

# CONTEMPORARY REALITIES AND CHALLENGES IN THE WORLD CHRISTIAN GRAVITATIONAL SHIFT: SOME SCHOLARS WHO ENGAGED PHILIP JENKINS' TRILOGY IN DISAGREEMENT

---

**Yaw Attah Edu-Bekoe**

***Abstract:** Jenkins is the author of a trilogy. The central theme in the trilogy is that there has been a shift of the world Christian gravitational center from the North to the South. In addition, the practice of Christianity in Africa, Asia, and Latin-America is in resonance with the biblical theologizing than in Euro-America. For Jenkins, the Southern churches with the World's Christian center of gravity are quite at home with biblical notions of the supernatural, with ideas such as dreams, visions, prophecy, healing, and deliverance dominating their practice and that, in addition, the old Christendom must give priority to Southern voices. Secularism and religious decline/immigration and religious upsurge are some dominant themes in the Trilogy. Jenkins sees a looming and persistent crisis in European Christianity. Accordingly, it is high time Western scholars ask whether Europe's current problems are religious, racial, or classism. Euro-America is now living in fear of attacks by Muslim fundamentalists. Mixed reactions have engaged the above analysis by Jenkins. Many scholars have agreed with Jenkins. Others have debunked his ideas with many still being neutral. The reactions by four of Jenkins' critics form the basis for this article. Views from one Northern and three Southern scholars—Robert (Euro-America), Phan (Asia), Sanneh (Africa), and Escobar (Latin-America) will be provided; all ending with an assessment.*

**Key Words:** Trilogy, Christendom, Diagnosis, Prognosis, Ecclesiology, and Sensationalizing

## **Introduction**

For Jenkins, since the destruction of the World Trade Center (WTC) to ground zero in 9/11 2001, the world's geopolitics have never been the same. Its subsequent Gulf War that killed Saddam Hussein, the Afghanistan War that killed Osama bin Laden, the Arab Spring demonstrations that have created the Islamic State (IS: ISIS, ISIL, and ISIQ, among others) have also aggravated the situation making Europe sitting on a time bomb of religious explosion. Recent bombings in France,

Belgium, and some Scandinavian nations give credence to some of the predictions of Jenkins. One would ask if Jenkins is a modern-day prophet of doom.

This article will:

- a) consider the dominant and recurrent themes in Jenkins' trilogy
- b) submit criticisms of some scholars in disagreement with Jenkins
- c) appraise Jenkins' Trilogy as the final section with concluding remarks.

### **Dominant and Recurrent Themes of the Trilogy**

Jenkins wrote as a Sociologist in a secular institution and for secular audience using what theologians, missiologists, and contextual scholars have been postulating for a long time. Six major themes appear persistently which include:

### **Global Spatial Gravitational Shift of the Center of Christianity**

The main recurrent theme is that there has simply been gravitational shift of the Center of world Christianity from the global North to the South. Using demography, Jenkins predicted that by "2050, 50% of the world's Christians will live in Africa and Latin America with another 17% living in Asia. Within the same era, there will be 1 billion Pentecostals for every Hindu and every Buddhist. Interestingly, there will be more Catholics than Pentecostals. By 2025, every three out of four Catholics will live in the South."<sup>1</sup> By the year 2050 with regard to the largest estimated Christian communities, three will be in Africa, two in Asia, one in Latin America, and one in Central and North America.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 93-95. Previously, in a center-periphery relationship, the 19th century missionaries posited a "tabula rasa" idea and considered Africans as having no God or little knowledge of Western Christian civilization. For Jenkins, this has changed unlike the Great century era that spread the Gospel around the world. World Christianity in the 21st century show remarkably different scenario because now there has been a great shift which has culminated into somewhat an inverse relationship. Hilaire Beloc had boasted, "Europe is the faith" quoted by Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?: The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 22, 23). For Sanneh, this statement should rather be "Africa is the faith!" (Sanneh, *Whose Religion*, 22, 23). This is because the period when Europe used to be the center with all other areas (Africa, Asia, and Latin America) considered as the "others" at the periphery is over. Accordingly, the immediate past movement of the Old Christendom in the North (West) has changed to a new center.

<sup>2</sup> Jenkins stressed the fact that this reverse shift of the center of gravity is based on three major issues: Reading the Bible with Different Lenses: The lenses through which believers in the South

## Cosmological Warfare

The second recurrent theme in all the three volumes is spiritual warfare. Jenkins treated this theme under a plethora of terminologies: exorcism, demonology, healing and deliverance, divination, witchcraft and witches, ancestors, paganism, shamanism, and syncretism. A center-periphery analysis can be utilized to explain the position of Jenkins.

For him, Christian converts believe in a constant warfare in which Christ (Supreme Being) is taken as their "Field Marshall" par excellence, for victory. Relating to this cosmological warfare, Jenkins stated, "Demonology is thus credible for African and Asian churches in a way it can scarcely be for most educated Westerners, and so it is the idea of exorcism...The theme of spiritual captivity and release finds expression in many biblical texts."<sup>3</sup> Jenkins postulated that such phrases as victory, loosing the captives, casting out demons, healing and deliverance, liberating the oppressed, and plugging and claiming what is deserved for good living, among others, are placed under the constant warfare between the Triune God and Satan with his demons. For instance, the *Akan* of Ghana believe in (also all other ethnicities) a hierarchical cosmology with the Supreme Being—Ultimate Reality—at the top. Others included in this hierarchy are the ancestral spirit, lesser divinities, and myriads of evil spirits which manifest themselves in stones, carvings, the sea, mountains, rivers, and trees.

---

are reading the Bible are quite different, revealing, and insightful. As Jenkins stated, "While simple interpretation and understanding play important roles in such interpretation in the South, Northern academia reject such interpretations as normative and see them as simplistic, literalist, and fundamentalist. Northern interpretation of Scripture is done with historical-critical form in their scholarship." This method is the result of the heritage of Enlightenment in which rationalism plays crucial role and various thoughts must be subjected to reasoning. Similar Socio-Religious and Biblical Conditions in Less Developed Countries (LDCs):

- a) Biblical conditions resound and resonate with the current socio-economic milieu of the South where "famine, disease, plagues, droughts, poverty, persecution, and exile" are the order of the day.
- b) Conversion for the Felt-Needs: Christians in the South convert to the faith to find solutions to their felt needs which are impinged upon by evil spiritual beings in a cosmological warfare.

<sup>3</sup> Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity*, 45. Within such cosmological scenario, Christian conversion becomes an escapist route, and within such faith categories victorious Christian living is appropriated because Christ has conquered sin, death, Satan. Constant cosmological warfare, consequently, is a recurrent theme in the theology of Southern churches. In African spirituality, African Indigenous Churches, for example, have called for new explanations for solutions to the felt-needs of the people.

Satan and his demons, and other divinities function as evil spirits; others such as witches and wizards also in addition operate in ways that impinge on the lives of the masses. For protection, traditional *Akan* would consult seers, charmers, sorcerers, traditional medicine men (priests), and *malams* for healing and deliverance from such hostile spirits. For Christianity, in the midst of this liberating cosmological encounter, "Christ is placed in the center of action as the Redeemer par excellence. Christ becomes the Field Marshall, Redeemer, Conqueror, and Deliverer who conquers all because He has conquered Satan, his demons, and death."<sup>4</sup>

With this particular theme, Jenkins cited Afua Kuma who eulogizes about Christ to illustrate the role of Jesus in this constant warfare encounter. In one of her descriptions of Christ's encounter with Satan, He forever overcomes him. She stated, "If Satan troubles us; Jesus Christ, you are the lion of the grassland, you whose claws are sharp will tear his entrails; and leave them on the ground for the flies to eat."<sup>5</sup> This expression constitutes a Christology in grassroots theology from the African Christian perspective. In such warfare in African Christianity, "some of the popular texts include: Exodus 15:3ff; Mark 1:21-28; 16:15ff, and Ephesians 6:12-18, and the like."<sup>6</sup>

### **Constant Christianity-Islamic Conflict**

The third dominant theme is the conflict between Christianity and Islam. All over the world, this Cross and Crescent forever conflict has gained consistency since the era of the Crusades. In the Euro-American context, the tension has culminated in the bombings in Madrid, London, and Paris in 2008/2009; again in Paris, Brussels, and Copenhagen (2015/1016), and recently in London Westminster (March 2017), among others. Groups such as Al-Qaida (Afghanistan) in Asia, Islamic State (IS)—Syria (ISIS), Iraq (ISIQ), Libya (ISIL)—in the Middle East, and Al-Shabab and Boko Haram in Africa have grown out of this conflict.

---

<sup>4</sup> Kingsley Larbi, "The Nature of Continuity and Discontinuity of Ghanaian Pentecostal Concept of Salvation in African Cosmology," *Cyber Journal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Research: African Cosmology* (10 June 2001), 4. See Larbi, *Pentecostalism: Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies (CPCS), 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity*.

<sup>6</sup> Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity*, 101,

In *God's Continent*, Jenkins provided plenty of information on the intermittent demonstrations of Muslim youth in Europe. In effect, there seems to be a serious premonition of an "Eurobia" or Islamization of Europe with Muslim youths demonstrating with messages such as "We shall out birth you;"<sup>7</sup> and "Islam, our religion today; your religion tomorrow."<sup>8</sup> In the *Next Christendom*, Jenkins noticed that in America, though the situation has not been so open and obvious like that of Europe, the final action has been the 2001 9/11 bombings of the WTC, an action that changed the world's situation to date.

In the South, the discussion goes down to the demographic trends which show a close relationship between Christians and Muslims. In South East Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia, Muslims seem to be in the majority but in Africa, Christians outnumber Muslims. Nigeria's example is unique with the Northerners being mostly Muslim while Southerners are mostly Christian. The intermittent clashes in Nigeria are reminiscent of the conflict between the two religions in Africa. The ethnic cleansing in the civil war in Sudan's Darfur region was basically religiously based.

## Human Sexuality

Human sexual morality is the fourth dominant theme; in all the volumes this issue feature strongly. Controversial issues as gay and lesbian rights, same-sex marriage, and paedophile challenges in the North are presented. Jenkins provided debatable information on the issue of homosexuality from the standpoint of the worldwide communion of the Anglicans. The fact is that all over the world there have been earlier historical parallels about questions of polygamy, sati, widowhood rites, and other general traditional practices. A relevant issue is the ordination of homosexuals and women in the American Episcopal Church which are unaccepted by all Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Episcopal members. The term homosexuality and its derivatives appear on:

- a) Eleven (11) pages of the *Next Christendom*;
- b) Nine (9) pages of the *New Faces of Christianity*, and

---

<sup>7</sup> Philip Jenkins, *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 46.

<sup>8</sup> Jenkins, *God's Continent*, 51.

c) Eighteen (18) pages of *God's Continent*.

Jenkins posited that “the Anglican Communion has in recent years suffered intense controversies over attitudes to sexual morality, and it is the African and Asian churches that have been most resolutely opposed to liberalism for this issue.”<sup>9</sup>

### Reformation Metaphor

The final theme this article discusses is the reformation metaphor which has to be considered in two parts. First, the reformation had repercussions in the Roman Catholic Church that has contemporary instances. As Jenkins stated,

The policies of Popes John Paul and Benedict must recall the era of the Catholic Reformation of the sixteenth century, when an earlier generation of prelates had to confront the prospect of a Europe slipping rapidly away from the faith, on that occasion to radical Reformation. Then too, the church restored its fortunes by a renewed emphasis on sanctity and devotion to saints, and revived focus on Mary. But not even the most charismatic pope...could have achieved much unless he had rather more to work with than merely the cooling ashes of a near-extinct faith.<sup>10</sup>

The most important group as a sequel to the Roman Catholic Reformation was the Society of Jesus—Jesuits. Contemporary Euro-American Catholicism has experienced repeated spate of controversies. Consequently, waves of new religious orders and societies have arisen, many just as controversial as the original Jesuits were. Among the most successful are Opus Dei, Neo-catechuminate, Focolare, and Communion and Liberation.<sup>11</sup>

Second, this Reformation metaphor has its counterpart in the European Muslim population. As Jenkins wrote, "This model is what is implied

---

<sup>9</sup> Jenkins, *God's Continent*, 72.

<sup>10</sup> Jenkins, *God's Continent*, 72. Other groups trace their origins in the charismatic movements. They grew parallel with the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Protestantism. Jenkins stated, “Counting Catholics and Protestants together, the numbers are impressive, especially when we compare them with the Muslim population that has received so much media attention in recent years; Europe’s evangelicals, Charismatics, and Pentecostals outnumber Muslims by almost two to one, and continue to do so for the foreseeable future...Though little known outside their region, other Catholic communities have produced several movements”.

<sup>11</sup>The less successful organizations include: Sant’Egidio, Community, L’Arche, the Scontatt Movement, the Emmanuel Community, and Regnum Christi.

when writers envisage an Islamic Reformation, a phrase that reveals little knowledge of the passionate, dogmatic, moralistic, and utterly politicized Christianity of the European Reformation.”<sup>12</sup>

Jenkins concluded his arguments on this subject by positing that both Christianity and Islam will change radically in the coming decades, through the experience of living in Europe’s social and cultural environment as well as from living side by side and having to interact with each other in a multi-faith setting.

Jenkins has been hailed as objective and positive contributor to World Christianity and academy. What are the reactions to Jenkins’ propositions? What are the main differences between Jenkins and his theological interlocutors?

### **Scholars in Disagreement with Jenkin’s Arguments**

Discussing Jenkins’ arguments, some scholars on the basis of demographic analysis commend his works; some other scholars disagree with him including: Robert, Phan, Sanneh, and Escobar. Apart from Robert who is an *etic* researcher, all the others are *emic* researchers from Asia, Africa, and Latin-America. All are domiciled in the USA, though. Though a Northerner, Robert is chosen because of her unique feminine arguments.

### **Dana Robert: World Christianity as a Women’s Movement**

The major argument by Robert<sup>13</sup> is that Jenkins is not gender sensitive. As she stated,

In 1999 I claimed that “typical late twentieth-century Christian” was no longer European “but a Latin American or African woman”...Later...Jenkins’ important book *The Next Christendom*...appeared, in which he stated. ‘If we want to visualize a “typical” contemporary Christian, we should think of a woman living in a village in Nigeria or in a Brazilian *favela*.’ Neither my article nor Jenkins’ book

---

<sup>12</sup> Jenkins, *God’s Continent*, 260.

<sup>13</sup> Dana L. Robert is a contributing editor and Truman Collins Professor of World Christianity and History of Missions, Boston University School of Theology. In the late 1990s she conducted research on women’s participation in eight denominations in central Zimbabwe.

explored the hard data behind this assertion—because there wasn't any.<sup>14</sup>

Robert continued her criticism of Jenkins, “Although Jenkins indicated in chap. 4 (p. 224) that he wrote an article “Shifting Southward,” and that he and I used similar examples, there is reference neither to gender nor to a “typical” Christian in his earlier article.”<sup>15</sup>

On the whole, Robert asked an important question and made two profound statements in her article. She posited, “What would the study of Christianity look like if scholars put women in the center of their research?...In Africa, South-East Asia, and Oceania, women were the earliest converts to Christianity...” World Christianity as Women’s Movement” is significant not just for scholarship but for the future of Christian practice itself<sup>16</sup>

In her concluding remarks she asked, “Why Does Gender Matter?” Robert in her empirical research on Christian movements in Latin-America and Africa suggested gender-linked factors in female church participation.<sup>17</sup>

### **Peter Phan: What Kind of New Christianity? Next Christendom: Mistaken Diagnosis for Southern Christianity**

In an elaborate write-up, Peter Phan critiques Jenkins by arguing from the perspectives of Asian Catholicism as an insider than that of an outsider<sup>18</sup>. In counter arguing Jenkins’ propositions, Phan submitted, on one hand, that point to a sharper image of Southern Christianity by

---

<sup>14</sup>Dana L. Robert, “World Christianity as a Women’s Movement,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30, no. 4 (2002), 180. Also see Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Robert, “World Christianity”, 180.

<sup>16</sup> Robert, “World Christianity”, 181-184.

<sup>17</sup> Robert, “World Christianity”, 185. 1) Women join churches because in them they find female solidarity and support for their roles in family and community life, often in connection with mitigating the pressures of patriarchal societies. 2) Women are attracted to new Christian movements because they hold out hope for healing, improved well-being, and reconciliation with others in their communities. Across the growing world church, experiences of healing provide entry points for women in diverse Christian communities, whether Pentecostal or Roman Catholic. 3) Church-based community support for women, and for healing and wholeness, can create new avenues for women’s leadership in patriarchal societies, as well as, provide context in which female education is valued—even if only in church-based instruction for membership.

<sup>18</sup>Peter Phan is the Ignacio Ellacuria, SJ Professor of Catholic Social Thought at Georgetown University. He had served as the Warren-Blanding Professor of Religion and Culture at the Catholic University of America and was the President of the Catholic Theological Society of America (2001-2002).

contrasting it with Northern Christianity. Therefore, Jenkins considers Northern Christianity in his account as, “Progressive in theology; advocating for married clergy and ordination of women; liberal in morality, accepting divorce, contraception, abortion, and homosexuality; dismissive of such biblical practices as faith-healing, exorcism, and discrediting popular notions.”<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, for Southern Christianity, Phan agreed with Jenkins that there can be no gainsaying the fact that both the general world and Christian populations have been shifting toward the South and will continue to do so significantly in the next 50 years and that this demographic shift presents both enormous challenges and opportunities for Christianity. For Phan, what is controversial and problematic about Jenkins’ reading of this “*New Christianity*” is his use of the historical counter-Reformation as interpretive tropes to understand the nature of Southern Christianity. Phan posited, that with regard to Christendom, Jenkins suggested,

Today...a rising religious fervor is coinciding with autonomy of nation states. He makes use of the analogy with the medieval concept of Christendom—the *Res Publica Christiana*—as an overwhelming source of unity and a focus of loyalty transcending mere kingdoms and empires. For Jenkins, Christendom was a primary cultural construct, and it may re-emerge as such in the Christian South—as a new transnational order in which political, social, and personal identities are defined chiefly by religious loyalties—The New Christianity. In this account, a new socio-political regime, similar to (the Old) Christendom...would emerge when Christians in Africa, Asia, and South America will begin to form alliances with each other. Once the axis is established, we really would be speaking of a new Christendom based on the Southern Hemisphere.<sup>20</sup>

What is more serious for Phan is Jenkins’ contemplation of the horrifying but unlikely scenario in which this new Christendom comes into conflict with Islam bringing about a new age of “Christian Crusades” and “Muslim Jihads” but now with “nuclear warheads and anthrax.”<sup>21</sup> Phan stated,

---

<sup>19</sup> Peter Phan, “A New Christianity, But What Kind?” In *Mission Studies* 22, no.1 (2005), 64-83.

<sup>20</sup> Phan, “A New Christianity,” 65.

<sup>21</sup> Phan, “A New Christianity,” 65. Regarding the Counter-Reformation, metaphor, Phan argued that the next demographic explosion of Christianity in the Southern Hemisphere recalls that of the

Due to the current population shift to the Southern Hemisphere, notes Jenkins, the likely map of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Catholicism represents unmistakably legacy of the Counter-Reformation and its global missionary ventures. Moreover, given its more conservative theology and morality as well as its promotion of devotional practices, the Catholic faith that is rising rapidly in Africa and Asia looks very much like the pre-Vatican II faith, being more traditional in its respects for power of bishops and its priests, and in its preference for older devotions.<sup>22</sup>

Phan then continued to pose the question as to “whether the historical analogies of the Christendom and Counter-Reformation are the most illuminating tropes to understand Southern Christianity or whether they lead to a pitfall in Jenkins’ works, seeing what one wants to see.”<sup>23</sup> Put differently, Phan asked whether there is not some more plausible and fruitful way of understanding Southern Christianity and its relationship to Northern Christianity.

### **Contesting Jenkins’ Diagnosis**

Phan used two contentions and examples to dismiss Jenkins’ arguments. First, Phan argued that those who disagree with Jenkins’ prognosis for the future of Christianity in the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century may want to contest his very diagnosis of Christianity in the South. He pointed out that for each of the six features Jenkins noted in Southern Christianity, it is not difficult to cite numerous credible counter-examples. An instance is Moses Tay, the Anglican bishop of South-East Asia’s attempts to exorcise Canadian Totem Poles.

Second, for Phan, it may be argued that all the six features that Jenkins attributes to Southern Christianity are found—and abundantly—in Northern Christianity as well. These are but a few instances that Phan used to disprove Jenkins’ diagnosis of Southern Christianity.<sup>24</sup>

---

post-Tridentine or Counter-Reformation period in which Catholic missionaries, with the help of Spain, Portugal, and France, created a transoceanic church structure in Africa, Asia, and North and South America.

<sup>22</sup> Phan, “A New Christianity,” 66.

<sup>23</sup> Phan, “A New Christianity,” 67.

<sup>24</sup> Phan, “A New Christianity,” 67. Examples include: a) Literalist interpretation of the Bible enjoys widespread popularity in North America; b) Appeals to Daniel and Revelation and other prophetic and apocalyptic books are plentiful among televangelists and their followers; Healing, and ecstatic utterances, visions, and dreams and exorcisms are frequent even among North American White charismatic Catholics; c) Pilgrimages to the cult of Mary and saints, processions and other forms

## Phan's Prognosis for Jenkins' Diagnosis<sup>25</sup>

Phan submitted four major arguments as better prognosis for Jenkins' diagnosis of Southern Christianity—two provided and other two foot-noted:

*Making the Kingdom of God Center of the Church's Life and Activities:* In the first prognosis from Phan, ecclesiology should preoccupy itself with making the Kingdom of God (KOG) and not the church the center of the church's life and activities, and to promote the KOG through dialogue. There are two operative words here—KOG and dialogue. The Asian Catholic church espouses a kingdom-centered ecclesiology in which the church is no longer considered the pinnacle or center of the Christian life. Rather it is moved from the center to the periphery and from the top to the bottom. The only reason for the church to exist is to serve the Reign of God—that is—to bring what has been commonly referred to as “Kingdom values.” It is these values that the church must promote and not any self-aggrandizement or reputation or institutional survival; in short, an ecclesiology that is kingdom-centered must then seek to promote the kingdom values.

*Ecclesiology of Local Community of Equal Disciples:* In Phan's second prognosis, the church should be seen as a local community of equal disciples. The church should be a truly local church built on communion and equality everywhere in four ways. To begin with, the church both at universal and local levels, should be seen primarily as a communion of communities “where both the clergy and laity recognize each other as brothers and sisters.”<sup>26</sup> Secondly, in this ecclesiology, there is explicit and effective recognition of the fundamental equality among all the members of the local church as disciples of Jesus and among all the local churches in so far as they are communities of Jesus' disciples and whose communion constitutes the Universal Church.

Third, for Phan, the above “pastoral discipleship of equals” leads to a third characteristic of the new way of being a church in Asia, that is, the participatory and collaborative nature of all the ministries in the church.

---

of popular devotions are alive and well patronized even in the heart of Europe, and any doubt about this will be quickly dispelled by a trip to the numerous Mary's shrines and holy places in France, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Italy, Spain, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

<sup>25</sup> Phan, “A New Christianity,” 70-75.

<sup>26</sup> Phan, “A New Christianity,” 70-75.

It is a participatory church where the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to the entire faithful—lay, religious, and cleric alike—are recognized and articulated so that the church may be built up and its mission realized. This participatory nature of the church must be lived out not only within the local church but also among the local churches ecumenically.

The fourth feature of the new way of being a church in Asia is prophecy. The church is a leaven of transformation in this world and serves as a prophetic sign daring to point beyond this world to the ineffable Kingdom that is yet fully to come.

Phan maintained that it is in the above context that the numerical growth of the Asian Christianity should be viewed. It should be noted that despite the dramatic increases in the last century, Christians in Asia constitute not more than 9% of the Asian population. After several centuries of evangelization, Christianity is still a “small remnant” in Asia, and contrary to Christianity in Africa and Latin America, Asian Christianity is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future. One of the fundamental reasons for this state of affairs is the presence of other religions in Asia which will continue to play an irreplaceable role in the religious life of Asians.

Accordingly, the prospect of Asian Christians forming political and ecclesiological alliance with their counterparts in Africa and Latin America to build a unified Christendom is nothing more than a pious wish. Consequently, in Asia, Christianity should journey with the followers of other Asian religions and together with them—not instead of, or worst against them—work for the coming of the Reign of God. That is why the Asian churches insist that in Asia there should not only be Basic Christian communities as in Latin America, but also Basic Human communities in which Christians and followers of other religions and even persons of no religious affiliations at all can work together for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Phan, “A New Christianity,” 75-77. The other two include: a) The Ecclesiological Mission as Dialogue: In Phan’s third prognosis, he posited and proposed that there is also the church’s mission as dialogue. The way of being a church in Asia is characterized by the dialogical spirit built in the hearts of people. In other words, the new way of being a church in Asia is by means of liberation, interreligious dialogue, and inculturation. These activities, to be truly effective, must be carried out together. b) Asian Ecclesiology for Renewed Church: In the fourth prognosis from Phan, there should be an Asian ecclesiology for a renewed church. Phan postulated the church as a movement, in eight dimensions, five of which are listed here:

## Lamin Sanneh:<sup>28</sup> Refuting Beloc's Problematic Statement and Shift by Translation

Sanneh wrote as an *emic* scholar. He is domiciled in the West, though. Sanneh also supplied his own figures for Africa to refute Hillaire Beloc's problematic statement that "Europe is the faith."<sup>29</sup> Sanneh posited, in 1910 when Africa had gone firmly under the grips of colonialism, the continent had the following out of its 107.87 million peoples:

- a) Christians: 8.7 million—9%;
- b) Muslim: 34.5 million—32%.<sup>30</sup> At this time,

The majority of Christians were made up of Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox Christians. Muslims almost outnumbered Christians by a ratio of 4:1. By 1962 when many African nations had been independent, out of about 145 million people, Christians were 60 million and Muslims were 80 million. At this point, the Christian population was made up of 23 million Protestants, 27 million Catholics, and 10 million Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox adherents. By 1985, it had become clear that a major expansion of Christianity was happening in Africa. There were about 6,500 conversions a day culminating into an annual rate of 60,000.<sup>31</sup>

Sanneh contended that paradoxically, the overwhelming majority of the contemporary Christian population is from the poor, needy, and marginalized, a fact from which Jenkins drew attention to. The strong argument by Sanneh and others about African Christianity in agreement with Jenkins is the reality in the change of the Christian heartlands in favor of the Two-thirds World. In other words, in response to Jenkins,

- 
- a) A movement toward active integral evangelization toward a new sense of mission;
  - b) A movement toward empowerment of men and women. We should evolve participative church structures in order to use the personal talents and skills of lay women and men.
  - c) A movement toward active involvement in generating and serving life.
  - d) A movement toward the triple dialogue with other faiths, with the poor and "dialogue with the great religious traditions of our peoples," especially the poor.

<sup>28</sup> Lamin Sanneh is Professor of World Christianity and of History at Yale University, and Chair of Yale's Council of African Studies. He is also a Contributing Editor of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*.

<sup>29</sup> Sanneh, *Whose Religion*, 14, 15.

<sup>30</sup> Sanneh, *Whose Religion*, 14, 15.

<sup>31</sup> Sanneh, *Whose Religion*, 14, 15.

Sanneh's provision of data to explore the fact of the shift of the center of gravity of Christianity is insightful.

However, for Sanneh, first, the basis for this major shift is not demographic as projected by Jenkins. Rather, the basis should be placed on the mission principle of translation. Stressing so much simply on demography for the shift presupposes the continuation of the erroneous Euro-American perception that Christianity is foreign for Africans. Sanneh pushed his contention further by implying that such an imposition of the idea of Christianity being foreign to Africa can lead to conflict. In short, conflict may arise because of Christianity's "alienness." Conflict should be more than a simple issue of competing past religious majorities without clash. Therefore, Jenkins' pitting of Islam against Christianity may be flawed.

Rather, Sanneh saw conflict in terms of Northern and Southern Christianities where terminologies such as liberals and conservatives are used. In the Euro-American standards, the term liberal serves as the normative while the term conservative becomes the reverse. For example, fifty years before Jenkins was writing, Pentecostalism<sup>32</sup> was considered anything but conservative. It did not appear in the mainstream imagination. For Sanneh, the term "conservative" appears to be the label used for those whose interest falls outside the liberal plan. Sanneh argued that instead of looking in terms of global conflict between Christianity and Islam—a continuation of universalizing agendas—scholars should look at particularities within the Christian faith itself.

Second, Sanneh disagreed with Jenkins for using "Global Christianity" so much instead of "World Christianity." He posited,

"World Christianity" is the movement of Christianity as it takes form and shape in societies that were not Christian...In these societies

---

<sup>32</sup> The first official Pentecostal representation occurred only in the 1952 Willingen Conference. The term conservative appears to be a label used for those whose interests fall outside the liberal agenda. To illustrate, Sanneh pointed to the 1988 Lambeth Conference of the Anglican World Communion where Southern bishops indicated to their Northern counterparts that henceforth any decision taken in subsequent conferences will indeed need their voting pattern to pass because of their majority position. This stance taken by the Southerners came to full cycle in the 1998 Lambeth Conference where the Euro-American bishops tried to force the issue of homosexuality only to be outvoted and the decision overturned by their Southern counterparts led by African bishops. It is a fact that the interests of the Southern bishops were different altogether. Homosexuality was not an issue on their agenda. The real interest was economic issues.

Christianity was received and expressed through the cultures, customs, and traditions of the people affected. World Christianity is not one thing, but a variety of indigenous responses through more or less effective local idioms, but in any case without necessarily the European Enlightenment frame. “Global Christianity,” on the other hand, is the faithful replication of the Christian forms and patterns developed in Europe. It echoes Belloc’s...“Europe is the faith.” It is, in fact, religious establishment and the cultural captivity of the faith.<sup>33</sup>

Actually, this position is what Sanneh had used as the basis for mission by translation.

Third, in a later article, Sanneh questions Jenkins’ “flawed” pitting of Christianity with Islam by citing extensively from *God’s Continent*. He stated,

Many in today’s Europe worry that...the rapid pace of dechristianization will push Europe to the fringes of Muslim world as “eurabia”... Will Britain become North Pakistan, France the Islamic Republic of New Algeria, Spain the Moorish Emirate of Iberia, Germany the New Turkey?...With its 20% Muslim population, will Brussels and Belgium become Belgistan? Will Italy and Albania merge to become Albanian Islamic Republic?...As...Gaddafi asserts, “There are signs that Allah will grant Islam victory in Europe without swords, without guns, without conquests. The fifty million Muslims [allegedly] of Europe will turn it into a Muslim continent within a few decades.”<sup>34</sup>

Sanneh is doubtful the above citation will be possible. For him, the strategic question for Europe is whether radical Islam can in turn be domesticated and moderated before being launched to stem the tide of extremism in the Muslim heartlands.” What or who precisely in secular Europe can achieve that goal of taming radicalism and monitoring its global course...It does not require a sixth sense to appreciate that the Muslim challenge implies that Europe can again be a continent only if it becomes God’s continent. Yet whose that is will determine what kind of continent Europe becomes.”<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Sanneh, *Whose Religion*, 22.

<sup>34</sup> Lamin Sanneh, “Can Europe be Saved? A Review Essay,” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 31, no. 3 (2007), 124.

<sup>35</sup> Sanneh, “Can Europe be Saved?,” 125.

## **Samuel Escobar: Holistic Understanding of the Gospel**

Another Southern scholar whose writings disagreed with some aspects of Jenkins' trilogy is Escobar. He approached the issue at stake as a Southerner looking at the North, not as a Northerner looking at the South. He argued that the future of missions can be seen in some of the large Latin American cosmopolitan centers such as Santa Cruz.

Christianity should cross frontiers as a routine. The shift to the South requires holistic understanding of the gospel—it should encompass the whole of life according to the richness of the biblical narrative. In this way, it will be realized that the Christian story will be a religion for the poor and marginalized. This also presents a challenge for the North which must at present consider geographical positions as mission fields.

## **Assessment of Philip Jenkin's Trilogy Propositions**

### **Contributions to World Christianity.**

Jenkins' project influences the contention around World Christianity in two major dimensions: contribution to World Christianity and promotion of contextual theologies. The long standing debate about World Christianity has been lifted to higher heights with a barometer that is very objective to discuss. Here, three major issues raised include:

*Bold Attempt of a Voice for the Voiceless.* The trilogy is a bold attempt of current realities because many Northern scholars tend to ignore what happens in the South on their blind side. When issues of post-modernity are discussed, while other issues take center stage, religion is pushed to the periphery. The trilogy, especially, *The Next Christendom* and *New Faces of Christianity*, suggest otherwise and try to be the voice of the voiceless.

*Multi-Purpose Wake-Up Calling.* On one hand, the thoughts in Jenkins' trilogy is a wake-up calling for Euro-American Christianity to stop, consider its self-appraisal, and to perhaps construct a "re-engineering" that will make Western Christianity what it ought to be. This is because many Southern Christians had expected inspiration for their Christianities. However, currently secularization has dominated Europe to the extent that Christianity is relegated to the background. For Jenkins, the North should wake up from its slumber to retake leadership. Otherwise, the North is being left behind in what is happening in the whole world

in terms of Christian growth. For example, certain information provided about British Anglicanism and British Islam recently is an eye opener to World Christianity.

In the world news on December 3, 2007, the CNN carried an item on the British Anglicanism. On the occasion of the former Prime Minister Tony Blair converting from Anglicanism to Catholicism, the information was given that, “by the most recent population census of England, 90% of adult Christian population professes to be Anglicans. However, out of this number only 10% attend church services.”<sup>36</sup>

Another example of the modern tactics of Islamic domination is recorded in the editorial of the *Trentonian* which read,

The most senior judge in England, Lord Chief Justice Philips, has declared that Islamic legal principles—Sharia Law—may be used within Muslim communities in Britain to settle marital arguments and regulate finances as long as punishments and divorce rulings comply with English Law. It is a law unto itself. And so the English who gave us the Magna Carta in 1215, who gave us William Blackstone and the foundation of American Law are slowly succumbing to the dictates of intolerant Islam and sowing seeds of their own destruction.<sup>37</sup>

After submitting the Iranian and Kurdish Women’s Rights Organization’s (IKWRO’s) resistance to Sharia and its work to liberate Muslim women, some of the various areas of marriage and divorce in which Muslims in Britain will be subjected to, and a case study in Maryland’s Court of Appeal’s denial of a Sharia divorce to a Pakistani man, Thomas also argued with a religious note,

It is impossible to reconcile this antiquated ‘law’ with English law, so what could Lord Philips mean when he says that Sharia can be used in Muslim communities as long as such comply with English law? This will mean English law must become subordinate to Sharia law. This is ‘Dhimmtude,’ an Islamic system of religious apartheid began in the 7<sup>th</sup> century that forces all other religions and cultures to accept an inferior status once Muslims become the majority... There is no due

---

<sup>36</sup> “Tony Blair converting from Anglicanism to Catholicism”, <http://www.CNN.news.com>. Accessed on December 3, 2007.

<sup>37</sup> Cal Thomas, “Lord Chief Justice Legalizes Sharia Law in England,” July 9, 2008. <http://calthomas.com/columns>

process under Sharia law. Lord Phillips has signed the death warrant for the nation if this view prevails.<sup>38</sup>

Regardless of all these in Euro-America, Jenkins submitted in his trilogy that there is hope. For example, the much trumpeted demise of European Christianity has not happened yet—at least not in the immediate future. Moreover, Western missionary enterprise has to cease its self-praise of achievements in Africa and other southern continents. Southern Christianities have demonstrated that they are determined to liberate themselves from cultural garb that was introduced in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Southern Christianities are prepared to tell their own stories. This is the wake-up call for Western Christianity.

*Promotion of Contextual Theologies.* In Jenkins' trilogy there are several propositions for a call to contextualize theology and Christianity. Three other theologians who advocated for this position are Shenk, Bediako, and Phan. Shenk proposed that “in theologizing he sees the development of Chinese theology, Indian theology, and Black theology—developed in South Africa—during the apartheid era. This is because every introduction of Christianity is done in a particular receptor culture and context.”<sup>39</sup>

Bediako on his part advocated for theologians to look at World Christianity as having multi-centers. For Bediako, perhaps developing an *Akan* theology of the African deep forest would add to the multi-system of developing theologies in their particularities. Consequently, the shift of the center of gravity of Christianity to the South is making Christianity having different centers at a time and in peace: Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In other words, theologians could consider Chinese Christianity as a center. Likewise, they could consider Indian, Korean, Brazilian, or Ghanaian Christianities as centers.

### **Critical Appraisal of Jenkins' Trilogy**

For a critical evaluation, however, there are four main caveats that could be argued as problematic with Jenkins' Trilogy. They include:

---

<sup>38</sup> Thomas, “Lord Chief Justice.”

<sup>39</sup> Wilbert R. Shenk, “New Wineskins for New Wine: Toward a Post-Christendom Ecclesiology,” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 29, no. 2 (2005): 73-79.

*Overdependence on Demographic Information.* The argument in agreement with Muller is that “the linchpin of Jenkins’ arguments in population trends: demography is destiny,”<sup>40</sup> and Palmer who also stated, “Philip Jenkins talks much about numbers, may be too much... However, the numbers tell us something important: that Church is growing rapidly in many places in the South and that the Church will continue to grow... But a word of caution is in order: Numbers or demographics are not everything.”<sup>41</sup>

Critically, in the trilogy, there is an overly dependence on demographic information or statistics. However, numbers are not the end of it all. Figures are means to an end and not the end itself. They are not the sine qua non because they can deceive. For instance, unless various human factors dealing with exponential growth such as birth rates, mortality rates, life expectancy, and mother-at-birth-mortality, among others, are held constant, predictions about statistical results are challenging. These factors are very high in the Southern continents—in Africa, for example—HIV/AIDs pandemic alone has been a devastating menace which makes population studies and predictions difficult.

Another basic problem with statistical data is misrepresentation. In *World Christian Database*, it is observed that Johnson and Kim provided the “total population of 478.5 million as against 480.7 million Christian population for Europe in 1910.”<sup>42</sup> This seems a serious anomaly and unless the problem is the “printers devil”—that is—a typological mistake, this piece of information placed in the *World Christian Database* distorts the whole picture for Europe.

Accordingly, it’s suggested, in contention that relying too much on statistical information becomes problematic because demography is usually influenced by human factors which are difficult to predict and project. In effect, relying so much on quantitative data might result in wrong conclusions. This is especially if statistical tools such as accurate sampling, correlation, integration, chi-square, and seasonal flow charts, and the like, are not handled well with critical analysis to arrive at

---

<sup>40</sup> John Muller, “Review of The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity,” in *Family Ministry* 17, no. 2, (2003), 63. Muller reviewed Jenkins’ volume in this journal.

<sup>41</sup> Timothy Palmer, “Review of The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity,” in *Calvin Theological Journal* 38 (2008), 174.

<sup>42</sup> Todd Johnson and Sandra Kim, “The Changing Demographics of World Christianity,” in *World Christian Database*. <<http://www.worldchristiandatabase.com>>. Accessed on May 21, 2009.

objective instead of subjective conclusions. When it comes to religion which is based on faith and cognitive analysis, the situation could be worsened.

*Overgeneralization of Issues in the Trilogy.* Another difficult area in the trilogy is overgeneralization of issues. Tennant described Jenkins as “one who looks for complexity in everything and often aided by a group of research assistants does his homework.”<sup>43</sup> In describing *The Next Christendom*, Palmer also stated, “a work such as this necessarily lapses into generalizations.”<sup>44</sup> Fact is, the South is a huge mass of geographical entity that generalizing the way Jenkins did is problematic. Africa, for instance is a huge continent with a mass of population density that is complex with diverse people groups who make predictions difficult. Consequently, generalization about African peoples is tricky.

Furthermore, there are too many generalized statements in the trilogy such as the following in *The New Faces of Christianity*: “According to one recent accounts...As one African bishop complained...According to one presenter...A friend once described visiting one of the most popular up-and-coming evangelical churches in Ghana...”<sup>45</sup> The Argument here is that making such statements without factual support are extreme generalizations. From the foregoing, it is doubtful if Jenkins has travelled to Africa. Is Jenkins an armchair researcher then? He might be a brilliant, knowledgeable, and widely read historian and sociologist because he easily cited from contextual scholars such as Huntington, Walls, Bediako, and Sanneh, among others. Nevertheless, it is uncertain whether Jenkins has been on the African field for practical research because of the way he wrote and talked publicly.

*Overly Sensationalizing the Christianity-Islamic Conflict.* Moreover, Jenkins, in addition, sensationalizes the conflict between Christianity and Islam to the extent of suggesting a possible “Armageddon” between the two religions. Under the topic ““Ultras” in *God’s Continent* (Chapter 9), Jenkins used such sub-headings as: “Generation of Terror;” “Making Militants;” “Paths of Terror;” Hizb ut-Tahrir;” “Al-Muha; jirrown;” and “The Mosque Militarist” to describe the violent nature of

---

<sup>43</sup>Agnieszka Tennant, “Allah’s Continent? Not So Fast, Says Philip Jenkins,” in *Christianity Today* 51 (2007), 174.

<sup>44</sup>Palmer, “Review,” 174.

<sup>45</sup>Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity*, 111.

Islam and Christianity conflict in Europe.”<sup>46</sup> Actually, Jenkins has predicted an end result of an “Armageddon” between these two religions until Islam finally takes over the European continent. It is argued that his propositions dramatize the issues too much.

I suggest that statements such as, “Imagine Christians and Muslims having arsenals of warheads in their hands”<sup>47</sup> exhibit the language of an alarmist who is hyping an issue in sensationalism. As Oakley stated, “That the real threat of Muslim terrorism notwithstanding, perceptions of a naked clash of civilizations is wide off the mark.”<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, placing the challenge of the conflict as solely a religious conflict is untenable. The problem is dependent also on other socio-economic, geo-political power play, and racial and ethnocentrism, and the like.

*Uncritical Presentation of Southern Christianity.* Jenkins’ major proposition is that the center of gravity of World Christianity has shifted from the minority to majority worlds. For example, it is factual that there’s been an exponential growth of Christianity in Africa. In this post-modernity era, many scholars, both Caucasian and non-Western have tended to shower praises on Southern Christianity in general, particularly, Africa.

However, I seek to suggest that an uncritical view of such proposition is untenable for Southern Christianity. Critical evaluation is indeed needed to access the situation on the ground. It becomes problematic if the much hyped African Christianity, for instance, and those who trumpet it in the West do not consider self-appraisal regarding quality of the ethos, theology, and practice of African Christianity. African search for quality is better than quantity. African Christianity has been described as “thousand mile long but two feet deep.” Examples that can easily be cited include: First, apart from the Kimbanguist church in the Congo DR, which is in a class of its own, some earliest African Indigenous Churches (AICs) such as the Musama Disco Kristo, Apostles Revelation, African Faith Tabernacle, Savior, and Nakaba Churches, among others—all in Ghana—seem to be unpopular in the 21<sup>st</sup> century than in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that they emerged and the 1950s and 1960s that

---

<sup>46</sup> Jenkins, *God’s Continent*, 205-232.

<sup>47</sup> Jenkins, *God’s Continent*, 205-232.

<sup>48</sup> Francis Oakley, “The Qu’ran at Note Dame? Review of God’s Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe’s Religious Crisis,” *Commonweal* 13 (2007), 26, 27.

they peaked. Reasons for their unpopularity, decline, or near demise should be researched into before any generalizations for African Christianity can be made.

Second, Engelke wrote that the Bible is rejected by the Shona weChishanu church in Zimbabwe (In this church, they place a stone on the ground to blasphemously represent the Holy Spirit, to face the East towards the Mt. Kilimanjaro to pray).<sup>49</sup> Mugambi also reported about the same issue of Bible rejection among the Gikuyu who join the Akurinu churches in Kenya.<sup>50</sup> These indicate that some African “Christians” have a long way to go. The above issues are to be interrogated, researched into, and reasons searched for. This will help to determine why these East Africans seem to call themselves Christians but choose to reject the Bible as their Scripture even though universally, it is accepted as such. This is not withstanding the fact of contextualization.

*Mutual Need for both Northern and Southern Christianities.* In the provision of the *Map for World Christianity*, Johnson and Kim made the following statements and ended with a profound question,

The map reveals at least three major trends: the decline of Christianity in the North; the uneven rise of Christianity in the South; the profound shift of the Christian center of gravity to the South. What does it mean that the center of Christianity’s gravity continues to move South and East?<sup>51</sup>

Perhaps these are similarly the exact questions Jenkins has asked in his trilogy. The question is, what can the African Church learn from the Western Christian crisis in its search for worshipping as authentic Christians and authentic Africans? Both the Western and Southern churches need each other. Newbigin stated, “We need their witness to correct ours...our need is greater...we imperatively need one another if

---

<sup>49</sup> Matthew Engelke, *A Problem of Presence: Beyond Scripture in an African Church* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007). See Matthew Engelke, “Discontinuity and the Discourse of Conversion,” in *Journal of Christian Religion in Africa* 34, no. 1-2 (2004).

<sup>50</sup> John N. K. Mugambi, *The Church and Reconstruction of Africa: Theological Considerations* (Nairobi: All African Conference of Churches, 1977).

<sup>51</sup> Todd Johnson and Sandra Kim, “Map of World Christianity.” <http://www.worldchristianity.com>. Accessed on May 21, 2009.

we are to be the faithful witnesses of Christ in our many different cultures.”<sup>52</sup>

African churches seeking to learn from the mistakes of Western churches and seeking to build quality ecclesiology have to improve Keneth Pike’s originated Three Selves as projected by Henry Venn for Africa in self-propagation, self-governance, and self-finance. To these, while Charles Kraft added self-theologizing, Edu-Bekoe and Enoch Wan have also added self-critique—self-evaluation of African Christian faith.<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusion

Jenkins' Trilogy has been hailed in Euro-America as one of the most well researched works in the fields of World Christianity and Christian History. This article began by considering the dominant recurrent themes in the volumes. It went on to submit views of Jenkins’ critical scholars who disagree with him. Finally, the article addressed a critique of Jenkins. It was composed of his contributions to World Christianity and critical appraisal.

Jenkins has legitimate propositions and positive contributions for world Christianity. It means calling attention to the current massive challenges to Christianity. One major weakness in the Trilogy is lack of much information from Latin America. In reviewing *The New Faces of Christianity*, Edu-Bekoe stated,

Latin America does not feature well...because for Jenkins, in South-America the differences are not so much to make any generalizations about the Global South. One wonders how Jenkins is willing to generalize about Africa and Asia—two continents far bigger and more diverse—but not Latin-America. Yet, Jenkins is writing about World Christianity.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> Leslie Newbigin, *Foolishness of the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986). Also See Yaw Attah Edu-Bekoe, *Ghanaian Diaspora: A Missiological Study of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana Congregations in the United States of America*. PhD thesis (Faculty of Western Seminary, Portland, 2012).

<sup>53</sup> Edu-Bekoe and Enoch Wan, *Scattered Africans Keep Coming: A Case Study of Diaspora Missiology on Ghanaian Diaspora and Congregations in the USA* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies - Western Seminary, 2013).

<sup>54</sup> Edu-Bekoe Yaw Attah, “Review of *The New Faces of Christianity*,” in *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* 18, no. 5 (2016), 119-121.

Ogbu Kalu submitted that Gifford's book "is a thick description of a group of Africans dancing without hearing their music."<sup>55</sup> This description could absolutely fit Jenkins. I have sought to suggest that "Jenkins has a brilliant academic description of Africans dancing without seeing them dance. Neither has he danced himself."<sup>56</sup>

In addition, I seek to submit that Jenkins is overly sensationalizing issues, especially, those concerning the Islamic takeover of Europe through Jihad. This may not happen in centuries ahead. Indeed, critical study of the historical antecedents of the spatial movement of the center of gravity of World Christianity shows that this center has never been static. It had been from Jerusalem to Antioch to Western Europe to the Eastern Orthodoxy in Constantinople and now to the Southern continents. This shows the amenability of the Christian faith to all cultures. In conclusion, therefore, it should not surprise anyone if in some centuries to come, this spatial center of gravity of World Christianity shifts back to Western Europe. The power of the Holy Spirit could do this according to its will.

*Dr. Yaw Attah Edu-Bekoe*

Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon  
yaw.edu-bekoe@alum.ptsem.edu

---

<sup>55</sup> Ogbu Kalu, "Paul Gifford," in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol. 29, no. 3.

<sup>56</sup> Yaw Attah Edu-Bekoe, "Review of *The Next Christendom*," in *KOINONIA, The Journal of the PhD Students*, Princeton Theological Seminary XX (2008), 113-115.