

*African Identities and World Christianity in the Twentieth Century*. Edited by Klaus Koschorke in cooperation with Jens Holger Schjørring. Studies in the History of Christianity in the Non-Western World. Wiesbaden, Germany, Harrassowitz 2005. Pp. 284. €38.00.

This book, the tenth volume in its series, is the outcome of the Third International Conference on the History of Christianity in the Non-Western World organized by the University of Munich. Key scholars in the field contributed, and thirteen chapters are in English and three in German. The editors, Klaus Koschorke and Jens Holger Schjørring, are professors of church history in Munich and Aarhus, respectively.

The book clearly documents the state of the art. Church history is a global undertaking, and one of its essential tasks is to analyze identity discourses. Therefore, diverse African *and* Christian characteristics as well as global *and* local aspects of the manifold manifestations of African Christianity must be considered in its historiography. It is logical that the plural “identities” is used in the title – a programmatic plural, which contains, at least implicitly, a skeptical view of projects that attempt to identify an African Christian identity in the singular.

Not every contribution can be discussed here, but five emphases correspond to the main parts of the book, as the introduction notes. These show that African Christian identities are constructed in different ways. First, such identities emerge tangibly in *specific religious movements*, and unsurprisingly the discussion focuses on African Instituted Churches and Pentecostalism (in the contributions of Ogbu Kalu and Allan Anderson). Yet Kevin Ward’s analysis of Anglicanism in several countries demonstrates that explicitly denominational and “mainline” identities also continue to exist in Africa, albeit in diverse forms. Second, such identities are manifested *theologically*, as elaborated by Erhard Kamphausen’s look at the contextual theology of liberation, Amélé Ekué’s discussion of the “theology of reconstruction” paradigm, and Klaus Hock’s presentation on “immediacy” as a formative element in African theologies. Third, African identity appears in *diverse perspectives toward the Bible*, as visible in the chapters of Adrian Hermann, Georges Razafindrakoto, and Knut Holter, which deal with the Old Testament in the formation of African Instituted Churches, the use of the Bible in non-Christian contexts in Madagascar, and African Old Testament scholarship. Fourth, *interaction with others* can produce African identities, for example with missionaries, as in pieces by Brian Stanley, Ezra Chitando, and Ezra Gebremedhin. Finally, such identities emerge in the *interaction or comparison with other cultures*. Because of its comparative perspective, this section is a fitting conclusion. Hartmut Lehmann examines Protestant views of African Christianity by comparing entries on Africa in the major German Protestant encyclopaedias, Afé Adogame reflects on African Instituted Churches in Europe, Roland Spliesgart compares African identities in West Africa and Brazil, and Koschorke evaluates African and Asian church history in comparative perspective.

The nature of such a collection is that an overarching theory cannot be identified. One should not look for a consensus on what constitutes “identity.” Still, the book does contribute to an elucidation of identity theory, especially in the context of church history, by suggesting the five distinct dimensions of identity mentioned above.

On a more critical note, one visible shortcoming is that there are many orthographical mistakes and style inconsistencies. From a misspelled Tumaini University in the editorial to an incorrect “Gandhi” spelling on the second last text page, I picked up more than fifty

errors without consciously looking out for them. It should also be mentioned that the quality of the texts varies, with some mainly using secondary sources, while others clearly reveal personal familiarity with the continent and its people. Yet this does not diminish the value of the book as a fine example of contemporary historiographical approaches for African church history classes, in the context of religious studies, and in missiological discussions.

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