

Chapter six discusses the reformation impulses (*Täḥädäso*, or, “renewal” movements) within the EOTC, examining the interaction among themselves and with Evangelicals, who provide financial and other support. Historical figures like the fifteenth-century monk *Abba* Estifanos are discussed in relation to recent reformation attempts.

The final chapter offers recommendations on how to enhance the relationship and foster a harmonious ecumenical connection between the two denominations. It emphasizes the commonalities that unite the two churches, such as faith in the triune God. Additionally, the book features an appendix detailing early attempts at ecumenism and a glossary of crucial Amharic terms used throughout the text.

The book provides a comprehensive historical analysis of the perceptions between Protestants and the Orthodox Church in Ethiopia, addressing a relatively understudied aspect of the interaction between the two denominations. With limited existing publications on the subject, such as “The Missionary Factor” and “Anthropological Insights for Mission,” Seblewengel’s work fills a significant gap and invites further exploration of its multifaceted issues. It stands as a valuable resource for religious and mission historians, as well as those interested in ecumenical relations and modern Ethiopian history. To broaden its impact, translating the book into local languages would help make its insights accessible to a wider audience.

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**Raymond Silverman and Neal Sobania, *Ethiopian Church Art: Painters, Patrons, Purveyors*, Tsehai, Los Angeles, California, 2022. 331 pages. \$74.95. ISBN: 978-1-59907-291-3.**

Drawing on the lives, works, and religious commitments of a wide range of Ethiopian artists, the authors of this groundbreaking volume brilliantly describe the vital but little studied art and craft of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Authors Raymond Silverman and Neal Sobania, professors of, respectively, African studies and art history, have conducted interviews and carried out in-depth research projects for over twenty-five years to produce this stunning masterpiece. Over two hundred individuals are featured—painters, gallerists, priests, woodworkers, patrons, promoters, and marketers—all participating in a complex matrix of intersectional relationships involving Ethiopian art, creativity, religious culture, faith, and commercial energy.

The presentation of this volume is in “coffee table” format—10 x 13-inch in size, sumptuously illustrated with colorful photography, and amply documented

with accompanying explanatory photo captions and other abundant text. Chapters follow the subtitle of the publication, with deep dives into the lives and roles of painters, patrons, and purveyors of this unique artistic expression. While the authors insist that their interest is in the people who make things, rather than in the things themselves, significant attention is devoted nonetheless to the trades of liturgical metalworking, parchment and manuscript production, and the “illumination” (i.e., the illustration) of religious texts, most commonly featuring portraits of individuals such as the Gospel writers, St. Mary, St. George, and particular archangels, or the depiction of biblical events from the Nativity to the Crucifixion and Ascension of Jesus.

Concluding chapters take the reader into the world of “Painting for a New Millennium” and the Ethiopian “Diaspora,” followed by a list of one hundred and fifty bibliographical references for further reading, a helpful glossary of vernacular terms used throughout the text and presented in Ethiopic script with transliterations and definitions, and an exhaustive index of the people, places, objects, and events referred to in the publication.

While this is not primarily a theological or missiological study, students of these disciplines will be intrigued by the potential implications drawn from this extensive research. Significant attention is given, for example, to the veneration of Mary as the focus of many devotional practices in Ethiopian art and culture. Though Mary has always played an important role in the Orthodox Church, her enhanced veneration in Ethiopia, including her thirty-three feast days in the ecclesiastical calendar celebrating her life and miracles, dates back to the fifteenth century. “Believers do not pray directly to Jesus,” write the authors, “as he is perceived as being spiritually too distant.” Furthermore, as Jesus is God, it is impossible for God to mediate with God. So, petitions are mediated through some other intercessor—Mary, a saint, or a priest (244).

As I was reading *Ethiopian Church Art*, along with the articles about the Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) appearing in this issue of *Anabaptist Witness*, a number of recurring questions kept surfacing in my mind. MKC now numbers over half a million members, one third of the entire membership of the Mennonite World Conference global body. Some new MKC converts come from Muslim religious backgrounds, but many of them are Ethiopian Orthodox in origin. To what extent do they bring along into their new church experience some of the perspectives found in this study? How do they view creativity and the aesthetic values deeply embedded in the Orthodox tradition? Does MKC encourage young artists within the church to paint or produce wood-based-arts expressions of the biblical story for discipling believers in evangelism and peacemaking, or have these practices been largely abandoned because of their association with a previous life and religious experience?

Perhaps new forms of artistry are being born within the MKC, and, if so, what are they and how are they shaped by or in reaction to the predominant

Orthodox artistic patterns and values present everywhere in Ethiopian culture? Answering these questions is beyond the scope of this review but might prove fruitful for discussion and research with MKC fellow travelers at some point in the years to come.

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