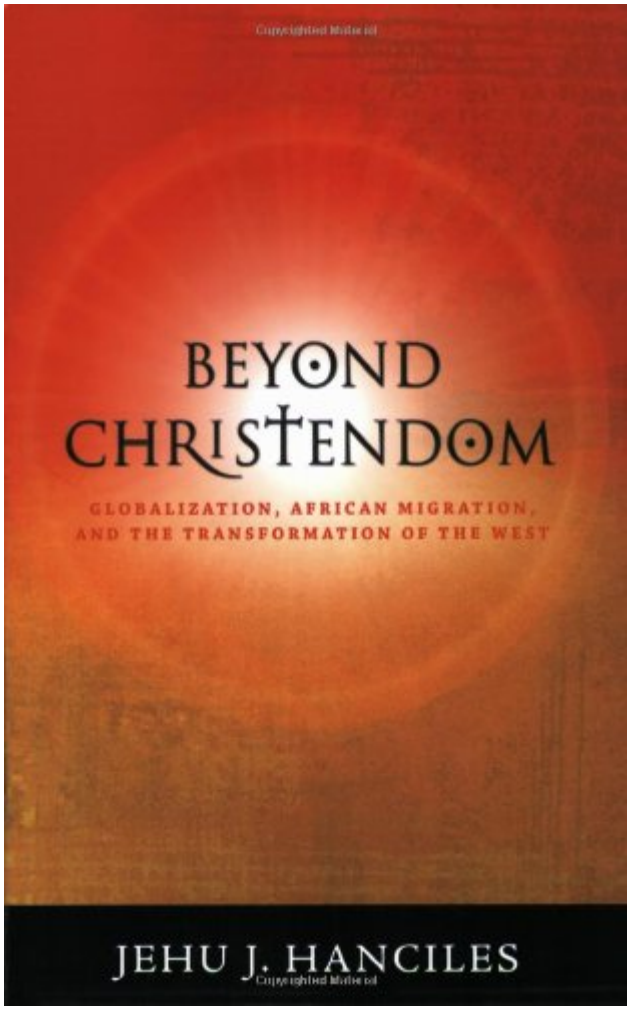
BOOKS I HAVE READ: BEYOND CHRISTENDOM

Posted on January 28, 2016 by Eddie

The reshaping of global Christianity has significant implications for the study of Christianity and the understanding of Christian missions. The old mental maps and conceptual wine skins quite simply will not do.
Category: Reviews

> *The popular and entrenched notion that the values, ideals, and institutions of modern Western societies are destined to dominate the world.. ...is not that new. It is has dressed itself in many different garbs over the course of time - at times even claiming divine clearance - but it is as old as the phenomenon of rampant uncontrolledÂ diversity that it seeks to replace or dispel. That much is evident from the biblical story of Babel.*

BEYOND CHRISTENDOM: Globalization, African Migration and the Transformation of the WestÂ by Jehu Hanciles is absolutely excellent, but, at around Â£26, it isn't cheap.



A large format paperback of around 400 pagesÂ with aÂ full bibliography and an index, this is an academic, rather than a popular work. If your interest is in diaspora ministry, migration or the future of the church and mission movement and you have not read this book already, it should be near the top of your 'to read' pile. If you can't afford to buy it, badger your library to get you a copy.

The bookÂ consists fifteen chapters which are divided among three sections:

- Section one looks at globalisation and the notion of Christendom.
- Section two considers the role of international migrations in shaping the contemporary world order.

- Section three explores the religious implications and impact of massive South-North migration on Western societies.

Though the book is broad in its scope, it is important to note that its primary focus is on African migration into the US. That being said, it is long enough and detailed enough that even the passing references to Europe cover a lot of ground.

A few quotes from the final conclusion will give an illustration of the issues that the book covers:

> *As I have shown, the conjunction between migrant movements and gods salvific purpose or missionary expansion is deeply rooted in the biblical story andÂ strongly manifested through throughout Christian history. Throughout the Old Testament, God's plan of salvation and redemptive action repeatedly unfold within the trauma and travail of displacement, uprootedness, and migration. In the new Testament, the intersection of migration and mission is further extended and encapsulated in the establishment of the church, the new Israel, which, not unlike the old, comprises "Aliens and strangers." From the outset, the spread of the gospel, including inception of the Gentile mission, was linked to migrant movements and networks. And, in the centuries that followed the fall of Jerusalem the faith spread mainly through kinship and commercial networks, migrants movements and other forms of mobility.*
>
> *The reshaping of global Christianity has significant implications for the study of Christianity and the understanding of Christian missions. The old mental maps and conceptual wine skins quite simply will not do. If Western missiologicalÂ thinking fails to detect, or struggles to understand, the nature andÂ global significance of the new non-Western missionary movement, for instance, this is largely because the Western experience provides few obvious guidelines or models that can be usefully applied to the new realities. Quite frankly Â the shifting perspectives and understanding that need to accompany "the shift" within global Christianity maybe nothing short of Copernican. But as with many aspects of globalisation the dominant forces appear all to self evident,Â strongly entrenched and very much in control of the action.*
>
> *The reshaping of global Christianity has rendered Western Christendom a defunct and meaningless conception; but, however marginalised the church and its institutions are within Western society, they remain associated with Western economic and political dominance and retain some of the old primacy. Within global Christianity, therefore, long-standing attitudes and assumptions related to Western supremacy, control, and monopoly of ideas are still entrenched. Thus, while non-Western Christians now represent the face and future of global Christianity, the church in the non-Western world does not yet constitute its main driving force.*