
The volume starts with an article by Jenkins, in which he reiterates the main points of his book *The Next Christendom*. The other authors in the volume respond to Jenkins’ ideas. In many articles one can taste a profound uneasiness about the major claims of Jenkins. In particular the conservatism of the South is felt as problematic. Some authors assume Jenkins praises this conservatism and understands it as the factor of its success. Several authors contest this along two lines of argument: (1) they defend the vitality of European and/or liberal Christianity, and (2) contest Jenkins’s equation of growth in numbers and success.

Ustorf calls the picture Jenkins draws a ‘nightmare’ (p. 47). He defends the Old Europe and wants missiologists to reflect critically on Southern ‘theocracies’ which are ‘in bed with powers that are not genuinely Christian’ (p. 47). Verstraelen in similar vein compares Northern and Southern Christianity and warns that the faith of Southern Christianity has not been tested yet. He argues that Europe’s secular standards of treating women are more in line with the gospel than the standards of the Southern churches (p. 111).

Kim criticizes Jenkins’ love for numbers. He argues that numbers do not tell the whole story whether Christianity is successful or not. ‘[C]hurches in these countries have made an impact on society… because of Christian principles… which shaped the direction of the church and in many cases of the whole society’ (p. 84). Other authors stress that the triumphant message of Christian growth should be nuanced, in particular in Africa and Asia. John Chesworth very informatively describes the competition between Islam and Christianity in Africa. Karel Steenbrink points out the minority position of Christianity in Asia.

The last article, an epilogue by Robert Schreiter gives the most relevant comment: ‘there is still no overarching model that might provide a way of understanding what future directions might be anticipated’ (p. 221). He also argues that Jenkins’ book is too US oriented, and his generalizations do not hold firmly. The task is to find better models.

*Global Christianity: Contested Claims* contains an interesting array of articles describing important topics in the debate on Jenkins’ work. Many of the articles are worthwhile contributions. However, none are up to the task Schreiter identifies in the epilogue. In the book we have not found models that can function as an alternative Grand Perspective to understand what is happening. We’re still left with Jenkins acute image of the Next (southern) Christendom without a suitable alternative.

Another issue — which may also apply to Jenkins’ work — is the rather essentialist understanding of Northern and Southern Christianity in many articles. These categories are getting increasingly confused as people move around, countries change and balances of power shift. What do the transnational migration and networks of Christians all over the world and the subsequent mixing of South and North mean for Jenkins’ or alternative images of our current situation?

A last issue is the fact this is a sample of Western, and often liberal missiology. Where are the Southern, conservative partners in the dialogue? They might have challenged some of the implicit assumptions in several of the contributions in this volume.

We see this bundle as an appetiser: we tasted it and ask for more. We would welcome a publication that has the same broad scope as Jenkins book but can offer us a more
theologically subtle and sociologically grounded evaluation of the success and value of Northern and Southern Christianity. — KIM KNIBBE AND MARTEN VAN DER MEULEN, VU University, Amsterdam.