

What Is African Theology?

“African Theology” is a household expression today in theological circles all over Africa. Yet, when we get down to defining what is really is, it is sometimes not easy to get a clear answer. For some, it is liberation theology, for others it is Black theology, for others still, it is simply theology for Africans.

(Ukpong, *African Theologies Now: A Profile*, p. 4)

Proposed Definitions

- African theology [is] the study that seeks to reflect upon and express the Christian faith in African thought-forms and idiom as it is experienced in African Christian communities, and always in dialogue with the rest of Christendom (*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 11:36).
- By African Theology we mean a theology which is based on the Biblical faith and speaks to the African 'soul' (or is relevant to Africa). It is expressed in categories of thought which arise out of the philosophy of the African people. (AACC, *Engagement: Abidjan 1969*, p. 114).
- I will use the term 'African Theology' . . . without apology or embarrassment, to mean theological reflection and expression by African Christians (Mbiti, in *African Theology En Route*, p. 83).

“African” and “Theology”

- African refers to the attempt to find points of similarity between Christian notions and those drawn from the traditional religions of Africa.
- Theology refers to the hope that the systematic theology expressed in the language and concepts of traditional religion and culture, may one day be written . . .

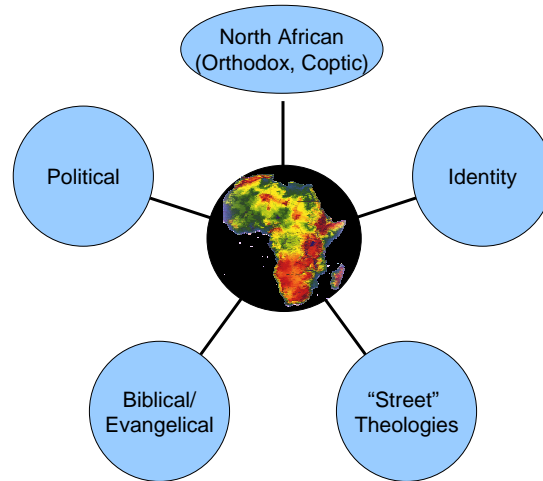
Turner, “The Wisdom of the Fathers,” 55

African Theology’s Quest

All these definitions attempt to respond to a mandate to construct a biblically-based and relevant theology that speaks to the spiritual needs of the African people. The implication is obvious. Imported theologies did not touch the hearts of the African believers because they were couched in a religious language foreign to them. Hence the quest for a relevant African theology. Furthermore, the cultural factor means that it is best that only African theologians undertake the task.

Muzorewa, *Origins*, 96-97

Types of African Theologies



Introductory Texts

- John S. Pobee, *Variations in Christian Theology in Africa*
- Jesse N. K. Mugambi, *African Christian Theology: An Introduction*
- Justin S. Ukpong, *African Theologies Now*
- Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity*
- Aylward Shorter, *African Christian Theology: Adaptation or Incarnation?*
- Gordon Molyneux, *African Christian Theology: The Quest for Selfhood*
- Benezet Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context*
- John Parratt, *A Reader in African Christian Theology*
- Josiah U. Young, *African Theology: A Critical Analysis and Annotated Bibliography*