

Claudia Jahnel

Interkulturelle Theologie und Kulturwissenschaft. Untersucht am Beispiel afrikanischer Theologie. (*Intercultural Theology and Cultural Studies. Examined with the Example of African Theology.*) Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 2016, 358 pp.

In this volume, her habilitation thesis, Claudia Jahnel offers a contribution to the discussion about the new form of intercultural theology as an independent theological discipline by analysing African theologies with the tools of cultural studies and the different cultural turns. She begins with an introductory chapter on basic analyses and perspectives by pointing out the developments in understanding “culture”, the relationship of theology and culture, the connection between culture, knowledge and (colonial) power and the political function of culture by constructing difference.

On this basis, she deals in the next two chapters with African philosophy as the locus of decolonization by pointing out inter alia the impact of western orders of knowledge on African philosophy or the renaissance of Africa out of “old” traditions, and with the discourses about culture in African theology between assimilation, resistance or independence and the search for alternative epistemologies including the subject of universality and particularity.

The following three chapters analyse the relationship of time and history, space and body. After discussing some critical perspectives on the thesis of a specific African understanding of time, she stresses the character of African theology as historiography and chronosophy (since the past is also constructed ontologically) and deals with myths and cultural change. The chapter on space begins with the unity of space, place and culture, continues with the socially constructed space and globalization and glocalization and ends with the spatial turn. The body is analysed out of very different perspectives – e.g. its construction via discourse, alternative discourses on body and knowledge in feminist theology, homosexuality and heterosexuality as possible results of a western colonial dichotomization or newer questions on freedom, autonomy and agency.

In the final chapter, Jahnel discusses the significance of agency and cultural sovereignty in African theology as it is shown inter alia in translations of the Bible and stresses the dynamic character of culture and its importance for intercultural hermeneutics. She ends with a concise conclusion.

Since Jahnel shows with her precise analyses the validity of combining the discourses of cultural studies and theology, this book can be recommended.

(Thomas Fornet-Ponse)