



<https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-2302-2023-27-4-1042-1046>

EDN: TUTBZR

Book review / Рецензия

Review of Book on Contemporary African Theology “The Routledge Handbook of African Theology” edited by E.K. Bongmba

Jude Ch. Mbina✉

RUDN University,
6 Miklukho-Maklaya St., 117198, Moscow, Russian Federation

✉annasamoikina@yandex.ru

Article history:

The article was submitted on 12.02.2023

The article was accepted on 19.08.2023 3

For citation: Mbina JC. Review of Book on Contemporary African Theology “The Routledge Handbook of African Theology” edited by E.K. Bongmba. *RUDN Journal of Philosophy*. 2023;27(4):1042—1046. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-2302-2023-27-4-1042-1046>

Рецензия на книгу по современной африканской теологии «The Routledge Handbook of African Theology» под редакцией Э.К. Бонгмба

Ж.Ш. Мбина✉

Российский университет дружбы народов,
Российская Федерация, 117198, Москва, ул. Миклухо-Маклая, д. 6

✉annasamoikina@yandex.ru

История статьи:

Статья поступила 12.02.2023

Статья принята к публикации 19.08.2023

© Mbina J.C., 2023



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

Для цитирования: Mbina J.C. Review of Book on Contemporary African Theology “The Routledge Handbook of African Theology” edited by E.K. Bongmba // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Философия. 2023. Т. 27. № 4. С. 1042—1046. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-2302-2023-27-4-1042-1046>

Theology has a long history on the African continent and has evolved in many directions since the arrival of Christianity. The handbook addresses historical and contemporary issues concerning the formation and application of theologies in African Union member countries. The chapters, written by international experts, primarily cover a collection of scholarly articles on the origin, relevance, and development of African theology using various methodologies. The authors presented various methods for identifying theological currents on African soil, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. They compiled a comprehensive overview of vital African theological topics such as spoken word and theology, indigenous religions and theology, Pentecostalism, liberation theology, black theology, social justice, sexuality and theology, environmental theology, Christology, eschatology, Hebrew Bible, and New Testament.

We will assess the relevance of some authors concerning liberation theory and reconstruction theory, and the second part will present points that could complete this work.

The first section of our review will be devoted to evaluating the authors’ work and the contours of their work.

The handbook examines theology in Africa from various perspectives. The chapters are primarily written from an interdisciplinary standpoint, and the articulations reflect each author’s interpretation of the topic. The debate over the post-colonial period is critical to African theology today. **Valentin-Yves Mudimbe** discussed **Edward Wilmont Blyden**, **Alexis Kagame**, **Vincent Mulago**, and **Fabien Ebussi Boulaga’s** work. These theologians opposed imperialism in all forms but also expressed the African desire to determine their future while working to overthrow domination ideology [1]. In Chapter 1, **Odomaro Mubangizi** discusses philosophy and theology in Africa. The chapter will briefly analyze major trends and themes in African philosophy and theology, emphasizing their sources and methodology. He mentions African concepts such as God, ancestors and spirits, integral healing, chatter, and Ubuntu ethics. The main sources of African philosophical theology are proverbs, riddles, mythology, symbolism, and rituals, which should be allowed to dialogue with the scriptures. Most African philosophers and theologians were educated in the Western tradition, and it is unrealistic to expect them to abandon Western intellectual culture overnight. It concludes that the main problem confronting African philosophy and theology and requiring immediate attention is strengthening academic institutions for African philosophy and theology integration. According to the author, most African studies centers and institutions are located outside of Africa, in European and American universities, where some of Africa’s best intellectuals seek refuge. A situation that breeds intellectual addiction. He mentions African concepts such as God, ancestors and

spirits, integral healing, chatter, and Ubuntu ethics. The main sources of African philosophical theology are proverbs, riddles, mythology, symbolism, and rituals, which should be allowed to dialogue with the scriptures. Most African philosophers and intellectuals of Africa are crucial to developing African theology and its relationship with African philosophy [2. P. 41]. **Chamma J. Kaunda** summarized African theological sources. He contends that any theological construct seeking to be relevant in a theological context must strive to use sources accountable to the receiving community. During his scholarly process, he advocated for African theologians to listen carefully and engage in respectful interreligious dialogue with indigenous African religions. African theology cannot simply draw on the sources of indigenous African religions. African theology should research how and what forms these sources have taken in their current manifestation in African Christianity. Having established this, African theology should seek to redirect these sources to benefit the African people in their struggle for socio-political, economic, and religious transformation and liberation [2. P. 66]. **Alice Yafeh-Day** discussed African feminist theology, encompassing many aspects of African feminism. African feminism arose from African women's unique socio-political and religious struggle against interlocking oppressive systems (gender, class, race, sexuality, etc.) alongside the broader practical basis of African (male) liberation theology [2. P. 85]. Thus, the entire dream of African theologians-feminists is based on men and women working together. As the **HIV/AIDS** pandemic dominates the current stage, African feminists have received the necessary channels to share their perspectives and practical responses to this crisis. Her work demonstrates the growing presence of women in the field of theology. She highlighted women's achievements and struggles and her latest leadership in African territory. We also understand that impact areas reflect women's place in African society. A greater presence of feminist theology in academic institutions would improve African society. **Julius Gatogo** presents the theology of reconstruction. After critiquing Reconstruction theology, the chapter demonstrated that in the Reconstruction phase, Africa must realize that we are in a rare moment of grace to be used for the continent's good. Now is the time to repair our "broken walls" (*Nehemiah 2:18*) I also told the people how good God had been to me and passed everything the king had told me to them. Then these people said, "Let us start building!" Then we started this good deed. These walls include economics, xenophobia, ethnocentrism, and racism. This also includes poverty, sickness, and ignorance [2. P. 194]. Surely this is the moment to say "No to violence," whether physical or verbal. This is a time of grace when Africans find their identity amid the effects of globalization. This is the moment when all the secondary theological motifs, such as reconciliation, inculturation, market theology, rural ministry, and liberation, operate simultaneously within the mainstream reconstruction paradigm, the dominant motif of 21st-century African theology. From this perspective, African Christianity plays a critical role in the transformation and restoration of modern Africa. A presentation of Anglophone and Francophone theology, with its authors

and approaches, would allow for a better appreciation of the scriptures than Reconstruction Theology. Francophone African theology will continue to support Africa's quest for holistic and organic liberation. She demonstrated her determination to move forward, not to retreat in the face of difficulties and obstacles, but to move forward systematically. French-speaking Africa has significantly contributed to developing African theology in fundamental areas such as Christianity, reconstruction, and faith. This helps future Africans understand the tasks and requirements of the Christian mission. French-speaking Africa has contributed to African consciousness and the biblical and historical framework. As a result, God's revelation is occasionally received and transmitted in the local language. In other words, Francophone African theology seeks to become a tool of reflection and persuasion for African churches in the context in which it originated and developed. As such, it is rightfully the theology of African identity. Theology in English is centered on the idea that theology must be adapted to people's times and circumstances. Reconstruction theology emerged in South Africa's English-speaking countries. It focused on the fact that, like Christ, every Christian and theologian must devote himself to his country's spiritual and multidimensional liberation. For them, spiritual involvement is required for liberation.

The second part is a critique of the current situation in Africa, which needs to be clarified in this work.

Namakula Evelyn B. Mayanja mentioned in her commentary on theology and peacemaking: "In Rwanda, as we have never seen before, the churches were closely associated with the genocide" [2. P. 380]. A man named Adalbert recalls: "We sang hymns in good spirits without comrades. Tootsie, our voices are still mingling in the choir" [2. P. 380]. We left the Lord and our prayers inside to hurry home. The brothers and sisters who sang together last night suddenly became mortal enemies." In the 1960s, **Michel Bernard** offered an article on the biblical text Amos 7.1-8. He regrets that we live in a world where a church leader can justify war because it is in line with his country's ideology and where the church can condemn a movement because it is opposite to his government's ideology. The church is often likened to false prophets because it is silent in the face of injustice. But Christians do not have the right to remain silent, even if the Word of God contradicts what we call patriotism. This criticism is aimed at South African churches that supported apartheid. This text from Amos describes the intervention of Amaziah, the high priest of Bethel. This is an illustration of the formal, hypocritical worshipers of God. Amaziah respected official institutions (Amos 7.10) and took care of temples and other property (Amos 7.13) but remained deaf and indifferent to the Word of God (Amos 7.12, 16). He was both a clergyman and an instrument of the king. He also denounces the wage gap between pastors on the one hand and between pastors and workers in religious institutions on the other. In most African churches, pastors are paid by local churches. Some shepherds are more fortunate than others because they work in large parishes and/or combine duties. There are cases of arbitrary appointments by church leaders. The pastor's

appointment in such a parish also determines his earnings because the more extensive the parish, the more donations or fees since the management of churches is Congregational on a financial level.

Therefore, we find great and small pastors in the same Union of Churches! Which is not normal. Without their approval, these injustices are partly due to the multiple levels of pastoral training in most African Protestant churches. Pastors do not have specialized training; they all receive the same fundamental training. Pastors educated at the Bible Institute, Theological Institute, and Faculty of Theology can all be found in the same Union of Churches. We do not need to go into detail about self-appointed pastors who lack biblical or theological education.

The relationship between church and mission is alarming and sensitive in some circles. While we do not oppose the presence of missionaries, we do oppose the paternalistic relationship between missions and local churches. Some churches remain mission-dependent and are generally referred to as “minor partners” because “due to their organizational form, these cooperative agreements frequently unknowingly support disparities between partners.”

The African theology outlined in this book by our authors is a Christological and divine reflection aimed at solving the specific problems of the African continent. Instead, he cannot select his preferred topics but focuses on all existing problems in African territory, including poverty and health, economic, political, and family situations. To continue studying African theology means seeking long-term solutions for the African continent. Furthermore, this theological study must be more integrated and adaptable to multiple local cultures for a more significant impact.

References

- [1] Mudimbe VY. *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; 1988.
- [2] Bongmba EK, editor. *The Routledge Handbook of African Theology*. London: Routledge; 2020.

About the author:

Mbina Jude Ch. — Postgraduate Student, Department of Social Philosophy, RUDN University, Moscow, Russia (e-mail: 1042208130@rudn.ru).

Сведения об авторе:

Мбина Жюд Шалёрё — аспирант, кафедра социальной философии, Российский университет дружбы народов, Москва, Россия (e-mail: 1042208130@rudn.ru).