

## Editor's Note

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It is with much enthusiasm I introduce and welcome readers to this *Special Issue 5.1 'Christianity and Social Change in Contemporary Africa'*, steered by our guest editors, Francis B. Nyamnjoh and Joel A. Carpenter. These richly diverse essays, that make up this Issue, form part of the research outputs and findings of a sub-project 'Religious Innovation and Competition: Their Impact in Contemporary Africa' conducted within a very impressive research initiative, 'Christianity and Social Change in Contemporary Africa', funded by the John Templeton Foundation in collaboration with the Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. The interdisciplinary research project, led by the guest co-editors, took place in 11 sub-Saharan African countries from January 2016 to March 2017.

This research initiative brought together African social scientists of different disciplinary orientations, but grounded in fieldwork ethnography, to interrogate the social impact of religious innovation and competition in contemporary Africa. This cohort of researchers, in conversation with theologians as collaborators, explored Christianity and social change in contemporary Africa, teasing out the complex dynamism of contemporary African religiosity through the prism of gender, health and healing, social media, entrepreneurship, and mutual religious encounter and exchange. The essays reveal inherent concerns and contradictions that are characteristic of new religious imaginaries on the one hand, but also the hallmarks of agency, creativity, innovation, and resilience that these religious mobilities engender in the face of social change. As our guest editors aptly remark: "the research and learning reflected in this volume may enhance understanding of religion's vital presence and power in contemporary Africa." I therefore enjoin readers, particularly scholars of religion and religiosity in Africa, to heed the clarion call of these authors "to invest new conceptual and methodological energy in researching the intricacies and nuances of what it means to be actively religious in a dynamic Africa." Such a move challenges us, as scholars and researchers, to look "towards a future in a transdisciplinary comparative border-crossing approach in the study of religion." It also illuminates the urgency and backbreaking task of demystifying and problematizing the ambivalent import of religious innovation and competition within contemporary African socio-religious landscapes.

My deep appreciation and admiration to our guest editors and authors for tilting our critical, scholarly gaze toward unpacking emerging discourses on religious innovation and competition in present day Africa.

Unquestionably, readers will find these essays thought-provokingly refreshing.

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Editor-In-Chief  
August 2019