:

- Centre for the Study of Reconciliation and Violence, founded 1989, has offices in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Hugo van de Merwe, its director of research, has published a great deal on South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission and has ranged out to look comparatively at postconflict “transitional justice” cases across Africa. The centre produces research reports, policy briefings, training materials, and lists externally published works by its staff.¹⁸⁸

- Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, founded 2000, was created to ensure that the lessons of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission would be conserved

¹⁸⁸ http://www.csvr.org.za/
and incorporated. It has since developed a brief for peacemaking and training, with a special interest in African issues and cases. It is currently working in Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. The staff is quite productive and the institute itself seems theologically informed.\textsuperscript{189}

- African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), founded 1992, does much training in mediation and conflict transformation. To date, it reports, some 20,000 peacemakers have received its training. ACCORD publishes \textit{Conflict Trends Magazine}, policy papers, and the \textit{African Journal on Conflict Resolution}, founded 1999. Currently ACCORD has projects in South Sudan, Somalia, and Burundi.\textsuperscript{190}

Add to these two South African university-based conflict resolution centers or programs:

- Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), founded 1968 at the University of Cape Town. CCR was founded by Dr. Hendrik W. van der Merwe (1929–2001), a Dutch Reformed Afrikaner who became a Quaker and pursued peacemaking and racial reconciliation.\textsuperscript{191} CCR pioneered the processes of negotiation, mediation, conflict analysis, intervention, and resolution that became the standard fare of conflict transformation training in southern Africa and beyond. CCR fosters research and training, convenes consultations, and disseminates knowledge via policy briefs, research reports, training materials, and books. It is the mother institution of this field.\textsuperscript{192}

- The program in Trauma, Forgiveness and Reconciliation Studies, recently begun at the University of the Free State, deserves brief mention too. It is led by Prof. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, a clinical psychologist who served the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as coordinator of victims’ public hearings in the Western Cape. Already the program is convening public conferences, engaging several research areas, and taking on postgraduate students to learn the field and assist with the research.\textsuperscript{193}

So what might be the capabilities and prospects for grant making? The South African NGOs and university-based centers are certainly ready and willing to mount funded initiatives. There is bubble-up scholarly interest in the topic across the continent and a fairly thin array of relevant NGOs on the ground in various countries as well. But we found only one current journal in the field, the one published by ACCORD: the \textit{African Journal on Conflict}

\textsuperscript{189} \url{http://ijr.org.za/justice-and-reconciliation-in-africa.php}
\textsuperscript{190} \url{http://www.accord.org.za/}
\textsuperscript{191} On the pioneering role of Dr. van der Merwe, see Jannie Malan, “From Going Between to Working Together: Learning from Structures and Attitudes in South Africa’s Transition,” \textit{African Journal on Conflict Resolution} 13:3 (2013): 21–43.
\textsuperscript{192} \url{http://www.ccr.org.za/}
\textsuperscript{193} \url{http://traumareconcil.ufs.ac.za/}
Resolution. Another one found on African Journals Online, the East African Journal of Peace and Human Rights, published by the faculty of law at Makerere University in Uganda, lists a 2008 issue as its latest published volume. It appears as though the larger organizations out of South Africa, with their busy websites and varieties of books, articles, research reports, and policy briefings, are the main communications media and project organizers on the continent. What that suggests is that grant makers will probably continue to prefer to fund projects organized, convened, and disseminated out of the South African agencies. We found evidence of JTF having done some such work via the South African peace and reconciliation NGOs in the recent past.194

If JTF desired to foster research on this phenomenon more broadly—for example, the role of churches in promoting peacemaking and reconciliation in a variety of African conflict and postconflict situations—such projects would seem feasible, and the South African agencies would be likely places from which to mount such work, given their operating capacity and their widespread contacts across the continent. We see that there are at least a few researchers scattered about the rest of Africa who have done some work of this kind. Another new step might be to engage not only the empirical researchers, but the normative thinkers as well— theologians and philosophers. What might they add, and learn, from concrete instances about the complex interactions of justice and mercy, restitution of wrongs and reconciliation, forgiveness and accountability? This field is quite thinly populated and networked outside of South Africa, but there are interested thinkers out there. It would be most helpful for the South African agencies to build capacity to sustain scholarly research and networks in the countries and regions where the conflict resolution occurs.


Several participants at the Accra consultation, upon hearing JTF officers say that the foundation’s forthcoming work in philosophy would focus on the nature of human agency, expressed hopes that there would be opportunities for African philosophers, and perhaps the more philosophically minded scholars in other fields, to study the nature of human agency also. The topic seemed important for Africans to engage, several thought, because

African popular culture might be at a critical tipping point now, between an older fatalism and newer expressions of hope for a better future. What can we learn about what aids and hinders “forward thinking,” as Sir John Templeton liked to say, in an African context?

Certainly, a desire for African agency and for intellectual independence and initiative are major themes across the entire African academic and intellectual scene over the past half-century. As we have seen, scholars in each of the disciplines we have examined have been searching for distinctly African modes of thought and practice in their disciplines. But a critical question looms over this quest: Do traditional African thought, culture, and worldviews help this quest? Do these inheritances have seeds of agency and forward thinking in them, or are they, like their counterparts in other traditional societies, fatalistic and change averse? Quite a few African philosophers seem to have decided for the “modern project,” engaging the ideas of Locke, Mill, or Marx—or even Rorty.195 Others, however, dispute the idea that traditional African worldviews are deterministic and not conducive of dynamism. Kwasi Wiredu, the esteemed Ghanaian philosopher, argues that traditional Akan thought did lead to a belief in “the predetermination of destiny” that often lead to fatalism, but he insisted that “Akans are not generally fatalistic.” More likely, he claimed, was an overriding sense of destiny and responsibility. Most Akan people, he thought, “assume a bright destiny and live and work with high motivation even in the face of adversity.”196

Even so, we did not find much intellectual activity that focused on issues of agency, aspiration, and initiative. There were some philosophers in Nigeria, for example, that seemed to be asking questions in the neighborhood of this topic, such as “emerging issues in African philosophy of mind” and a “Rortyian critique of traditional epistemology.”197 Issues of agency, initiative, and forward thinking arise also in the field of “development studies,” which focuses on the economic and more holistic flourishing of communities. Researchers, for example, of “health-seeking behavior”—or the lack thereof—in regard to HIV/AIDS see fatalism as a factor in such behavioral patterns.198


196 Kwasi Wiredu, Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 132. We can’t help but notice the parallel here to the arguments closer to home about the effects of the doctrine of election among Calvinists, who are accused of fatalism but whose prime historical reputation is as driven activists.


These questions also arise in religious studies, intriguingly, where they intersect with development studies. So are some religious persuasions more conducive to economic flourishing and “health-seeking behavior” than others? We found two studies that argued just so: one comparing Christian, Muslim, and traditionalist women in regard to five commonly identified behaviors that enhance women’s well-being.¹⁹⁹ This study claimed that Christianity had a positive effect. Another study looked at the meaning of being “born again” among Malawian young people and showed that they identified it with lifestyle changes and life aspirations that were conducive to prospering and staying well.²⁰⁰ Even so, we did not find what might appear to be sustained interest and conversation directly on matters of agency and their philosophical or religious impact in Africa. It is a topic with much promise, but any grant making would need to be developmental in nature, enabling some intellectual entrepreneurs to organize and stimulate interest. As we explain later, however, we think that the general idea of African agency has much promise as an organizing theme.

Religious Freedom and the Rule of Law in Africa

Several African participants at the Accra consultation spoke about the crisis of governance and basic law and order in places across the continent, and the frequent disconnects between personal Christian piety and public responsibility. Others spoke of the rise of radical Islam, and they laid its misdeeds at the feet of failed law enforcement. A possible approach for JTF, the Accra participants suggested, would be to support highlighting and propagating the positive contributions to religious freedom and the rule of law that can come from existing Christian, Muslim, and traditional religions’ teachings.

If there are prospects arising for centers for research, education, and advocacy of religious freedom in Africa, JTF officers suggested at the Accra meeting, JTF might be able to support their early development. JTF is currently supporting some major initiatives to study and advocate for religious freedom. A major case in point is the Religious Freedom Project at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University, which began with funding from JTF in 2011. Its purpose is to examine “different understandings of religious liberty as it relates to other fundamental freedoms; its importance for democracy; and its role in social and economic development, international diplomacy, and the

struggle against violent religious extremism.\textsuperscript{201} And currently the Templeton Religion Trust is considering a fifteen-nation international research project to find out 1) what Christian communities have done to respond to persecution, 2) why Christian communities respond in the ways they do, and 3) what kinds of results Christian communities have seen from their lines of response.

So how might work of this sort play out in Africa? We have found very little concerted attention being given to issues of religious freedom (or the lack thereof) in sub-Saharan Africa. We searched through the NGO directory and database of the UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, and we found nearly 700 NGOs in African nations that stated either peacemaking or human rights as their fields of activity. Yet none of them made a specialty of looking after religious freedom.\textsuperscript{202} In our searches of scholarly literature on human rights in Africa too, we found very little at all on religious freedom, even though the fields of human rights and democratization in Africa are very lively ones.\textsuperscript{203} Such inattention to religious freedom, evidently, is fairly common in the realm of human rights research and advocacy more broadly. A study conducted by Georgetown University’s Religious Freedom Project reviewed 323 major reports published by Human Rights Watch from 2008 to 2011 and found that religious persecution was a focus of only 8 of them. Only half of those were on the persecution of Christians, even though the International Society for Human Rights estimated that Christians are the victims of 80 percent of such acts.\textsuperscript{204}

The most common form of religious repression or persecution in sub-Saharan Africa comes not so much from the state as from other religious or ethnoreligious groups. Militant groups such as Boko Haram in northern Nigeria attack Christians, then Christians form militias and retaliate. The role of the state is not as repressor or persecutor, but as being too weak to maintain the rule of law and keep peace and good order. The other main instance of inter-religious violence recently has been in the Central African Republic, where there has been a meltdown of government and law and

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order. Tensions mount too in East Africa, where Muslim minorities in Kenya and Tanzania clash with Christian neighbors, and law enforcement is increasingly ineffective.

So the specter of diminished religious liberty does arise and has become a growing concern in sub-Saharan Africa. Assertive Muslim minorities in a number of nations have pressed for special treatment within legal systems, and they confidently argue that they have, in Islamic law, the answer to African nations’ ongoing problems of keeping public peace and order. In northern Nigeria, Islamic parties have won state elections and imposed Shar’ia law within those regions. Christian groups have reacted against such advocacy but have yet to put forward a positive agenda that incorporates religious freedom within the rule of law as drawn from a Christian vision of justice and peace. In Kenya, for example, a new constitution was approved in 2010 that concedes authority in certain cases to Muslim courts. Evangelical Christian groups campaigned against such measures, but had no positive Christian vision of the just society to offer as an alternative.205

As we have seen, African Christian theology has engaged in vigorous political theologizing. The liberationist school of African theology informed much of the advocacy emanating from the (Protestant) All Africa Council of Churches (AACC) in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, and it was the dominant religious voice in the anti-apartheid campaign in South Africa. Yet such prophetic radicalism has had a much tougher time in the post-Cold War, post-apartheid decades. It has turned its critical attention to globalization and “neoliberal” capitalist forces, but it has had much less to say about the corruption and ineffectiveness of African regimes. As we have also seen, an attempt to develop a “theology of reconstruction,” with an emphasis on human rights, democratization, and accountability, was pioneered by Jesse Mugambi of Kenya with the endorsement of the AACC; and in South Africa, Charles Villa-Vicencio offered a version as well. Yet this outlook has not gained much traction.

So what might be done about religious freedom and the rule of law? A promising effort at raising awareness and seeking the collective wisdom of Christian leaders from across the continent has been conducted by Lamin Sanneh, the Gambian historian and mission theologian at Yale.206 Following consultations with Protestant and Catholic leaders in 2010 and 2011, this consultative group issued the “Accra Charter of Religious Freedom and Citizenship,” which states in distinctly African terms a Christian vision of the role of religious conviction in shaping the good society in a religiously plural situation. Sanneh’s group stated, in sum, that:


As Christians we feel a particular burden to put forward a positive vision for how we worship the living God and point the way to God’s reign, while giving due regard and respect to the governments under which all people, of all faiths, live together as fellow citizens. We are deeply convicted that faith gives its noblest expression in settings where all are free to follow their religious convictions and freely serve the common good; and where government secures the peace and good order taught by all the world’s great faiths, affords its citizens the right to live freely, and recognizes their power to hold it accountable.207

Sanneh has met the group at various sites since then as part of an ongoing effort to persuade church leaders that the African churches very much need public theology, and it needs to address the pressing public issues of the day on the continent—inter-religious tensions, dictatorial abuse of power, and the breakdown of the basic systems of law and order.

But how might advocates of such ideas elicit ongoing attention within Christian institutions? We do not see a great deal of capability on the ground at the moment specifically aimed at advancing such work. There are a few church-related institutes, such as the Beyers Naude Centre for Public Theology at the University of Stellenbosch, founded by the South African Reformed theologian Nico Koopman, but we have not found significant networks for this field or dedicated publications.208 So if JTF desires to foster work along these lines, it would need to be pioneering work, with a developmental set of expectations behind any investments.

One possibility might be to provide project funding for pre-existing institutions with similar commitments to develop fresh ideas and the means to encourage their uptake, such as workshops for pastors and lay leaders and seminary and Christian university curricula. We think that the Beyers Naude Centre could conduct such work. Or one might envisage such projects within the major theological education agencies on the continent, including the conservative evangelicals’ Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA); the other Protestant regional groups, such as the West African Association of Theological Institutions (WAATI), the Association of Theological Institutions in East Africa (ATIEA), and the Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa (ATISCA); the international federation of Catholic universities and superior institutes; the Organization of African Instituted Churches’ Department of Theology, and the Association for Pentecostal Theological Education in Africa (APTEA). The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, which has published quite a bit of what might be termed public theology, should be considered also for such ventures.


208 Godfrey Ngumi, a theologian teaching at Kenyatta University, makes a case for public theology in education for ministry but gives no examples of places where it is being done. Nico Koopman, director of the Beyers Naude Institute and dean of the faculty of theology at the University of Stellenbosch, makes the case also, but has no concrete examples of it other than his own. See Ngumi, “Political Theology in Theological and Bible Colleges Curriculum,” pp. 689–697; and Koopman, “Theological Education for Dignity in Africa: A Public Theological Perspective,” pp. 698–706, in *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa*.
Character Formation Curricula and Assessment

Several participants at the Accra consultation spoke about the need for concerted work with the rising generation, which has grown up outside of the formative influence of traditional rites and institutions. Might JTF sponsor projects to assess work in this field, highlight creative initiatives, and develop solid programs and materials?

If there is a coherent and connected conversation or movement for character formation initiatives and assessment on the continent, it must be fairly well hidden. Here is what we found: First, some articles from within the conversation about public health and sex education, once again part of the great mobilization on the continent in response to HIV/AIDS. Second, curricular reforms in post-apartheid South Africa include values education, and there is an ongoing discussion, evidently, about how to frame and conduct these programs in an ethnically and religiously plural society. And third, we encountered a number of articles that called for character formation in the schools, without mention of any concrete examples of where it had been tried or of current initiatives being planned.

The website of the UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa lists hundreds of NGOs across the continent that focus on the needs of children and youth and on education in particular. No doubt there are many that have an interest in character formation and in the creation and assessment of curricula for that purpose. Yet it would take some focused research aimed at those networks to discover what is being done.

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and what the needs are. There may well be opportunities therein to invest in some helpful projects, but they lie beyond the scope of our research.

At the Accra meeting, two of the participants who were most engaged in this topic were senior academic officers of Catholic universities. Both of them said that they are working in a number of ways to cultivate virtue in their students and to make character formation a distinctive feature of their campuses. And it is clear from recent accounts of the formation of new Protestant universities that virtuous character formation—and the obstacles to it on state university campuses—clearly have been strong motivators behind the founding of these universities and remain one of their abiding concerns.212

So JTF might consider grants to networks of African Christian universities to clarify how they are hoping to achieve the development of virtues in their students, how they might assess the effectiveness of what they are doing, and how they might improve their work in this field based on their assessments. There is an agency that links Christian universities in Africa, the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education, which regularly conducts faculty and staff development seminars on faith and learning in the various regions of Africa. It might prove a likely site for such a project.213

Positive Psychology in African Contexts

One persistent theme across several of our fields of study has been African resilience, initiative, and creativity, even in the face of daunting social, economic, and political problems on the continent. Several members of the Accra consultation responded positively to JTF officers’ reports about recent research grants and plans to do more within the field of “positive psychology,” a movement to research the conditions, factors, and personal attributes that contribute to human flourishing or “positive development.” Advocates of the field stress the need to balance off the more traditional approach that focuses on pathologies and problems in human consciousness and behavior. Our lone African psychologist at the Accra consultation, Dr. Araba Sefa-Dedeh of the University of Ghana, was particularly interested in seeing research aimed at young people, asking what makes them feel capable, what builds them up? What resources do those who do well rely upon?

So what did we find? We found not a huge body of work but some interesting studies nonetheless. And this time they were not so much percolating up from scattered sources, as with other topics, but from two regions in particular. There were three thematic kinds of


studies: on personal fulfillment and well-being,\textsuperscript{214} on resiliency and strength in the midst of distressed circumstances,\textsuperscript{215} and on the personal ingredients for entrepreneurial success.\textsuperscript{216}

And where did we find these works? At least a half-dozen scholars at the University of Ibadan in southwest Nigeria are working on topics relevant to positive psychology. Ibadan faculty members A. O. Adejumo and Sunday Samson Babalola have been recent and frequent publishers in these areas. Indeed, one of the strongest regional concentrations of psychologists and psychological research and publishing with relevance to this field appears to be in southwestern Nigeria, especially at the University of Ibadan, at Covenant University (a Pentecostal university located not far from Lagos), and at Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) in Ile-Ife.

Also in Ile-Ife is a research center, the Ife Centre for Psychological Studies/Service, which was founded in 1993 by a prominent faculty member of OAU, Professor Akinsola Olowu, who has been dean of social sciences there and also at Redeemer University, a Pentecostal university north of Lagos. The Ife Centre has published IFE PsychologIA continuously for twenty-one years and it is arguably the best psychology journal on the continent outside of South Africa.

Given the critical mass of psychological research and publication in this region, we think that it shows some promise as the location for initial convening, and perhaps some collaborative research subsequent to that, in positive psychology.


Another regional concentration of interest appears to be in South Africa, where social psychology and management/leadership psychology have come to the fore. We found related articles published over the past decade by professors at Rhodes University and the universities of Witwatersrand, Cape Town, South Africa (UNISA), and KwaZulu-Natal, and we noted that the University of Pretoria listed positive psychology as a research area of interest.

A closer examination revealed that there is also a very active and productive center that focuses on positive psychology and kindred approaches to the study of people and institutions. It is the Optentia Research Focus Area of the University of the North-West in Potchefstroom, South Africa. It includes five ongoing research programs with robust publishing in the following areas:

- Flourishing in institutions
- Pathways to resilience and posttraumatic growth
- Psychosocial well-being and communal thriving
- Unlocking potential in educational processes
- Talent management

Optentia also hosts symposia, lectures, and conferences, has a large group of affiliated social science professors, and delivers postgraduate degree programs. To date Optentia has focused its work on South Africa and has built some networks out to European and Australian universities. But perhaps there might be an interest at Optentia in helping to build and strengthen this field in other regions of Africa as well. Between these two sites, in Nigeria and South Africa, we are encouraged to think that some creative projects in positive psychology could develop.

**Science, Health, Technology, and Creation Care**

At the Accra meeting we heard a need voiced early and repeatedly for opportunities to teach pastors about science, technology, and the environment. On the fourth day of sessions sponsored by the Issachar Fund, the participants settled quickly on a discussion of how to understand the churches’ and religious leaders’ disconnection from these concerns and ways to remedy it. We discussed research and communication as to why this disconnect exists, training and curricular development for seminary professors and church leaders, and integration of these themes into the initial and continuing education of pastors.

Our search thus focused on places where these fields of inquiry were being addressed in relationship to religious communities and commitments.

**Religion and science.** In the realm of religion and science, generally speaking, we ran into some very interesting artifacts: evidence of JTF-funded activity via the Metanexus

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217 http://www.optentia.co.za/index.php
Institute’s “local societies” awards, circa 2003–2005. The Metanexus Institute website shows seven associations that began with grants from these sources:

- Dialogue in Religion and Science Group (DRS), Moi University, Kenya
- Association for the Study of the Interplay between Religion and Science, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria
- Nigerian Association for the Study and Teaching of Religion and the Natural Sciences, University of Ilorin, Nigeria
- Religion and Scientific Promoters Among the Youth in Uganda, Scripture Union of Uganda
- African Areopagus Society, Uganda Christian University
- ILASH: Institute of Leadership, Applied Science and Human Security, Kampala, Uganda
- Department of Dialogue in Religion and Science, United Religious Initiative, Kampala, Uganda

These groups sponsored a variety of activities, such as religion and science youth clubs, annual scholarly symposia, university courses in science and religion, and some publications too. While it is difficult to find ongoing activity for a number of these, the Kenyan organization, Dialogue in Religion and Science (DSR), seems to have accomplished much. It is hosted at Moi University in western Kenya by Prof. Adam Kiplangat arap Chepkwony of the religious studies department. Under his leadership, DSR started religion and science dialogues in every faculty of Moi University, in a number of neighboring high schools, and in other universities in Kenya. A recent visitor reports that some of these activities are ongoing. Without any follow-up project support, however, these organizations seem to have faded. That is unfortunate, because there are several topics at the science-religion interface that continue to stimulate scholarly attention across the continent and seem to speak to some pervasive popular concerns. A very recent series of consultations in Kenya sponsored by member universities of the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE) bears this out. Evidently, a representative from the Templeton World Charity Foundation attended the latest one and found the work to be promising. Perhaps some of this work can be restarted in East Africa on a trial basis.

**Health and healing.** The most persistent of African concerns at the intersection of faith and science is health and healing. Western medicine has come to stay in sub-Saharan Africa, but many Africans still call on traditional healers for help with illness. And now there is a very dynamic third party to this discussion, the Christian healers of the African-instituted

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and Pentecostal churches. So how does one understand African belief and behavior on this complex front? We found a large and widespread body of literature on the topic.

Some of these studies, as one might have predicted, come from the huge body of research that has been stimulated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and massive funding for addressing it. But many others come from the ongoing fascination of scholars—across the continent and abroad—with the beliefs and practices of the traditional healers and of those who seek out their services. One of the reasons why people persist in seeking out the traditional healers is that Western medicine is relatively scarce, too expensive for many poor people, and its remedies are often in low supply or are in unreliable condition (e.g., expired drugs). There are a number of governments across the continent, therefore, that are seeking to document the properties of the herbalist remedies and to ensure more uniform quality. At least one researcher, however, cautions that such reductionistic research may result in distorted knowledge because it does not take seriously what the traditional healers do, which includes discernment of spiritual forces and incantations to counteract them.

Religious studies scholars and theologians weigh in on the topic as well; they delve into the worldview interactions between healers, African and Western, Christian and traditionalist. They ask about the meaning of illness. And they explore the roles that religious agents play within Western health systems.

On this last point, we found that there is an institute focusing research on this very concern: the International Religious Health Assets Programme (IRHAP). It was founded in


2002 as the African Religious Health Assets Program (ARHAP), following on a meeting that a group of South African scholars had with the leaders of the Interfaith Health Program of the Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia.

The IRHAP leaders say that they want to remedy “the general paucity of studies on faith based organizations working in health, both in respect of knowing what is there, and in … assessing what faith based initiatives do best … in the face of growing public health crises in many parts of the world.” For its first decade, ARHAP was housed in the religious studies department of the University of Cape Town, but then moved its base to the university’s School of Public Health and Family Medicine. It has conducted projects in Lesotho, Zambia, Malawi, Uganda, and Kenya, and has received support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Health Organization, TEAR Fund, and UNAIDS. Much of the first decade’s work was “mapping” and assessing the capabilities of religious “assets” across nations and regions. In general terms, this program is designed to integrate religious agents and agencies into the health care systems.223

James Cochrane, a distinguished UCT religious history professor and theologian, has done much to inform the thinking of IRHAP about religious communities.224 Yet this program seems most intently focused on drawing on the influence of religious activists and “aligning them” with the health systems rather than on understanding what they bring, spiritually and therapeutically, to the enterprise. The fact that religious leaders might have beliefs and practices that are at variance with those of Western medicine is seen to be a problem, not a potential gift. But perhaps some of the scholars and health care professionals who have been involved in this program might also be interested in “big questions” regarding faith and health as well the more instrumental ones that drive IRHAP? Might there be some interest in developing partnerships with continuing education networks for pastors? These questions are at least worth asking in order to see whether there is a fit with JTF mandates.

As we mentioned earlier, there are networks of theological institutions that have incorporated courses on HIV/AIDS into their curricula. One of the Accra consultation participants, Dr. Peter Okaalet, the former Africa director of MAP International, a Christian public

The fact that religious leaders might have beliefs and practices that are at variance with those of Western medicine is seen to be a problem, not a potential gift.

health NGO, was a leader in developing and promoting this effort. Another leader is the indefatigable Prof. Ezra Chitando of the religious studies department of the University of Zimbabwe, who is theology consultant for the World Council of Churches’ Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA). Given that these HIV/AIDS courses are already in place in seminaries, perhaps a long-term plan for such courses would be for them to broaden thematically to teach pastors about the theology and practices of health care and healing more generally, in African contexts. Again, this prospect seems worth exploring.

**Creation care.** Environmental issues are of concern to Africans, but these concerns cannot get much traction if they are posed in the stark terms of saving nature from humanity. Human well-being on the continent calls for a fierce struggle in many places, so the development of resources for the sake of human flourishing must be a given. In Africa, there can be no sweeping opposition of development in the name of Green causes. Prof. Ernst M. Conradie, who teaches theology at the University of the Western Cape, states the obstacles that environmental stewardship faces in South Africa:

> Many urban blacks view issues of nature conservation as a concern of the white middle class, the hobby of an affluent, leisured minority who would like to preserve the environment for purely aesthetic reasons and who seem more concerned about wildlife than about the welfare of other human beings. The primary concern for the majority of South Africans is the day-to-day struggle of surviving in overcrowded, squalid, unhealthy conditions. Some fear that attention to environmental concerns may divert scarce human and financial resources from the more pressing issues of poverty, hunger and employment and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In other African nations too, environmental concerns have similar uphill battles to gain some popular and governmental priority.

So how does one make the case for environmental protection? The late Steve de Gruchy, a Christian theological ethicist from the University of KwaZulu Natal, said that the key is to make it a “bread and butter” issue. If the land is deforested, what happens to the soil? Will the rains come? If the water is polluted, how do we keep our children healthy?

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The operative term for “creation care” in African scholarly circles, then, is “sustainable development,” and it is the subject of a widespread and lively conversation among social scientists. Among those who study religion and theology too, the topic is being addressed, with special vigor it seems in the universities of South Africa, with a modicum of attention in Nigeria and in East Africa. Several theologians of Obafemi Awolowo University, for example, have made it a special interest, looking specifically at environmental issues in the Bible.229

Researchers from across the continent are showing interest in the role that “indigenous practices” might play on behalf of sustainable development.230 Some of these studies blame Christianity for the “demystification” of the forests and streams, and some of them call for the renewal of the old taboos that keep people from disturbing sacred forests.231 Yet we recall the conversation at the Accra consultation, in which a number of the participants wondered if there was a way to convert or translate the old reverence for nature into more Christian terms. So recovering and understanding the environmental effects of traditional beliefs and practices seems potentially very valuable to Christian environmentalists as well.

What does Christian environmental thought look like in Africa? We wish we could show more of it. Searching, for example, through the recent publications of the leading scholars in the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians—some of the most societally attuned and reform-minded theologians on the continent—turned up no


relevant texts. Consulting the NGO directory of the UN Office of the Special Advisor for Africa, we see scores of NGOs pursuing varied goals of sustainable development. Some of these agencies state a Christian support base and mission. Indeed, two of the most dramatic successes in African grassroots environmental action—tree plantings by the millions—were organized by Christian grassroots leaders. Shona people in rural Zimbabwe, mostly in AICs, developed one of them. The other is the famous Green Belts Movement in Kenya, led by the courageous Christian activist Wangari Maathai, which contributed to her winning a Nobel Peace Prize. The All Africa Council of Churches (AACC) and some of its member regional councils have hosted several environmentally themed conferences in recent years and have posted declarations, and the AACC maintains a thematic unit on “Climate Change and Care for Creation” under its larger program on “Empowerment and Capacity Building.” Yet it is difficult to find places where addressing these issues is sustained and is gaining traction.

Only in South Africa do we find clusters of theologians and ethicists who continue to address these issues in a concerted way: at the department of religion and theology at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), and at the School of Religion and Theology at the University of KwaZulu Natal. One of the four stated areas for collaborative research by the theologians at UWC is on Christian ecological theology, led by the very industrious Dr. Ernst M. Conradie. With his convening, writing, and collaborative work with colleagues and graduate students, Conradie has been laying down a Christian theological basis for environmental justice and nurture based on biblical exegesis and theological frames developed from a mostly European theological

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232 Musa Dube, Philomena Mwaura, Nyambura Njorge, Mercy Oduyore, and Isabel Phiri were all author-searched on EBSCO Host.


At KwaZulu Natal’s School of Religion and Theology, the late Steve de Gruchy was the leading advocate for Christian thinking and action in creation care. His protégés, notably Andrew Warmback (cited above), carry on in his wake. The School’s senior theological ethicist, Klaus Nürnberger, also has weighed in with a major treatise. De Gruchy’s approach was much more concrete, people centered, and case driven than Conradie’s high theology. And it has been fortified by the School of Religion and Theology’s longtime postgraduate program in theology and development. Yet both De Gruchy and Conradie seem to have couched their views in vital Christian piety.

So it appears that if the IF staff members are interested in developing initiatives in creation care, it would be worth investigating as to whether some institutional partnerships involving these South African centers might help make good things happen elsewhere on the continent. KwaZulu Natal maintains an exchange partnership with the Akrofi-Christaller Institute in Ghana, a center for contextual theology and cultural studies. Conradie of UWC also appears to have a collaborative partnership with the Beyers Naude Centre for Public Theology in the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University. And the Stellenbosch faculty, as well as KwaZulu Natal’s, draws advanced students from around the continent.

Outside of this South African tandem, Christian work in creation care is so scattered and thin at present that a patient and broadly collaborative developmental approach might be just what is needed. It would start with careful synthetic thinking, then adapting and messaging for the consumption of pastors and lay leaders, then workshops via partnerships with a variety of Christian ministry and service training agencies on the continent. And then, one might devise an initiative to put creation care on the curriculum of Christian schools of ministry and universities across the continent. That looks more like a fifteen-year plan to develop a field rather than a three- to five-year round of grants. But if the IF staff wants to help Africans concerned about creation care “build to last,” that is what it would take.

Human flourishing in a technological world. At the Accra consultation participants shared freely their misgivings regarding the impact of mass media, computing, the Internet, mobile phones, and the popular culture and values that these new devices and services bring. Yet there does not appear to be a great deal of discussion about these matters among African scholars more generally, whether social scientists, humanists, or theologians. We did find a bit of interesting literature, however, about the social impact of mobile phones.

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239 http://theologyanddevelopment.ukzn.ac.za/about.html

So our advice is to keep on the lookout for opportunities to foster such research and conversation in African Christian contexts, but the field is not ripe for investment yet.

**Christian Theology: Engaging African Realities**

In their initial review of the report from the Accra consultation, JTF officers reflected that most of the topics for possible grant making engaged theological themes and reflection, implicitly if not explicitly. Yet nowhere on the list of possible topics was an initiative in and for African theology per se. A pressing concern, addressed several times by the theologians around the table, was that “engaging Africa,” this project’s theme, was timely and urgent for Christian theology, especially the need to engage Africa as it is today. They resonated positively also with JTF’s emphasis on research for the sake of “progress in theology.” Systematic theology, Prof. Tienou remarked, had its place, but he said that he had moved more into a “mission theology” model of analysis because he felt so driven to address the gospel to culture. Theology simply must take African realities seriously, he insisted. Our research has shown that African theology’s main driver over the past fifty years has been the call to address African realities. Leading theologians have sought to address the word of God and the wisdom drawn from it by the church to a concretely African world, not merely repeating the answers that had come by way of Europe or America. African realities needed to drive the questions.

In our survey of African theology’s main currents of thought and the state of its institutional support and mediation, we saw that theology is a highly articulated, intellectually busy, and institutionally developed field. It is true that many of the institutions where Christian theology is taught and written are small, scattered, and thinly resourced, but Christian theology is present and active in most of the continent’s state-sponsored universities as well. And the sheer scope of the enterprise on the continent is quite remarkable. Even so, its two main schools of interpretation, inculturation and liberation, feel a bit played out.

So what are the prospects for African theology?

One of the unmet challenges for formal African theology is its relative inattention to some huge areas of Christian belief and practice on the continent.

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the newer charismatic/Pentecostal churches. Even though their theology is more created and driven by the bishops, apostles, pastors, and lay leaders of these movements than by academic theologians, it is worth more serious attention. The teaching, rituals, spirituality, and social ethics of the older generation of AICs—such as the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Nigeria, the Kimbanguist Church in the Congo, or amaNazarites and the Zion Christian Church in South Africa—have sustained the keen interest of historians, anthropologists, missiologists, and even political scientists. The newer Pentecostals are also receiving plenty of scholarly attention—again, mostly from outside of theology. Given the fact that the older AICs are absolutely huge—constituting the largest Christian groups in South Africa, for example—and that the newer Pentecostal churches are probably outgrowing the AICs now all over the continent and most prominently as urban megachurches—it would be wise for African theologians to show more interest. In both cases, Christian leaders and thinkers are developing thoroughly enculturated forms of African popular Christianity. And while liberationist theologians decry injustice and inequity, these communities are practicing effective local forms of mutual assistance and economic development. Furthermore, they


245 But see J. Kwabena Asamoa-Gyadu, Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013); and Damaris Seleina Parsiut and Philomena Njeri Mwaura, “God in the City: Pentecostalism as an Urban Phenomenon in Kenya,” Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae 36:2 (2010): 95–112. These theologians give careful attention to the theological inculturation that these movements have developed and the kinds of liberation (“deliverance”) that they promise.

246 Bompani and Frahm-Arp, Development and Politics from Below. But see also Paul Gifford, Ghana’s New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), which argues that these churches teach people to exploit neoliberal economic and political dynamics rather than to seek justice for all.
show forms of piety and practice that may well hold some answers for the renewal of older Christian communions.\textsuperscript{247}

The South African theologian Tinyiko Maluleke, writing a dozen years ago, saw even broader prospects coming from such sources. He surveyed the African social, political, and theological scene and sensed that “our inherited frameworks, theological methods, and metaphors are increasingly being seen as inadequate if not expired. Africa finds herself in a ‘new place’ and its thinkers and leaders are desperately looking for new language and new frameworks.” In the face of multiplied frustrations in South Africa and crises across the continent, he saw Africans “fashioning out their own ways of being.” They were showing a “creative, innovative and agentic spirit.” He denied any attempt to conjure up “positive thinking” in a sort of conservative behaviorism. Rather, he wanted to pay better attention to African perseverance and agency, in spite of horrific legacies and current conditions. He saw this new approach taking “fraudulent post-colonial nationalism” to task as well, turning the prophetic edge now to unjust African overlords. He called for a new respect to be paid to the African poor, honoring their perseverance and creativity, in religion as well as in society and the economy.\textsuperscript{248}

Of paramount importance, Maluleke thought, were the women—and the women theologians who articulated their creative piety and practical efficacy. African women’s theology, he said, “has been by far the most prolific and challenging” across Anglophone Protestant Africa, at least in recent decades.\textsuperscript{249} He also cited the work of Sanneh and Bediako that emphasized African agency as the major means of the continent’s Christianization and the growing recognition of several radical South African theologians of the sociopolitical importance of the AICs, notably their ability to imagine and live out a prophetic vision for the reign of God. Maluleke worried about the tendency to romanticize these popular and populist initiatives, and he did not want to minimize the history of


\textsuperscript{249} Maluleke, “Rediscovery,” 160.
oppression across Africa or the sins of the oppressors. Even so, he hoped that a theology of agency might prove not only illuminating for the theologians and others called to interpret current reality, but empowering for ordinary people as well.

African Christian agency is an apt rubric for understanding the other emerging trends in African theological circles. Certainly it signifies the remarkable mobilization of theological schools to teach pastoral skills for combatting HIV/AIDS, including the Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA). Its theological unit at the University of Zimbabwe, led by Ezra Chitando, is developing a pastoral theology to undergird it. Agency would embrace the efforts of pastoral theologians in many places to provide spiritual insight and counseling for efforts to defuse conflicts, reconcile alienated parties, and promote a peaceful way forward. And it would incorporate the work of many more to organize and inspire communities to alleviate extreme poverty and care for the creation.

“Traditional African values” are sometimes thought to reflect a fairly fatalistic view of life, but a theology of agency might seek to cultivate other more enabling traits, which are as deeply Christian as they seem to be African, and are abundantly evident in African life today.

Professor Charles Nyamiti, a leader among Catholic theologians in Africa and now emeritus from the Catholic University of East Africa, wrote that African theology is now entering a “third phase.” After a “prolegomenal” phase from 1950 to 1975, in which the


agendas for both the “inculturation” and “liberation” schools were set, a second phase sought, until quite recently, to apply these reflections to African issues more directly. Nyamiti appreciated African theology’s practical intent, seeking to answer questions arising from mission and ministry. But now, he said, he hoped to see theological thinking become more rigorous, systematic, and balanced. He worried that contemporary African theology was shallow, reductionistic, and lacking in metaphysical depth. He thought that the liberationists’ work especially could be downright secularizing at times, lacking in the more mystical and eschatological understandings of the Kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{255} Inculturation theology, he said in another study, has focused largely on Christology and secondarily on ecclesiology, but there is so much more to do. Other African traditional ideas, such as life, initiation, healing, naming, word, and communality all urgently need theological work, he said. “Nothing less than well-organized team-work involving African scholars in theology and other scientific disciplines can duly and efficaciously realize such an urgent and gigantic project.”\textsuperscript{256}

In 1998, Tite Tiénou, an astute observer and spokesperson for the more conservative evangelical Protestants in Africa, lamented that many in these circles still wrestled with grassroots distrust and disparagement of theological reflection and analysis. Even so, evangelicals had made great strides in developing theological institutions over the past twenty-five years, he thought. But he worried that what was currently on offer was quite fragile. He hoped for a major push to develop the infrastructure that would sustain serious and deep theological inquiry. What was needed? Tiénou presented a list of all the things that Europeans or Americans might take for granted as necessary for sustaining scholarly enterprise:

- a monograph series
- issues and topics colloquia
- textbooks
- research centers
- professional newsletters
- theological journals
- university departments of religion (with evangelicals serving therein)
- pastors’ theological workshops
- professional societies
- research grants
- better equipped and staffed theological schools
- theological students’ fellowships


• theological institutes and seminars
• specialized grassroots and lay theological training programs

Tiéno spent much of the 1990s working on such things as the founder of a new, postgraduate-level theological school in Abidjan for Francophone West Africa and as the director of the African Theological Initiative, a major research and project awards program funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. That program did not last, but the evangelical Protestant institutions across Africa have improved significantly since the 1990s. Even so, as we have seen, any effort to strengthen African theology cannot take matters of infrastructure, media, networks, and institutional capacity for granted. That seems even more urgently true when one considers the rapid growth of Pentecostal churches and the emerging interest in theological education among the older AICs.

At the Accra consultation, Tiéno repeatedly weighed in with two concerns: 1) the need for theologians to attend to present-day “African realities” in an era of political volatility alongside rapid demographic, technological, and economic change on the continent, and 2) the need for theologians’ best ideas for ministry and witness in and through the churches to reach out to pastors and lay leaders “on the ground.” And we think that he would accept a friendly addition, which is that 3) one of theologians’ best sources for reading Africa realities is by “consulting the faithful”: seeking out the intelligence and “agency” of local Christian leaders as to what they are encountering.

So what sorts of projects might we look for in theology? Looking back over the eight other possible grant-making topics, every one suggests a rich field of theological inquiry and theological address.

**African values.** As we have seen, this is a very broad field of inquiry, but with a common set of questions about how African traditional values interact with relatively novel settings: in urban neighborhoods, on sustainable development or public health projects, in education, in politics, in conflicts and their resolution, in personal well-being and family integrity, and in businesses and bureaucracies. Theologians have had some involvement in

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258 Bill Houston and Victor Nakah, “Theological Education in Evangelical Churches,” in Handbook of Theological Education in Africa, 386–392.
these conversations, but they tend to work with some fairly dated understandings of this field. Perhaps some theologians who have some rather fresh and intensive engagement at this intersection, such as Ezra Chitando of Zimbabwe and Musa Dube of Botswana who have worked long and productively on HIV/AIDS programs, could help devise some ways to engage theologians with social scientists and humanists who have done original work with these categories.

**African spirituality.** Africa is rich with spiritual sensibility, and it is as much a present reality as a traditional inheritance. What might theologians make of this contemporary African reality? As we have suggested, the richest bodies of scholarship on spirituality in Africa today comes from outside of theology: from anthropology and from the phenomenological side of religious studies. Theologians too often accept or react to the old adage of African Christianity being “a mile wide and an inch deep” without seeking a deeper understanding of African Christian spiritual experience and reflection, and how they combine with communal dynamics to make up the religious lives of people in congregations. Theologians need to get up to speed with the religious studies and anthropology of religion people and engage with them in some closely focused studies of African Christian congregations. The influence of the AICs and the Pentecostals are of particular importance to the Christian spirituality of all traditions in Africa now.

**Forgiveness and reconciliation.** Christian theologians are allegedly experts on forgiveness, a crucial theme in Christian thought, belief and living. Social and political scientists who study conflict and postconflict “transitions,” on the other hand, make a fairly instrumental demand of forgiveness: Does it help bring satisfaction of grievances and reconciliation of estranged parties in postconflict situations, or not? What role might it play? In our estimation, each group of thinkers could benefit from the other. Christian leaders need to think carefully about where forgiveness fits in regard to the complex interactions of justice and mercy, restitution of wrongs and reconciliation, forgiveness and accountability, based on real-life cases. And social scientists and activists need to understand the deeper nuances of Christian and other African religious traditions of forgiveness.

**Human nature and human agency.** We discovered that there is not a heavy trade, intellectually, in this field of inquiry among African philosophers, theologians, or social scientists. But Tinyiko Maluleke’s naming of “agency” as an overarching theme for a theology of the

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Theologians too often accept or react to the old adage of African Christianity being “a mile wide and an inch deep” without seeking a deeper understanding of African Christian spiritual experience and reflection.
modern African experience shows that it is a way of understanding African persistence, creativity, and productivity, in the face of overwhelming challenges on every front. It would seem to be a good fit with the themes of positive psychology as well. So we should be willing to welcome some convening and project entrepreneurship on this front, putting theologians and social scientists and philosophers together on the questions of African agency.

**Religious freedom and the rule of law.** As we noted above, there are a few centers that support research and advocacy from Christian perspectives in public affairs, but they are not thick on the ground, and they do not seem to have focused intently on the basic matters of a Christian vision of citizenship and civic duty within a context of religious freedom and the rule of law. Christian agencies with a public affairs brief have focused more on combating external, “neocolonial” exploitation and pursuing economic redistribution in order to combat extreme poverty. But Prof. Sanneh of Yale has organized a conversation around some basic Christian civic principles, cast in a particularly African frame, and his conversation partners have issued a potentially useful statement of these principles. Giving these ideas a very wide reading and potential uptake would seem to be the next programmatic step for that initiative. We can envisage a project that will encourage an emphasis on civic education in Christian universities, theological schools, and practical training workshops. Again, theologians need to be in conversation with philosophers and political scientists who can help develop relevant and useful models.

**Character formation.** We understand that Christian character formation is a major concern of the Catholic and Protestant universities that are springing up across Africa. Now that many of these institutions have made it through the initial struggle to establish themselves, it is high time to do some more careful reflection about how they pursue character development on campus. As the educational leaders at the Accra consultation suggested, they need to learn more about how their efforts at character formation are proceeding. They suggested assessing the effectiveness of what they are doing, and how they might improve their work in this field based on their assessments. We think that any such assessment should not merely be about programmatic vehicles and behavioral change, but about the visions of moral and communal integrity that animate the programs. Here the help of theologians and Christian philosophers, especially ethicists, would be invaluable as well. An agency that links Christian universities in Africa, the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education, might be a likely convener for such a project.

**Positive psychology.** We were encouraged to find an active interest in this field—whether it was recognized by name, as in the Optentia program at the University of the North-West in South Africa—or in terms of psychologists’ interest in positive outlooks and behavior such as resilience, agency, growth, well-being, achieving, and communal thriving, such as we found in abundance among the psychologists of southeastern Nigeria. The Nigerians gave some evidence of looking at these traits in reference to Christian or other religious dynamics, but if the Optentia people did, it was not obvious. We saw some reference to religious
or spiritual matters only in two of the eighty-two articles this group has produced in the past four years. We are convinced that theologians could garner “new spiritual information” from these studies in positive psychology and other social sciences (e.g., studies of coping and initiative by anthropologists or “strengths inventories” of persons and institutions by other social scientists and community practitioners). And theologians and philosophers could help others understand the large deposits of wisdom about virtue that they know and study. For pastoral practice in encouraging formative “Christian discipleship,” this could be invaluable work.

Science, health, technology and creation care.

Religion and science: We noted that at the Accra consultation, several participants voiced the need for pastors and lay leaders to have a better understanding of science and gain a better appreciation of Christianity’s deep regard for investigating the creation. Given the narrowly specialized educational tracks from the bachelor’s degree-level forward for African theologians, such educational work seems critical. Several items from JTF’s “playbook” of projects in Europe and North America spring to mind as potentially fruitful for African theologians and church leaders. One is an opening up of conversations and strengthening mutual understanding between the churches’ thought leaders and leading scientists. Another is “science for pastors” continuing education seminars, led by teams of master teachers with both scientific and theological competencies. And another is curricular innovation and reform in both the theological schools and in the new Christian universities.

Health and healing: No other “big questions” on the faith and science front are so compelling to African Christians as the issues surrounding health and healing. One’s health, in African traditional terms, emanates from a fundamental life force at the core of one’s being, and any signs of ill health evoke concerns of why one’s life force seems diminished and what other forces may be besieging it. So health and illness are inseparable from spiritual questions. Mission-founded Protestant churches historically dismissed these ideas and pointed parishioners to the wonders of Western medicine. Catholics were keener to encourage belief in miracles, including healing. But many African Christians maintained older ideas about health and sought out traditional healers. The AICs and Pentecostals grant much weight to the spiritual dimension in questions of health and healing, but tend to demonize traditional healers and shun their remedies. But the questions remain about how to understand health and healing in African Christian terms. We found a fair amount of social scientific research on Africans’ beliefs and behavior regarding healing, but not so much among theologians. The one exception is the cluster of theologians and theological educators working on
HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and community care. It would be wonderful to see this group take what they have learned into these broader realms of faith and health and engage Christian theologians and health care leaders. Following on or perhaps coterminous to projects of that sort would be projects to develop formal curricula on faith, health, and healing and nonformal, continuing education work as well. Once again, the experience of Ezra Chitando, Musa Dube, and others with projects of this kind in regard to HIV/AIDS in particular would be invaluable for parlaying it out into this broader realm.

**Creation care:** This field, unlike health and healing, has less of a natural popular appeal, partially because of its history as a white settlers’ preoccupation in Africa and partially because other matters, such as advancing public health and combatting extreme poverty, seem more pressing in Africa. Yet creation care has found a natural fit within the rubric of “sustainable development,” and it has much currency in the secular mainstream of that field. Leading Christian agencies have proclaimed the need to emphasize creation care issues, but the uptake has been slow. So any work in the field on a theological and churchly front will by necessity be developmental; there is not so much to build on. Two strongholds, however, of Christian thinking and education on environmental stewardship are in South African theological programs—at the University of the Western Cape, which has a significant and longstanding “eco-theology” initiative going within its religion and theology department, and the University of KwaZulu Natal, whose School of Religion and Theology has a longstanding degree program in theology and development. If these complementary programs could form a joint effort to grow this field of inquiry among Christian theologians elsewhere on the continent and possibly help advise the startup of similar programs in various regions of Africa, it would seem to be a project with great potential for the IF to promote.

**Technology and human flourishing:** Although participants at the Accra consultation readily saw potential for work in this area, we found very little current interest in it—some among social scientists but none to speak of among theologians or philosophers. If there are some who want to make a start, IF or JTF might consider making some singular project grants to encourage them to pioneer in this field.

In sum, there are “African Realities” aplenty for theologians and church leaders to address, all worthy arenas for fresh currents of thought and commitment in African theology and in the churches more broadly. When it comes to thinking about what grant making in African theology ought to engage, the answer is “all of the above!”

So how might such engagement happen? That is one of the most important questions we will take up in the final section.
IV. Project Recommendations

As this study should make clear, intellectually oriented grant making in Africa has its challenges. African intellectuals and the institutions with which they work have persevered through critical times and still face serious obstacles. Higher education and other inquiry-promoting institutions are fairly thinly seeded across a vast continent. Lines of communication for research, dissemination, and critical debate are also thin on the continent and frequently disrupted. Scholars resort to limited local and “offshore” publishing, which adds to the difficulties of building communities of discourse. The communities that do exist are still relatively fragile and susceptible to disruptions and discontinuations. Talented people have come and gone, as have journals and institutes. This sort of “churn” happens on any such front over time, but things have been more volatile in African academe and intellectual networks than elsewhere. And relationships with the more powerful and well-resourced intellectual networks in the global North often have been strained.

But at this moment conditions are improving. Universities across the continent are getting stronger and more stable. And the “South Africa factor” in relation to the rest of the continent may be critical to the whole enterprise. African intellectuals in diaspora are more in contact with their colleagues on the continent than ever and are narrowing the continental divides in a variety of fields. External funding for research and research-related action seems to be peaking as well. The funding is also more targeted than ever before, and this causes some distortion, no doubt, in shaping research decisions, but it is making for increased scholarly productivity nevertheless. JTF’s funding interests, which aim at the “big questions” of the natural world and of human existence rather than the more instrumental “big problems” approach of other foundations, offer African intellectuals opportunities to explore questions that other major funders do not address.
do not address. So there are good prospects, we believe, for JTF to invest in some very interesting and beneficial projects.

Grant-making Recommendations

Given the challenges and opportunities that this report has brought to light, we have a variety of recommendations to make, both about the kinds of grants or grant-making initiatives to pursue and how to pursue them.

First, we see relationships between the nine topical areas that suggest to us that JTF could sponsor two substantial initiatives that would afford opportunities for fresh work at their intersections: one with Christian theological inquiry and missional concerns at its center, and the other encouraging a common outlook and set of approaches in the social sciences.

1. Develop a grant-making program in Christian theology, focusing on “African Realities and African Hope.” Encourage African theologians to make “progress in theology” by means of closer interaction with scholars in the social sciences and the humanities who are doing research on contemporary African realities within the other topical areas we prioritized at the Accra meeting. The main approach would be a “mission theology” orientation that asks gospel-and-culture, gospel-and-society questions, particularly relating to:

- African values: tradition, modernity, and the cultivation of virtue in today’s Africa
- African spirituality, both traditional and contemporary, with an interest toward understanding how Christian and traditional sensibilities intertwine in contemporary African Christian spirituality
- Forgiveness, peacemaking, and reconciliation following seasons of profound conflict and injustice
- Moral education and character formation, particularly within African Christian educational institutions
- African understandings of humanity, destiny, and human agency
- Religious freedom, good governance, and the rule of law in Africa
- Positive psychology and an emphasis on agency and initiative more generally
- Faith and science, with a particular emphasis on health and healing

In all of these areas, we recommend encouraging theologians to work with social scientists and humanities scholars in interdisciplinary teams to develop normative Christian thought that can be infused throughout theology and ministry education, the degree programs of Christian universities, and the ranks of working pastors and lay leaders. These projects would try to gain deeper understanding of contemporary African realities on a variety of fronts, but emphasize African agency and African wellsprings of hope rather than focusing only on African problems. What can theologians learn from front-line research about African resilience, resourcefulness, perseverance, and hope? What theological themes
might emerge that will bring encouragement and empowerment to the churches and help social scientists see the spiritual implications of their research? We think that an initiative like this one could launch a good dozen interdisciplinary initiatives ranging across the continent and across these topical fields. We might hope to bring a freshness and new urgency to African theology at a time when its longstanding themes seem a bit played out.

2. Develop an interdisciplinary grant-making program in the social sciences and humanities focusing on “African Agency.” Across the continent and the variety of the topical fields we investigated, we found researchers discovering, acknowledging, and seeking to understand more deeply the resilience, resourcefulness, perseverance, and hope of African people. We recommend encouraging sociologists, anthropologists, public health and development studies researchers, psychologists, philosophers, and religious studies scholars to look for the factors that contribute to people's resiliency, agency, well-being, initiative, creativity, prospering, reconciling, and healthy living in various contexts (e.g., urban or rural, different nations, regions, religions, and ethnicities). We found quite a few studies that attended to these kinds of research, scattered across the various disciplines and topical areas. We think that it could be greatly encouraging to the scholars pursuing them to be in collaboration, to share ideas and learn from each other, and to continue to refine and promote a “capabilities” approach to studying African contemporary life rather than solely a “problems” approach. Each of these fields has professional practitioners as well as research scholars, so we might anticipate that these research projects might develop plans for dissemination and training as well.

3. There are live prospects for particular projects in several of the nine potential topical areas. JTF and IF should feel free to invite and review proposals wherever this study highlights prospects. Equipped now with a bit more knowledge of the general conditions for work on the continent and the location of some of the more promising enterprises in the nine topical areas, foundation officers should be able to negotiate some project grants with a bit more confidence. Through their initial acquaintances they now have people to contact for reviewing proposals, or for referrals of other knowledgeable people to conduct reviews. By using this study’s bibliographies and lists of important agents and agencies, JTF and IF officers can build their knowledge of the fields and issues at hand. Help with monitoring and evaluation is more within their reach as well.

4. Prospective funders should favor project designs that are more collaborative and developmental than the typical one-off research project or a simple RFP competition. What we have found out about research and scholarship in Africa is that it has been hindered by the structural problems of academic and intellectual networks on the continent. While the foundation officers may encounter senior researchers or small teams that are totally grant-ready, we have learned from veteran grant makers and research institutes on the continent that more collaborative and developmental approaches are ways to build stronger fields of inquiry.
CODESRIA, one of the oldest and most accomplished social science research agencies on the continent, provides some strong models for addressing themes and issues.\footnote{See especially a summative evaluation of CODESRIA’s recent work, which describes in detail its processes of unpacking and executing a research theme: Mohamed Salih and Rasheed Draman, “Evaluation of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA),” June 2012. Chs. 4 and 5, accessed May 24, 2014, http://www.codesria.org/spip.php?article278&lang=en.} CODESRIA’s approach is to foster multinational and international studies that choose a theme and participants from different disciplines and countries or regions. The selected research teams work on the topic collaboratively and then contribute chapters that become an edited volume. The steps and processes CODESRIA engages for these kinds of projects have proven to be quite beneficial. They run like this:

- Post call for proposals, then select about twelve to fifteen participants from different countries and disciplines
- Bring the selected participants together in a central location for a seminar to work through methodologies and theoretical frames and allow them to meet peers and create networks
- Send participants back, with some modest project funding, to finish their research and conduct their writing
- Collect and edit their entries into a volume and publish it
- Bring the group back for a conference that shares the findings and invites others to listen and contribute

One need not think of this as an exact template, but it assures that people working within different disciplines and with varying approaches can engage and learn from each other. It makes sure that at least one high-quality publication, disseminated from a well-known source, is produced. And it provides an opportunity for equipping and mentoring of younger scholars in a context where high-end methodological work and specialist reviews and critiques are not easily available to them. The CODESRIA model has produced consistently strong work.

5. South African universities and think tanks are solid and capable. In several of the nine topical areas they present some of the strongest prospects for basing initial projects. Yet we recommend that if foundation officers decide to work with South African institutions, they should put a premium on their partnering with agencies in other African nations. South African universities and their scholars have a number of unique issues to work through, and one very critical one has to do with international relationships. For many years they experienced academic boycotts and isolation from European and North American institutions and from African ones as well, but now they have been keen to re-establish links. They also feel strong pressure to intensify their community-serving work right at home. They have welcomed scholars from other African nations, especially for advanced degrees, and they have recruited quite a few of them, especially in
the early post-apartheid years, to become faculty members. Yet while many South African institutions work energetically at re-establishing ties in Europe and North America, there is huge and relatively untapped potential for South African scholars to build partnerships elsewhere in Africa.

We recommend that grant makers hold out a premium to South African agencies for their engaging in intra-African scholarly partnerships. South African projects should incorporate a variety of partnering measures with other African scholars and agencies, such as:

- codirectorship of the project
- the local agency’s coordination of field research
- coanalysis of data and coauthorship of publications

One of the goals of such projects should be to build the capacity of African agencies outside of South Africa for organizing and executing such projects in the future.

6. **Grant makers who wish to pursue the aims of African agency and the strengthening of African scholarship should be very careful, if not reluctant, to make project grants to European- and North American-based African studies scholars.** African-based scholars have seen two generations of such scholarship in their lands over the past half-century, and it has often tended to act as yet another extractive “mining” industry, benefitting its expatriate practitioners immensely but doing little to enhance African scholarship on site. Assuming that the sponsors of “Engaging Africa” want to see scholarly capacity and high-quality production advancing in Africa, they need to make those particular goals drive any research they fund on the continent. If, say, a US-based researcher or institute wants a JTF grant to conduct a project in Africa, it should incorporate the partnering measures and outcomes outlined above in recommendation five.

7. **Encourage the involvement of diaspora African scholars in projects in ways that will build up continental African scholarly capacities and achievement.** As we have seen, not all analysts of the African “brain drain” think that it continues to be purely a problem. More than ever before, relocated African scholars have the capability of staying in touch with scholars and ideas on the continent and using their talents and cultural advantages to leverage more scholarly opportunities for their African colleagues. We highly recommend that grants officers “factor in” and encourage the participation of diaspora scholars in the project plans they develop. The idea is for the expatriate Africans to serve projects and partners on the continent, however, not to take over as principal investigators. Indeed, we think that with the right programmatic pieces in place, diaspora Africans in theology and related fields could be encouraged to develop immensely rewarding ongoing relationships with African theological schools, particularly those that have been developing doctoral degree programs and research institutes. The Carnegie Foundation is sponsoring the African Diaspora Fellowship program to place African expatriated scholars from across
the arts and sciences, but they do not include scholars in theology and religious studies. We recommend that JTF consider starting a diaspora fellowship program for those fields.

8. **JTF and other interested grant makers should favor working with African agencies that already exist and are doing credible work rather than favoring the development of new agencies.** African agency would thus be as much an operational value as a research topic. There is almost no end to the number of externally funded project and program startups in Africa that have failed to flourish. We are not sure what the secrets are for “building to last” institutionally in Africa, but among them seems to be local initiative. JTF should reward such agency and resilience and find ways to strengthen its institutional grip.

9. **JTF should have an “Africa desk” that can look after overall goals and priorities, secure capable project monitoring, develop grant-making intermediaries if needed and provide cross-program communications and networking for the foundation.** JTF does not have a large staff, but it has an exceedingly busy one, on which the officers and directors have scant understanding of what each other is doing. But as we have seen, the potential projects in Africa frequently transgress the various grant making themes and disciplinary silos of JTF. International grant-making will go better if there is someone whose responsibility it is to know of all the initiatives on the continent, the people and institutions involved, and how and where the work is intersecting. Every grant making unit of JTF would benefit thereby.

**Next Steps**

No doubt JTF and IF staffs and other interested grant makers are fielding requests from African scholars already. As we suggest above in recommendation three, that is all well and good, and grant makers should feel free to use this report and recommendations to guide them in making decisions about such requests.

Even so, we think that the most promising work to be done in order to make a solid start is more collaborative and interactive. Earlier on, we asked JTF to anticipate that we would be proposing two or three “Request for Proposals” kinds of grants initiatives for JTF and/or IF to consider funding.

Now we are refining that idea based on what we have discovered about intellectual work and capabilities on the continent. We are quite taken with the CODESRIA model of approaching a topical area with interdisciplinary and international teams, engaging in methodological and theoretical seminars to sharpen and focus the intellectual tools of

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participants, requiring all participant researchers to produce article- or chapter-length essays for collaborative publication, and following up with larger public conferences to spread interest and knowledge.

So that is what we anticipate will be the outcome of the proposed “design” phase of this “Engaging Africa” project: two three-year team initiatives:261 “African Realities, African Hope,” engaging theologians with the discoveries of contemporary social scientists and humanists. These projects would try to gain deeper understanding of contemporary African realities on a variety of fronts, and especially to emphasize African agency and African wellsprings of hope rather focusing only on African problems. “African Agency,” which will engage African social scientists and some humanities scholars in understanding more deeply the resilience, resourcefulness, perseverance, and hope of African people, and developing a “capabilities” approach to studying African contemporary life rather than solely a “problems” approach.

We have secured the contingent agreement of Dr. Mwenda Ntarangwi, an anthropology professor at Calvin College and the executive director of the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education, to direct the “African Agency” planning effort, and should it eventually be funded as a project, as its project director. Prof. Ntarangwi is a well published and highly regarded scholar, including in Africa, where he was once president of the Pan African Association of Anthropologists. Prof. Ntarangwi recently completed directing a CODESRIA-funded and sponsored research program on “Children and Youth in Africa.”

We have yet to identify a director for the “African Realities, African Hope” project for theologians, but we expect to have on the planning team several veteran project organizers in Africa, notably Prof. Lamin Sanneh of Yale University, convener of several projects in Africa on African Christian thought, and Dr. Tite Tienou, currently dean of the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois, who is also the former and founding dean of the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and the former program director of the African Theological Initiative, a pan-African grant-making program funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. These two scholars have exceedingly deep and wide networks among theologians and other Christian scholars in Africa to assist with finding the ideal director.

So if we are awarded the grant for the design phase, we expect to have two fully formed initiatives to propose by the spring of 2015, each with a nominated project director and an advisory/selection committee, and with African agencies secured to host their activities. The Nagel Institute of Calvin College would provide administrative and fiscal services for the two initiatives.

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261 This design phase proposal, submitted in March to JTF, also included a third initiative, to be funded by IF. In the meantime, however, IF has changed its status from a grant-making foundation to an operating foundation. This change in status has necessitated a change in plans.
And beyond that? To be true to our theme of African agency, the natural next steps for grant making would be for initiatives to be organized and conducted out of African study centers. Through the course of this study, we have seen several African centers that seem promising, whether theologically focused or emerging in and through the other disciplines. These are places that have successfully mounted collaborative research, publishing, and dissemination/education initiatives. They have book or journal publishing operations at hand and serviceable libraries and hosting capacity. We will be able to try them out as hosting sites for the first two initiatives proposed above.

And beyond that? Even in the teeth of our advice above in recommendation number eight, we come out of this study with …

**An Institutional Dream**

All across the continent, we saw no other agency with such a powerful effect on the quality of African research and scholarship than CODESRIA, in Dakar, Senegal. It is difficult to calculate the immense beneficial effect that this one agency, which is the home to multiple research projects in any given year, is organizing not-to-be-missed topical conferences across the continent every year, is publishing eleven scholarly journals, and hosts a lively book publishing concern as well. We could not help but covet such an interdisciplinary center for African Christian thought, not only theology but also the “new spiritual information,” as Sir John put it, that circulates within and out from the other disciplines as well. Perhaps it would be better for there to be a dozen smaller entities, each with a sustainable program of research, publication, and convening and networking, but given what we have seen of the extreme difficulty of sustaining such centers on the continent long-term, the idea of a much less vulnerable, “industrial strength” institution with continental reach is quite compelling. But if it is to be built to last, we recognize, it would need to grow from some program or center that has survived the initial stages of development and is on its second or third leader. So for the longer term, we hold up a CODESRIA sort of model and will ask JTF and other funders to consider what such an institution could mean for Christian thought in Africa.

But let us begin more modestly, and in vital partnership with this generation’s remarkable array of African Christian scholars. There is much good work to do.
Appendix

Contact Information for Selected Leaders and Agencies

The report identifies a variety of people and institutions that appear to us to be natural first contacts for engaging the fields of endeavor being discussed. We list them here for handy reference.

Introduction

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**Religious Studies**


**Theology**


Gitari, David M. In Season and Out of Season: Sermons to a Nation. Carlisle, UK: Regnum, 1996.


III. Project Ideas: State of Play

African Values


**African Spirituality: Traditional and Contemporary**


**Forgiveness and Reconciliation Studies, in African Context**


**Humanity, Nature, and Agency, in African Context**


Religious Freedom and the Rule of Law in Africa


Character Formation Curricula and Assessment


Positive Psychology in African Contexts


Science, Health, Technology and Creation Care

- **Religion and science**

- **Health and healing**


**Creation care**


Human flourishing in a technological world


Christian Theology: Engaging African Realities


Index

Abubakre, ’Deremi, 44
“Accra Charter on Religious Freedom and Citizenship,” 71
Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA), 72
Adejumo, A. O., 75
Adogame, Afe, 45
Adoyo, Priscilla, 64
AFER (African Ecclesiastical Review), 53
Africa, 6
“African-instituted” churches, 42
“brain drain” from, 10, 39, 46, 98
diversity of Christian religions in, 13
number of African professionals living abroad, 31
number of Christians in (1900, 1970, and 2014), 13
political instability in, 8
research and scholarship concerning, 7
See also Africa, universities of; East Africa; North Africa; sub-Saharan Africa; West Africa
Africa, universities of, 7, 8–13, 30, 74, 91
financial cuts to in the 1970s and 1980s, 8
founding of new Christian universities, 16
importance of partnerships to, 11
laboratories of, 12
libraries of, 12
number of colleges and universities in Africa, 8
“privatizing” measures in, 11
shortage of published materials at, 10
tertiary enrollments at, 9
total student enrollment in Africa, 8
See also theological education, in Africa
Africa Development, 33
Africa Peace Mission, 64
Africa Theological Journal, 53
African Anthropologies: History, Critique and Practice (Ntarangwi, Babiker, and Mills), 17n39, 20
African Anthropologist, 19, 20, 33
African Areopagus Society, 77
African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR), 46
African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), 66
African Christian theology, 20
African Instituted Churches (AICs), 84, 85, 89, 92
African Journal on Conflict Resolution, 66–67
African Journal of International Affairs, 33
African Journals Online (AJOL), 7, 17, 21, 28
African Protestantism, 49
African Religious Health Assets Program (ARHAP), 79
African Sociological Review, 33, 36
African studies, 37–41
intellectual challenges of, 40
African Studies Association (ASA), 38
African Studies Review, 38
African Theological Initiative, 89, 100
“African Values,” 20, 57–60, 89–90
“African traditional values,” 58–59, 87
“Africanists,” 40
Afrika Zamani, 33
“Afro-pessimism,” 39
AJET (African Journal of Evangelical Theology), 53
All Africa Council of Churches (AACC), 54–55, 71
environmental conferences held by, 82
Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, 11n20
anthropology, African, 17–20, 25
“Africanist” approach to, 18–19
centrality of Africa in the development of anthropology, 17–18
persistence of through critical attacks and theoretical debates, 19
practicality of African anthropologists’ approach to anthropology, 18
research opportunities in, 20
status of in Africa today, 19–20
Appiah, Kwame, 40
Ashforth, Adam, 40n109
Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA), 52, 53
Association for Pentecostal Theological Education in Africa (APTEA), 72
Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education, 74
Association of Theological Institutions in East Africa (ATIEA), 72
Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa (ATISCA), 72
ATLA (American Theological Library Association) research database, 6, 15, 53
Azikiwe University, 45

Babalola, Sunday Samson, 75
Banana, Canaan, 45
Banda, Joyce, 30
Bediako, Kwame, 48
Beyers Naude Centre for Public Theology, 72, 83
Biafran War, 42
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 79
Bishop Tucker Theological College, 16
Boko Haram, 70

Cameroon, 21
Canada, 30
“Carnegie Commission on the Poor White Problem,” 35
Carnegie Corporation, 11n20, 35
African Diaspora Fellowship program of, 98–99
Carpenter, Joel, 5
Catholic Faculties of Kinshasa, 55
Catholic Institute of West Africa, 55
Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, 64
Catholic University of Central Africa, 55
Catholic University of East Africa, 11, 53, 55
Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), 66
Centre for the Study of Reconciliation and Violence, 65
character formation curricula and assessment, 73–74, 91
Chepkwony, Adam Kiplangat arap, 77
Chitando, Ezra, 41–42, 45, 46, 80, 87, 90
Christian Bilingual University, 65
“Christian discipleship,” 92
Christianity, 6, 42, 43, 48, 60, 61
African Christianity as “a mile wide and an inch deep,” 90
dynamic nature of in Africa, 13
growth of in Africa, 42
positive effect of, 69
Church of the Lord (Aladura), 85

Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, 72, 81
Cochrane, James, 79
CODESRIA Bulletin, 33
communialism, African, 57
Congo/Belgian Congo, 26
Conjé, Geoffrey, 35
Conradie, Ernst, 80, 82–82
“consultancy hustlers,” 32
Council for the Development of Social Science in Africa (CODESRIA), 19, 32, 39, 40, 54, 99, 101
current projects of, 34
mandates of, 34
origins of, 33
publications of, 33, 36
research monographs of, 34–35
research program of on “Children and Youth in Africa,” 100
research working groups of, 34
specific steps used by in the promotion of collaborative research, 97
Covenant University, 11, 22, 75
Cox, James, 45
creation care, 80–83, 93
Christian ecological theology in South Africa, 82–83
obstacles facing environmental stewardship initiatives, 80
role of indigenous practices in sustainable development, 81
as “sustainable development,” 81
de Gruchy, Steve, 80, 83
Department of Dialogue in Religion and Science (United Religious Initiative), 77
Dialogue in Religion and Science (DSR), 77
Dube, Musa, 51, 90
DuBois, W. E. B., 47

East Africa, 49
East Africa Social Science Research Review, 33
EBSCO research database, 6
Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA), 80, 87
Egypt, 13
election, doctrine of, 68n196
“Engaging Africa” project, future steps for, 99–101
“African Agency” initiative, 100, 101
“African Realities, African Hope” initiative, 100
Ethiopia, 13
Evangelical Church of West Africa, 49
exchange students, 12
Ford Foundation, 11n20, 31, 33
forgiveness and reconciliation studies, African, 63–67, 90
in South Africa, 65–66
Francophone Africa, 89
educational policies of, 42
and the “Negritude” movement, 47
Ghana, 10, 21, 22
Gifford, Paul, 45
globalization, 71
Gobodo-Madikizela, Pumla, 66
grant-making, recommendations for JTF, IF, and other grant-making institutions, 5, 95
grant-making should encourage the involvement of diaspora African scholars, 98–99
grant-making should favor already existing and proven African agencies, 99
grant-making should favor collaborative and developmental projects, 96–97
grant-making should focus on “African Agency,” 96
grant-making should focus on “African Realities and African Hope,” 95–96
grant-making should not favor European- or North American-based African scholars, 98
grant-making specifics for South African institutions, 97–98
JTF should establish an “African desk” for overall goals and priorities, 99
Green Belts Movement, 82
Gyekye, Kwame, 27
Hackett, Rosalind, 46
Hallencreutz, Carl, 45
*Handbook of Theological Education in Africa* (Phiri and Werner), 15n34
“Harmony Restoration Therapy,” 24
Hastings, Adrian, 45
health/healing issues, 77–80, 92–93
types of healers in Africa, 77–78
use of traditional healers instead of Western medical practices, 78, 92
HIV/AIDS, 11, 32, 36, 37, 52, 68, 73, 78, 90
courses concerning HIV/AIDS in the curricula of theological institutions, 79–80
theologians working for the prevention and treatment of, 92–93
See also Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA)
Hountondji, Paulin, 26, 27
Howell, Alison, 62
Human Development Resource Center, 24
human nature and agency, African context of, 67–69, 90–91
Human Sciences Research Council, 35, 37
Idowu, Bolaji, 26, 42, 48
Ife Centre for Psychological Studies/Service, 75
*IFE PsychologIA*, 75
*Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, 45
Ilorin University, 22
inculturation, 20
India, 8n6
individualism, 23
Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 65
Institute of Leadership, Applied Science and Human Security (ILASH), 77
International Association for the History of Religions, 46
International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE), 77, 91
International Development Research Centre (IDRC), 33
International Missionary Council, 13
International Monetary Fund (IMF), 8, 9
International Religious Health Assets Programme (IRHAP), 78–79
*Invention of Africa, The* (Mudimbe), 40
Islam, 6, 43–44, 45
radicalization of, 42, 69
Issachar Fund (IF), 4–5, 4n3, 76, 93
See also grant-making, recommendations for JTF, IF, and other grant-making institutions
Janz, Bruce, 25

*Jesus of Africa* (Stinton), 49

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, 11n20

John Templeton Foundation (JTF), 4–5, 63, 67, 69, 72, 79, 92, 93

emphasis of on research for the sake of “progress in theology,” 84

funding interests of, 94–95

geographical distribution of grants made by, 4

grants to African Christian universities, 74

grants made through the Metanexus Institute, 76–77

*See also* grant-making, recommendations for JTF, IF, and other grant-making institutions

*Journal of African Christian Thought*, 53, 62

*Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, 33

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*Journal of Religion in Africa*, 42, 46

*Journal of Religion and Human Relations*, 45

*Journal for the Study of Religion*, 45

*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 45, 53

JStor research database, 6, 15

Kagame, Alexis, 26, 48

Karamaga, Andre, 54–55

Kasali, Musiande David, 65

Katho, Robert Bungishabaku, 65

Kato, Byang, 49

Kenya, 77

Kenyatta, Jomo, 18

Kilonzo, Susan, 64

Kimbanguist Church (Congo), 85

Kresge Foundation, 11n20

*La Philosophie Bantoue (Bantu Philosophy [Tempels])*, 26, 48

Liberian National Students Union, 64

Louw, Johann, 24

Lutz, David, 59

Maathai, Wangari, 28

Madu, Raphael, 28

Mafico, Temba, 45

Makerere University, 8, 42

financial crisis at, 9

Makinde, Moses Akin, 28

Malawi, 30

Maluleke, Tinyiko, 50, 51, 86

on agency as a theme for theology, 90–91

on women theologians, 86–87

Mano River Women’s Peace Network, 65

MAP International, 79–80

Mapadimeng, Mokong Simon, 35

Mbabazi, Isaac, 64

Mbiti, John, 26, 42, 48, 50

Mbogua, Judy, 52, 53

Metanexus Institute, 76–77

Meyer, Birgit, 62

*Missionalia*, 53

Mkandawire, Thankdika, 39

“modern project,” the, 68

Moi University, 77

Mpyangu, Christine Mbabazi, 64

Mudimbe, V. Y., 40

Mugambi, Jesse, 50, 71

Murray, Michael, 5

Mwaura, Philomena, 51

Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity, 4, 100

research efforts on fields of inquiry, 5–6

research methodology of, 6–7, 7n4

Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, 65

neo-liberalism, 71

Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 33

“new spiritual information,” 60, 92, 100

Ngum, Godfrey, 72n208

Nigeria, 9, 22, 28, 43, 61, 70

“brain drain” from Nigeria to the United States, 10

growth of chartered private institutions in, 10–11

Islamic parties in, 71

Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association, 31

Nigerian Association for the Study and Teaching of Religion and the Natural Sciences, 77

Nigerian Philosophical Association, 28

Nkrumah, Kwame, 18
non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 11, 31, 32, 35, 70
NGOs pursuing sustainable development goals, 82
peacemaking NGOs, 64–65, 66–67
pro-democracy NGOs, 36
NORAD program (Norway), 10, 33
North Africa, 8n9
Nsamenang, A. Bame, 21
on cognitive development in children, 24
on psychology as an ethnocentric science, 23–24
Ntarangwi, Mwenda, 100
Nürnberg, Klaus, 83
Nyamiti, Charles, 48
on the three phases of African theology, 87–88
Nyerere, Julius, 25
familial socialism (Ujamaa) of, 25
Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), 22, 28, 75
Oduyoye, Mercy, 51
Ogbomoso Journal of Theology, 53
Okaalet, Peter, 79
Okere, Theophilus, 28
Oladipo, Olesugun, 27
Olowu, Akinsola, 75
Olupona, Jacob, 42, 43, 46
Oluwole, Sophie, 27
Optentia Research Focus Area (University of the North-West), 76, 91–92
Organization of African Instituted Churches’ Department of Theology, 72
Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern Africa (OSSREA), 32, 54
mission statement of, 32
publications of, 33
research programs supported by, 33
Orientalism (Said), 40
Orita, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies, 46
Oruka, Odera, 26–27
Pan African Anthropological Association (PAAA), 19, 20
Pan African Christian Women’s Alliance (PACWA), 52
aims of, 52
Pan-Africanist intellectuals, 47
Parrinder, Geoffrey, 42
Partnership for Higher Education, 11
p’Bitek, Okot, 42
Pentecostalism, African, 61
Perez Chapel, 14
Perry Center for Peace, Security and Development, 65
Pew Charitable Trusts, 89, 100
Philosophical Association of Kenya, 28
philosophy, African, 25–29
ambiguity in the meaning of philosophy itself, 25
debate concerning the “ethnophilosophical” approach to, 26–27
hermeneutical approach to, 27–28
institutional conditions of, 28
linguistic-analytical approach to, 27
meaning and mission of “African philosophy,” 25–26
in South Africa, 29
Phiri, Isabel, 51
Platvoet, Jan, 45
“Primal Religion as the Spiritual Undercarriage of Christianity,” 62
Prozesky, Martin, 45
psychology, African, 21–25
as an ethnocentric science, 23–24
and the issue of how to “Africanize” psychology, 23, 24–25
number of academic journals concerning, 21–22
positive psychology in an African context, 74–76, 91–92
slow development of psychology as a discipline in Africa, 21
in South Africa, 22–23
types of academic journals concerning, 28–29
Quest, 28
rationalism, 23
Redeemer University, 75
religion, 25
and science, 76–77, 92
Religion and Scientific Promoters Among the Youth in Uganda, 77
religious freedom, and the rule of law in Africa, 69–74, 91
Religious Freedom Project, 69
religious studies, African, 41–47, 61
  difference of from programs in Europe and North America, 44
  interest of in the study of Islam, 43–44
  as a product of Anglophone Africa, 42
  in South Africa, 44–45
Rockefeller Foundation, 11n20
grants of to Africa, 8–9
Roman Catholicism, 13, 55
  and traditional healers, 92
Said, Edward, 40
Sanneh, Lamin, 5, 45, 71, 91, 100
Sawyerr, Harry, 48
  science. See religion, and science
secularism, 23
Sefa-Dedeh, Araba, 74
Senegal, 30
Senghor, Leopold, 25
  embrace of “Negritude” by, 25
Setiloane, Gabriel, 50
sex education, 73
Sindima, Harvey, 47
social sciences/sociology, African, 29–37, 39, 92
  affinity of with non-aligned socialist ideologies, 30
  during the “lost years” of the 1980s and 1990s, 30–31
  funding for, 31–32
  origins of, 29–30
  salaries of social science professors, 31
  in South Africa, 35–37
Society in Transition, 36
Socio-Economic Data Centre, Ltd., 32
South Africa, higher education system of, 12–13
  and Christian ecological theology, 82–83
  educational reputation of, 13
  emergence of from the apartheid era, 12
  journal publications of, 53–54
  number of universities providing psychology majors, 22
  religious studies in, 44–45
  social sciences in, 35–37
South African Journal of Philosophy, 29
South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), 65, 66
Southern African Political Economy Series (SAPES), 35
Southern African Sociological Review, 36
spirituality, African (traditional and contemporary), 60–62, 90
St. Paul's Theological College, 16
St. Paul's University, 16
Stellenbosch University, 12, 15, 35, 83
STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics), 37
Stinton, Diane, 49, 62
Student Christian Movement of Liberia, 65
sub-Saharan Africa, 6, 17, 23, 77
  diminished religious freedom in, 71
  NGOs in, 11
Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), 33
TEAR Fund, 79
technology, impact of on humans, 83–84, 93
Tempels, Placide, 26, 48
Templeton, Jack, 4
Templeton, John, 4, 101
theological education, in Africa, 13–16
  Catholic institutions and networks for, 55
  contrast between Catholic and Protestant financial support for, 14–15
  founding of new Christian universities in Africa, 16
  number of theological schools in Africa, 13–14
  post-apartheid South African university faculties of theology, 15–16
  public theology in Africa, 72n208
  student-faculty ratios in pastoral studies institutions, 14
  theological faculties in universities, 14
  theological library conditions, 14
See also individually listed academic disciplines
Engaging Africa

theological studies, African, 47–56
approaches to Christology, 49, 88
criticism of the indigenizing theologians from
the left, 49–50
inspiration for the rise of, 48
publication network of, 53–54
and the rise of African women theologians,
51–53, 86–87
service centers of, 54–55
and the “Theology of Reconstruction,” 50–51
theology, Christian, 84–89
Christology, 49, 88
ecclesiology, 88
inculturation theology, 88
liberationist theologians, 85, 85nn245–246
Pentecostal movements, 85
theology of African Christian agency, 87, 90–91
three phases of African theology, 87–88
women theologians, 86–87

Thought and Practice, 28
Tienou, Tite, 84, 89, 100
on the items necessary to sustain a scholarly
enterprise, 88–89
Tinkasiimire, Therese, 64
Turner, Henry W., 47
Tutu, Desmond, 49

Ubuntu, 59
South African concept of, 57
Uganda Christian University, 16
UNAIDS, 79
United Nations Office of the Special Advisor on
Africa, 64, 70, 73, 82
United States, 30
African studies programs in, 37–38
University of Calabar, 28
University of Cape Coast, 28
University of Cape Town, 12, 35, 76, 79
University of Daar es Salaam, 8
University of East Africa Project, 8
University of the Free State, 66
University of Ghana, 11–12, 21, 42, 44
number of psychology majors at, 22
University of Ibadan, 22, 30, 42, 75
University of Jos, 43
University of KwaZulu Natal, 15
School of Religion and Theology of, 82, 83, 93
University of Leiden, 28
University of Nairobi, 8, 42
University of Nigeria at Enugu, 24
University of Nigeria at Nsukka, 30, 42
University of the North-West, 76, 91
University of Pretoria, 35
University of South Africa (UNISA), 15, 76
UNISA Press, 29
University of the Western Cape (UWC), 82
University of Witwatersrand, 76
University of Yaounde, 21
University of Zambia, 28
University of Zimbabwe, 41
USAID, 10
van der Merwe, Hendrik, 66
Villa-Vicencio, Charles, 50, 71

Walls, Andrew, 42
Warmback, Andrew, 83
Washington, Booker T., 47
West Africa, 43, 49
West African Association of Theological Institutions
(WAATI), 72
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 11n20
Wiredu, Kwenso, 27, 68
Word Miracle Ministerial College, 14
World Alliance of Reformed Churches’ Accra
Confession (2004), 51
World Bank, 8, 9, 31
World Council of Churches (WCC), 80
World Health Organization (WHO), 79
WorldCat research database, 6

Zambia, 21, 52
Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe, 30, 32, 38, 39, 40, 41n111
Zimbabwe, tree plantings in, 82
Zion Christian Church (South Africa), 85