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Andrew Eugene Barnes and Toyin Falola (editors), *The Palgrave Handbook of Christianity in Africa from Apostolic Times to the Present*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2024, 694 pages. ISBN 978-3-031-48270-0.

Reviewed by Pr. Bourouayah Mohamed, Professor of Religions & Former vice-rector of Emir Abdelkader University, Constantine, Algeria.

One of the editors of this book is Toyin Falola, a brilliant researcher who, over many years, researched diverse fields of knowledge; however, mainly in the philosophy of history and the history of religions. He has contributed to various academic associations through his involvement in the techniques of academic writing and his strength in communicating with various researchers from different backgrounds and convictions with great objectivity. Toyin Falola seeks to reach the truth with others, which is the goal of researchers in different paths of science. Indeed, I found in Falola's books an intellectual pleasure that is rarely found in other books. He takes you through a vast scientific field from ancient times to the present. He deals with all of this in an interesting, enjoyable style that is full of feelings and ideas.

Praising Toyin Falola does not detract from the value of the work of Andrew Eugene Barnes, his co-editor, whose writings clarify various aspects of contemporary Christianity, especially the missions that, in his point of view, are an extension of the message of Christ, his disciples, and Paul the Apostle. This introduction to Toyin Falola is necessary because the book we are reviewing is the fruit of his tireless coordination. Most of the contributors to this book are members of the Toyin's Falola School of Historical and Religious Studies, where Falola and these researchers devote a considerable amount of interest in undertaking historical investigations into African issues. The contributors deal with history from a religious angle for the purpose of discovering religions' positive aspects; ones that help, as in the case of Christianity, to develop a correct [1] conception of the apostolic experience and the pastoral experience in general. The book provides a useful historical overview of the history of Christianity in Africa; it offers a realistic approach to the spread of Christianity. It covers a long period of the history of Christianity in Africa, from the apostolic times to the present. The chapters show a high level of coordination between the research team's members.

This book is divided into four parts. The first, entitled "Mentors," sheds light

on various topics such as "The Writings and Influence of Edward W. Blyden." In this chapter, Moses Moore claims that "Blyden's explication of Philip and the Eunuch embodied a thesis that he had been developing over the course of his maturation as a West African-based scholar simultaneously engaged with the validation and defense of Africa and her descendants while responding to the myriad challenges posed by the advent and extension of late Victorian modernity and its new religious, scientific, intellectual, and academic corollaries" (1). We can add that Philip is in the middle of a successful revival in a Samaritan town (2), and that the eunuch had been on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and was returning to Ethiopia, where he was a minister in charge of all the finances of Candace, the Ethiopian queen. He was riding in a chariot and reading the prophet Isaiah. (3) In this chapter, Moses Moore argues: "Given the acknowledgment of Blyden's importance as a scholar of religion by his contemporaries, it is ironic and unfortunate that his contributions are so little known by current religious studies scholars and students." (4) I believe that this argument given by Moses Moore about the attitude of the contemporaries to Blyden seems foggy and needs further investigation. The interest of the author reserved to Blyden is significant evidence that this religious figure has attracted attention even in a late period.

Toyin Falola illustrates Elizabeth Isichei's contributions to the study of Christianity: "Professor Elisabeth Isichei remains an outstanding pioneer with a consuming passion for interrogating religious history, especially the Christian religion as it infiltrated Africa." (5) In the second part, we read about Trans-Atlantic Christianity in Africa. In this context, Emma Wild-Wood talks about "missionaries and African Christians." Her view is that "The Great Awakenings spread evangelical enthusiasm and social concern among freed Christians of African heritage. From 1792, some moved to Freetown, which was to become a missionary sending centre throughout West Africa." (6) This argument is given by scholars engaged in the history of missionary activities in Africa; this was during the time when the Church returned to its missions and revived the work of the Christian apostles after having focused its efforts for centuries on pastoral work.

The third part is titled "The Rooting of Christianity in Africa I: Christian Life from Ancient Times to the Independence Era". According to Eric Fournier and Mark Lewis Tizzoni, Christian life is one of the biggest symbols of Christianity; it is part of spiritual life because there is a deep relationship between beliefs and acts. In the fourth part, titled "The Rooting of Christianity in Africa II: Christian Life in Contemporary Africa," J. J. Carney clarifies the Church's growth in independent Africa. He shows the reasons that allowed the Catholic Church to spread in Africa.

The major criticism of the book is that it deals with a huge number of issues,

and it would have been more appropriate for the editors to have chosen specific issues related to the history of the Church. However, there are many positives, and one of these is the amount of information it gathered about the Church's history, and the other is that many narrative texts enriched one's understanding. All of this lays the foundations for future critical studies.

#### Cited works:

1. Moses Moore, "The Writings and Influence of Edward W. Blyden," *The Palgrave Handbook of Christianity in Africa from Apostolic Times to the Present*, p. 18.
2. Adam Allen, "What the Story of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch Reveals About Being an Ally," *Whosoever*. Available at: [<https://whosoever.org>](<https://whosoever.org>).
3. Acts 8:28.
4. Moses Moore, "The Writings and Influence of Edward W. Blyden," *The Palgrave Handbook of Christianity in Africa from Apostolic Times to the Present*, op. cit., p. 19.
5. Toyin Falola, "Elizabeth Isichei's Contributions to the Study of Christianity," *The Palgrave Handbook of Christianity in Africa from Apostolic Times to the Present*, op. cit., p. 57.
6. Emma Wild-Wood, "Missionaries and African Christians," *The Palgrave Handbook of Christianity in Africa from Apostolic Times to the Present*, op. cit., p. 181.

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