BOOKS I HAVE READ: OUR GLOBAL FAMILIES

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A thought provoking book which gives a good overview of some major issues.
Category: Observations

Sometimes I come across a book which captures something that I've been thinking in a way that I have not managed to articulate it, or which brings to the surface thoughts and ideas which were lurking somewhere in my unconscious. Our Global Families: Embracing Common Identity in a Changing World is one of those books.

This 240 page paperback will set you back about Â£14 and a little less for the Kindle version. It is written in a fairly easy style and the average reader is unlikely to struggle to get through it or have to read a sentence three times to work out what it means. The authors are Todd Johnson (well known for his work on Global Christianity) and Cindy Wu (who I had not previously encountered.

The central theme is simple enough: all Christians belong to two global families; the human family and the Christian family and each of these families brings different relationships and responsibilities.

The book gives an overview of the two different families and then goes on to develop the theme of our responsibilities within a changing world. The concept isn't particularly complex but the book does provide an excellent overview of a broad range of issues.

A couple of things stand out as worthy of comment.

Firstly, unlike some evangelicals, this book makes a clear statement that we have responsibilities to our wider human family. We are part of humanity and we need to work for solidarity and justice within that family.

Secondly, the definition of Christian in the book encompasses all of those that confess to be Christians and who fit into the major traditions. I realise that this will cause some people to struggle, but equally, I'm not sure how else to deal with the question. I may write something on this at a later point.

Something else that I should mention is that the book is now ten years old and - proving one of its central theses - is to some extent out of date in a changing world.

This is very much a book for the general reader, rather than for the mission specialist. I wouldn't hesitate to give a copy to someone in the church who was interested in what is going on in the world today.

A few quotes:

> *In the context of global Christianity we must first and foremost see ourselves as Christians proclaiming the apostolic faith and only secondarily as Reformed Christians, Pentecostal Christians, Dispensational Christians, or Arminian Christians. We must learn to think of ourselves as members of a massive global Christian movement that is looking more and more like Johnâ€™s vision in Revelation 7:9, which encompasses people from every nation, tribe, people, and language.*

> *In order for Evangelicals to navigate the crossroads of a multifaith world, we must understand how to view ourselves and others religiously.*

> *Christians have never spoken just one language, represented just one ethnicity, or lived in just one country.*

> *The fact is that the gospel is making headway among the many tribes, nations, and languagesâ€"that it is indeed making more headway among them than it is among the dominant cultures of the North Atlantic. The question is not whether there will be a multicultural church. Rather, the question is whether those who have become so accustomed to seeing the gospel expressed only or primarily in terms of those dominant cultures will be able to participate in the life of the multicultural church that is already a reality.*

> *British theologian Dewi Hughes writes, â€œChristians have dual citizenship. On one hand, they belong to the heavenly kingdom, which is already manifested in Jesus but is yet to be revealed in all its glory. On the other hand, they also belong to earthly nations and have a responsibility to ensure that, when the kingdom is revealed, those nations will be able to make a worthy contribution to the praise of the Lamb.â€*

> *According to Tennent, â€œThe basic problem is that Western systematic theologies are still written with a Christendom mind-set, assuming the absence of rival theistic claims as well as*

> *rival texts. They tend to be overly preoccupied with philosophical objections to the Christian message, rather than with religious objections based on sacred texts or major social traditions that contradict the claims of Scripture.â€*

> *Christianity became more diverse as our global community spread across the whole world. Yet we often fall short of taking full advantage of our diversity. We listen to some voices but not others. Normally it is Western voices (usually white male) that speak the loudest in our community. They lead Christian organizations, have the most resources, and receive the most invitations to speak in large meetings. Given the shift of global Christianity to the South, it is particularly troubling that Western voices continue to dominate.*

> *...we get our calling wrong when we imagine that God needs us, to be the hero of our story, rather than Christ.*