

Olofinjana, Israel Oluwole, ed.

*World Christianity in Western  
Europe: Diasporic Identity,  
Narratives & Missiology*

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REVIEWED BY PAVOL BARGÁR

Protestant Theological Faculty, Charles University in Prague  
bargarp@yahoo.com

IN THIS BOOK, ITS editor Israel Oluwole Olofinjana, the founding director of the Centre for Missionaries from the Majority World, brings together a variety of papers that reflect on the phenomenon of the diasporic life of Christians from the majority world in Western Europe. The primary focus of the volume is on Pentecostal and charismatic forms of Christianity as embodied by migrants as well as second-generation migrants.

The book opens with an introductory study by Olofinjana that provides the reader with helpful orientation when it sheds light on relevant issues, such as the study of world Christianity, diaspora, migration (both in the Bible and contemporary world), Pentecostalism, and Pentecostal studies. Toward the end of this

chapter, the author proposes a new approach to studying world Christianity through the lens of multi-ethnic congregations.

*World Christianity in Western Europe* can then be read as an elaboration of this approach. In accordance with their primary focus, all chapters are divided into three sections, engaging with diasporic identity, missional narratives, and missiological insights, respectively. The chapters represent a good balance between rigorous academic contributions and narrative accounts by reflective practitioners across all three sections.

It is somewhat regretful that the volume does not more vocally emphasize the dynamic and multi-layered interaction between the stories of the migrants and those of “indigenous” Europeans, both Christians and non-Christians/post-Christians. Although this theme is reflected in some chapters (for instance, those by Jim Stewart, Claire and Mark Ord, and Usha Reifsnider), it deserves more prominent attention, as it is not only diasporic identity that undergoes a process of transformation *vis-à-vis* its encounter with European society and culture. The transformative process is mutual and multilateral, even going beyond the confines of Christianity.

As such, the actors engaged in this dynamic play the role of “transcultural mediators,” to use the terminology of Paul Hiebert, fostering cultural hybridity that is increasingly becoming a hallmark of many (especially urban) settings. As far as diasporic believers are concerned, this process involves a struggle for one’s core identity in the continuous exchange between “original” and “host” cultures. The book emphasizes that identity is shaped as faith is intertwined with various political and economic issues.

Amidst all these factors, Christian mission emerges as a creative combination of history, heritage, and theology, as Dulcie Dixon McKenzie proposes. In this account, “heritage” refers to “a contemporary use of the past” (74) for the sake of nurturing community development and fostering one’s identity. In addition, Christian mission involves several other aspects that are helpfully explored in the book. For example, hospitality is introduced in the context of a complex yet delicate web of guest-host relationships. Furthermore, the contribution of women to mission is recognized

when women are asserted as agents of non-coercive power. Finally, the frequented notion of “mission in reverse” is conceptualized not merely as a pursuit of personal evangelism and church planting but also as an initiative that addresses structural issues to bring about systemic change.

For the field of ecclesiology and practical theology, *World Christianity in Western Europe* represents a welcome addition to the discussion as it reminds us that the Church is a colorful people “on the move,” sharing their diverse stories to make an irreplaceable contribution to *missio Dei*. Methodologically refreshing and theologically inspiring, it is desirable that the project on diasporic identity, narratives, and missiology expands ecumenically (to include other Christian traditions besides Pentecostals and free churches) and geographically (beyond Western Europe) to offer an even richer portrayal of contemporary world Christianity.