

BOOK REVIEWS

Harvey C. Kwiyani, *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in the West*, Orbis: Maryknoll NY 2014. 244 pages.

In the early days of colonial missions Western missionaries looked forward to the time when non-Western Christians would come to Europe and North America to breathe new vitality into the ageing body of Western Christianity. After the decolonization of the Majority World and the current massive migration to the West, this so-called “blessed reflex” is now definitely happening. It is increasingly becoming clear that non-Western Christians in the West are not just there for economic reasons, but they consider themselves as missionaries, with a calling to reinvigorate the cultures of the West. This book by a Malawian theologian living in the United States, documents this missionary movement, concentrating on the African diaspora in North America.

The main argument of Kwiyani’s book can be summarized as follows. The coming of African Christians in the West must be considered as a God-given opportunity for Western and non-Western Christians to work together to revitalize the dying churches of the West. African Christianity has a unique and important contribution to make. However, we are only in the very first stages of finding out what this contribution may be. Many obstacles need to be overcome, deep racism not being the least of these. However, the future of Christianity lies in increasing cooperation of Western and non-Western Christians.

Chapter 1 provides a historical perspective on the role of African Christians in the early days of the Christian Church. It is important to stress that Christianity has deep roots in the African continent, as the Roman Empire covered large stretches of North Africa. However, I wonder to what extent it is helpful to lump everything ‘African’ together, thereby clouding that Christianity is a relative newcomer in sub-Saharan Africa, and that sub-Saharan Christianity (being the main inspiration of African missions) is quite different from Christianity in Egypt and Ethiopia. This chapter also contains worthwhile theological reflections on migration, showing that mission is almost always born out of an experience of exile and diaspora. Chapter 2

maps historical examples of missionary contacts between Africa and the West, and it also provides a map of the three main currents of African Christianity: Mainline, Independent, and Pentecostal. Kwiyani further demonstrates how “the evangelisthood of all believers” is deeply ingrained in all these streams of African Christianity, and he presents helpful discussions on the use of the words “missionary” and “mission” in a post-colonial context. In chapter 3 Kwiyani discusses scholarly literature on the African missionary movement to the West. His focus lies on the scholarly debate in the United States that is only just taking off. That is unfortunate, as the debate in Europe has been going on much longer. Although he discusses some (older) European studies, he ignores important recent contributions by, for example, Claudia Währisch-Oblau (2009), Rebecca Catto (2010), and Daniëlle Koning (2012). Chapter 4 presents a very interesting description of African Christian presence in the West. Kwiyani discusses the three currents that were mentioned in chapter 2, and adds a fourth, Roman Catholicism. Chapter 5 addresses the issue of Christian dialogue in the context of mission. Kwiyani lists some specifics of African Christianity that can contribute to the revitalization of the church in the West. Here Kwiyani opens some very promising doors toward the mobilization of all believers and the revitalization of congregations. He does mention the current lack of missionary success of African Christians in the West, and I believe that the addition of recent European studies would have helped him here to reflect a little more on this. Must we really expect that the second generation of African Christians will see more fruits on their work, or will they be swept away in the forces of secularization? The jury may still be out, but more could have been said about this, as there is a growing amount of data in this respect. Chapter 6 discusses conditions and obstacles for a truly multicultural missionary movement. Again, Kwiyani concentrates on the United States. His own experiences as a church planter in America are prominent in these pages. As for the very serious problem of racism, Kwiyani not only presents us with some shocking examples from his own experience, but he also gives food for thought. For example, he writes about his visit to a Black church where his sense of alienation and rejection was just as strong as in White churches. Racism cannot be the problem here, but what is it? Kwiyani mentions the issue of ‘having an African accent’ which made him stand out. Also, he encountered more explicit racism in Minnesota than in Britain. Is that because Americans are more prone to racism? Or are there other issues hidden under these experiences, issues of power for instance (the proverbial ‘weak’ coming to evangelize *us*)? Chapter 7 continues this discussion with some personal reflections and a look to the future of the missionary movement.

This well-written book is a must-read for everyone who is interested in the future of the missionary movement. Even though it is more about the United States than about Europe, the book is highly informative, and it contains many excellent observations and questions. An added value is that

it is written by an African who has missionary experience ‘on the ground’. Kwiyani’s personal reflections and experiences are skilfully interwoven with his scholarly work, and this prevents the book from becoming too abstract.

Stefan Paas

J. H. Bavinck Professor of Missiology and Intercultural Theology, VU University Amsterdam

Professor of Missiology, Theological University Kampen

Chigor Chike, *The Holy Spirit in African Christianity*, Paternoster, Milton Keynes, 2015. 196 pages.

Chigor Chike is a Nigerian minister in a Church of England congregation in London. He has lived and worked in England since 1992, and thus, is part of the African Christian migration that brought many Africans to Europe in the 1990s. A significant of the migrants are Christian – their migration taking place at a time when Christianity is experiencing tremendous growth in Africa. That is why African Christianity exploded in Europe in the 1990s with African congregations emerging in Western cities in the hundreds. Chike was part of that migration story, though unknowingly and unintentionally (1). He has, since 1992, observed the growing presence of African churches in Britain, and reflected on it in his earlier book, *African Christianity in Britain* (AuthorHouse, Milton Keynes, 2007) in which he explores the doctrines of God, Christ, and salvation among African Christians in Britain.

The Holy Spirit in African Christianity is Chike’s second book focusing on African Christianity in the Diaspora. Chike’s focus in this book is *pneumatology* – the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The book comes out Chike’s doctoral thesis—his research having explored the beliefs held by African Christians, especially what they believe about the Holy Spirit (2) with an aim to add to the existing studies of African Christianity (5). The title maybe a little misleading since his research was limited to African Christianity in London, even though Chike is aware of, and often brings into his argument, the scholarly conversations on the Holy Spirit taking place in Africa. Being a doctoral thesis, the book is a brilliant piece of academic work. It achieves both its stated goals; to explore African pneumatology and to extend knowledge of the same in theological disciplines. Even though it is academic in its approach, it is accessible even to those who are not academically inclined. Especially in its conclusions, the book is relevant to the work of pastors and other church leaders.

A greater percentage of the book is dedicated to the research that informed Chike’s doctoral work. The research’s entire methodology is discussed, with the philosophical issues that shaped the methodology explained. Chike opted for a four-part process that included inductive research followed by analysis of the data collected, and this was followed by deductive research and again

an analysis. The inductive part of the research involved Chike being a participant observer in one congregation for over fourteen months (38), followed by interviews where leaders and members of the congregation answered questions posed by the researcher. After analysing the data, and reflecting on it in the light of the works of other theologians in the form of a literature review, Chike conducted further interviews in four other congregations from four denominations (Pentecostal, Methodist, Anglican, and Roman Catholic) to test his theory-patterns (from the first part of the research) out (112). What comes out of this testing of theory-patterns uncovers the complexities behind the research—a congregation’s pneumatology is not determined by its liturgy or denomination.

One of the great contributions that the books makes to the study of the Holy Spirit in African Christianity is in the chapter entitled, “The Anatomy of African Pneumatology.” Here, Chike explores a Trinitarian framework for talking about the Spirit in African theology. He tackles the issue of *subordinationism* where the Spirit, being the third in the Trinity, is believed to less than the Father and the Son (146–150). He, then, explores the five factors that he believes affect a person’s pneumatology, which include; experience, the Bible, African worldview, Africa’s traditional concept of God and Pentecostalism. I found Chike’s discussion of each of these very informative even though I wondered how them maybe used to explain pneumatology in non-African contexts. Indeed, this caused me to seek to understand what Chike meant by *pneumatology*. While it is fairly clear in the book how he sees pneumatology at work in the lives of many Christians, he seems to suggest that it is readily at work in charismatic or Pentecostal churches (where the members’ closeness to the spirit was more visible during his research). He adds that foundational to a believer’s pneumatology is their understanding of the Trinity – which “sets both the framework for their negotiation of pneumatology and the boundaries of what the can accept” (169). This got me thinking, “Do mainline churches also have a pneumatology even though it is expressed differently? If so, how does the Spirit affect their lives and services?” In other words, “Is the Holy Spirit only Pentecostal?” Of course, I wished Chike would explore further the connection between pneumatology, Pentecostalism, and the African worldview. These are understandably questions for future study.

Chike is to be commended for the good book that is definitely a significant contribution to the discipline of African theology. *The Holy Spirit in African Christianity* is a book many students of theology (or pneumatology) will find indispensable. Everyone interested in the study of African Christianity in Britain will do well to know this book.

Harvey C. Kwiyani
 Lecturer in Missional Leadership and African Christianity
 Birmingham Christian College.