BOOKS I HAVE READ: WORLD CHRISTIANITY IN WESTERN EUROPE

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A book with a lot of really good material, with some significant problems.
Category: Observations

I really wanted to like this book and bits of it are very good indeed, but overall I found it a somewhat frustrating experience.

World Christianity in Western Europe: Diasporic Identity, Narratives & Missiology is a medium format paperback (although only Kindle versions are available at the moment) of 285 pages. The Kindle version will set you back about Â£6. It is a multiauthor book and the style varies from personal testimony to fairly heavy theology. Most, but not all of the chapters are copiously annotated and supplied with extensive references.

There are twelve chapters, grouped around three broad themes: Diasporic Identity, Missional Narratives and Missiological Insights. It is in the nature of multi-author books to have a lot of variation in style and content between the different chapters. However, in this case, I found the differences in style, subject matter and approach somewhat difficult. There was lots of good stuff to read, but it came across as a set of disconnected papers, rather than a book on a single theme. The strongest chapter on Encounters and Identities by Rosalee Velleso Ewell seemed to belong to a different book altogether to this reader. I suppose that it could be argued that any book taking on a subject as broad as this one does would have to be diverse.

Another weakness of the book is that it doesn't really do what it says on the cover. Although it claims to be a book about Western Europe, none of the chapters gives an overview of the European situation and most of the chapters are actually devoted to various aspects of the situation in the UK, with only three other countries being given any in-depth treatment at all. The absence of any significant discussion on the situation in France is particularly disappointing.

There is a lot that is good in this book. The story of a Brazilian missionary couple in the UK should be read by any church leader in Britain who is interested in partnering with Christians from the rest of the world. Having led significant ministries and planted churches in Brazil, they were told to tidy up a garden when they came to the UK!

There is much else here that will interest people who are interested in the particular themes raised in different chapters. Who should read this book? To be honest, I'm not convinced that many people would want to sit and read the whole book; though those who are particularly interested in World Christianity may do so. However, students, academics and those interested in the particular themes raised in individual chapters will find a good deal that is interesting.