

## Book Reviews

---

Tim Hartman. *Kwame Bediako: African Theology for a World Christianity*.

Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2022. ISBN 978-5064-8045-9. Softback. Includes Table of Contents and Index. 209pp.

Hartman presents Kwame Bediako's theological thought, characterized as authentically African and uniquely Christian, in an accessible manner for audiences both familiar and unfamiliar with Bediako and with African theological discourse.

He briefly narrates Bediako's personal religious background, drawing on Bediako's autobiographical record and supplemented by material from Gillian Bediako, Bediako's marriage and ministry partner. Bediako's personal story and struggles are part of Bediako's theological method (24; 135), providing the context that motivates Bediako's quest to articulate a theology of African Christian identity that is different from Western Christian formulations. Bediako describes Western Christianity as operating under the assumptions of Christendom, as Christianity wedded itself to political power. Evangelism in Europe was accomplished through conquest leading to a theology of conquering (166). Under Christendom, Christianity is inherited as part of an ethnic and cultural identity (63).

By contrast, Bediako builds his Christian thought upon two Christian sources: early church theologians prior to Constantine, and African Christian theologians writing towards end of African political colonization (4; 62). Using these two Christian sources Bediako engages in theological and cultural acts of *sankofa*, an Akan concept of moving forward by retrieval (65; 164). He integrates African life experience and his study of the *négritude* movement with the gospel of Jesus Christ as initially apprehended by Africans through the translation of the Bible into African languages.

Hartman argues that Bediako understands the Bible "more like a record of the gospel" (84). For Bediako there is no pure gospel disconnected from human culture and language (29; 52), and yet he understands the gospel to be universal (133). The translation of the Bible is part of Africa's historical experience that is inherited from missionary Christianity. While Bediako is critical of Western Christianity, he accepts missionary translation. The translatability of the Christian gospel is key for Bediako's 'post-missionary' theological project. Bible translation forces an initial dialogue between the gospel of Jesus Christ and culture through African languages. Bediako extends the theological dialogue initiated by translation by exegeting 'mother tongue Scriptures' using a hermeneutic of continuity between