



## WORLD CHRISTIANS ARE HERE

### Harvey Kwiyani

In this article, I explore the subject of World Christianity in Europe with the intention of discerning what missiological implications emerge from the presence of hundreds of thousands of Christians from other parts of the world in many European cities. I am not intending to convince readers that world Christianity does exist in Europe. I believe that a conversation on the presence of Christians around the world in Europe has been done to exhaustion.

**“the general image of a European Christian is looking more like world Christianity”**

There are numerous resources that readers can access to learn about African, Asian, Latin American and other non-Western Christians in Europe. For instance, Israel Olofinjana’s ambitious edited book, *World Christianity in Western Europe*, is a good starting point. There exist also many localised studies on aspects of non-Western Christianity in many European countries. From Gerrie ter Haar’s *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* to Miguel Angel Zova Arroyo’s 2021 thesis, “‘Common Mission’ and Latino Migrant Churches in Flanders (Belgium): A Case Study of CEI (Brussels) and ICA (Antwerp),” there is an increase in resources about world Christianity in Europe. Most are done as academic research for masters or doctoral studies but some find

## EDITORIAL: To the ends of the earth

At the beginning of the 19th century, well over 90 percent of Christians lived in Europe and North America. By the end of the 20th century, over 60 percent lived in Africa, Asia, South America, and the Pacific. In terms of Acts 1:8, “Jerusalem” today is to be found in São Paulo, Abuja or Manila, and Europe is at “the ends of the earth”.

So we are delighted that Vista finally has an editor from the Majority World: Harvey Kwiyani. His lead article draws on his research and lived experience as a Malawian in the UK. His article is a “must read” and I would also encourage you to get to know him by reading Appleton’s interview with him later in this edition.

Following Harvey, I add some of my own reflections especially on the need to look at our language, and with a tribute to the late Andrew Walls, whose writings on World Christianity alerted so many of us to this shift in “the Christian centre of gravity”.

As we say hello to Harvey, we also say goodbye to Darrell Jackson, one of the founding editors of Vista. His article includes new research on migration in Europe but also looks back at the beginnings of Vista and the ground we have covered together. We will miss him. God speed Darrell.

The final article is a taster of the Europe 2021 Report which I published earlier this year. The report, and the accompanying discussion guide, are free to download and share.

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their way to accessible popular literature. There has been a shift in the past two decades in the authorship of such. This gives us some inside understanding of the experiences and challenges facing world Christianity as it rises in Europe. The discourse is no longer dominated by the “beware, the Pentecostals are here” or “watch out, the next Christendom is coming” voices of the 1980s, 90s, and early 2000s. Instead, here in the UK where I am located, we are seeing migrant Christians challenging the Church of England for its racism and to account for its role slavery and colonialism, and calling the Body of Christ as a whole to live out the multicultural reality that world Christianity is.

### Black and Brown Christians in Europe

It is beyond dispute that Christians from around the world, of various ethnicities and theological traditions are, by the thousands, possibly millions, living in Europe today, and that their presence in many European cities is changing Christianity's appearance, beliefs, practices, and hopefully, its self-understanding. Many of these Christians are not white, they hardly speak European languages well, and were raised in cultures of peoples far away from Europe. Thus, in addition to being foreigners

culturally, they understand the Christian faith and shape their lives in ways that make them perpetual religious strangers in a land that should eventually become home.

**“Without the migration of Christians from the current Christian heartlands of Africa, Asia, and Latin America the decline in European Christianity would be more pronounced”**

In spite of the many challenges they face, they continue to prop up the presence of Christianity in some fast-

secularizing European cities. For instance, it is a well-established fact today that African and Afro-Caribbean churches in London drive church attendance in the city to the point that a riddle has emerged saying “London Christianity is a black religion.” Others joke that, in terms of Christianity, “as Lagos goes, so does London,” meaning the christianisation of Lagos inevitably leads to an increase of Nigerian (or African) Christian presence in London. In all honesty, this also leads to a general increase in Christianity in London even when mainline white-British Christians continue their exodus from the church. Of course, there is some truth in these riddles, many African, Asian, and Latin American Christians make European Christianity what it is today. .

When we talk about “European Christianity,” it is necessary that we include in our definition the many non-Western Christians living, working, and being church in many European cities up and down the continent. In a sense, then, European Christianity in the 21st century includes bits and pieces of African Christianity, Asian Christianity, and Latin American Christianity and, thus, includes within it world Christianity. It should be impossible to imagine 21st century Christianity in Europe without the many black and brown Christianity whose churches have mushroomed in almost every major city in Britain, France, Germany, Italy and every other European country. Of course, “European” itself as a term must begin to shift its identity in our minds to include people of other races, like my own children, who have been born or brought up, educated and cultured in Europe. There are in Europe today Black Europeans, Asian Europeans, Latino Europeans, and this is not a problem. Many of them are Christians and are contributing to the European Christian landscape of the century. They, too, are European Christians. Without them, European Christianity, most certainly London Christianity, would look different.

Here in Britain, for example, it seems plausible that between one and two in every five church-going Christians in the UK are black. Thus, any faithful discussion on contemporary British Christianity must reflect a real awareness of thousands of black and brown Christian denominations that have emerged in the past five to six decades. A good example of those is the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), a Nigerian Pentecostal church, that was registered in the UK in 1989. It had almost 200,000 members in 1000 congregations scattered across the UK in 2020 with 75 per cent of them in England, and half of them in the Southeast, including London. When they gather in London Excel for prayer vigils, which they do at least two times every year, more than 50,000 people show up. They attempt to plant 50 new churches every year.



[Redeemed Christian Church of God \(RCCG\) Europe Mainland - Photo gallery](#)

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Studies exploring African Christianity in the UK, including the works of Babatunde Adedibu and Andrew Rogers, reveal the presence of thousands of independent African churches in London – the Old Kent Road alone in SE being home to 200 African churches and ministries. However, before the Nigerian and Ghanaian Pentecostals arrived with their Christianity, there existed West Indian Pentecostal churches in the UK, like the Church of God of Prophecy, the Church of God in Christ and the New Testament Church of God. While many of the West Indian churches have not sustained the growth

**“ Christ may be understood differently by Christians from different parts of the world, but still, there in only one Christ”**

rates of the 1960s and 1970s, they are still in existence and doing well. Altogether, these denominations of Black Pentecostals make a huge proportion on diaspora Christians. Eben Adu of London City Mission estimates that 75 per cent of diaspora Christians in London are of African

and Afro-Caribbean heritage. Of course, Latin American denominations like the Blessed Church of the Kingdom of God have also a presence in Europe. South Korean Pentecostals (as well as Presbyterians) have also established congregations in many cities in Europe.

As a result of the presence of these many Christians from around the world in Europe, the general image of a European Christian is becoming less European and looking more like world Christianity. In addition to European languages, Christ is preached in Yoruba, Twi, Swahili and Shona, as well as in Mandarin, Cantonese, Creole, Gujarati, Farsi, and many other languages in Europe. A sample of church music sung on a typical Sunday across a European city will include genres from Nigeria, Congo, South Korea, China, Brazil, Jamaica, and many other countries in the world. Without a doubt, world Christianity is here in Europe, the question that we need to ask ourselves is, “what shall we do with it?” I have a few suggestions to make.

### Foreign Christians are not Enemies

Yes, they may worship differently. They may use strange music and languages. They may even look different. However, foreign Christians are also brothers and sisters in Christ. They are all members of the only one Body that Christ has on

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earth. They are following the same Christ that European Christians call Lord. He may be understood differently by Christians from different parts of the world, but still, there is only one Christ. Often, many Christians believe that their way of worshiping is the only way people are supposed to worship. Many European missionaries believed this when they went to evangelise in other parts of the world. Most of them believed that all Christianity had to look European – that the only way to be a Christian was to be a European. The audacity and, most certainly, the theological ignorance behind such assumptions cannot be fathomed. Yet, many still believe like this today.

Non-European Christianity is often treated as not only different but also inferior. Indeed, there is a tendency for European Christians (and their scholars) to show great interest in Christianity in Africa, Asia, and other parts of the world but ignore Christians who have come from those continents and are living in their own neighbourhoods. I know too many churches that send nurses, doctors, and other valued experts on short-term mission trips to Africa but have nothing to do with the African congregations that rent their halls for worship services every Sunday. Numerous mission organizations remain fixated on sending missionaries to other continents, paying very little attention to Christians from those continents who are living in Europe and seeking ways to engage in mission among Europeans.

Two years ago, I wandered into a mission conference in Manchester discussing British mission strategies for Malawi, without any acknowledging of the ten Malawian congregations in the city. It does sometimes appear that the interest is in exploring Christianity in non-Western lands as one would study a virus under a microscope. For instance, there is a desire to study the exotic phenomenon of Christianity in Africa and not necessarily African Christianity. The latter would lead us to engaging diaspora Christians in a more hospitable manner.

European Christians could actually recognize and celebrate that this world Christianity that exists in their cities today is testimony to the fruit of their ancestors' labour of love as they served as missionaries around the world. This will mean that European Christians need to let go of the expectation that all Christianity has to look European and celebrate the diversity of cultures God has created for God's own glory. Of course, world Christianity has come about because of the Western missionary movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, and can be attributed, both directly and indirectly, to the close relationship between the missionary enterprise and Europe's imperial project that led to the domination and colonization of major parts of the world. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the end of political colonization in the 1960s saw the beginning of the explosion of Christianity that has seen Africa's Christian population grow by 600 percent in 50 years since then. Still, the missionaries planted the seeds of the gospel and, in the case of Africa, colonialism showed the people that there should be a better way of being Christian which is exactly what happened as soon as people gained independence. There would be no world Christianity today if it were not for European missionary work around the world between 1800 and 1960. Since then, churches have grown whose members have found their ways to Europe, or who are now sending missionaries to Europe. This is a cause for joy. This leads to the next point.

**“European Christians need to let go of the expectation that all Christianity has to look European”**

### **They Serve God's Mission in Europe**

Even though many of these non-Western churches are patronised by non-Westerners, almost exclusively, and are unable to evangelise beyond their own fellow nationals, there is evidence that their presence is actually invigorating European Christianity. It is because of these non-Western Christians and their churches that we hear that Christianity is on the rise and churches are growing again. Consequently, while we acknowledge that non-Western missionary work among Westerners is yet to blossom, we must celebrate that non-Western Christians are strengthening the presence of Christianity in Europe. They are doing so in many ways including their prayers and other ministries of mercy, some of which are not entirely relevant in Europe. Nevertheless, their presence in Europe brings with it gifts that, in many ways, invigorate both European culture and Christianity.

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The work of God's mission in Europe will not be effectively done without the involvement of the migrant Christians. They form part of the wider diaspora community in Europe that needs to be evangelised, e.g., the African Muslims in France. European Christians will not evangelise the diaspora without working with the Diaspora Christians in their own neighbourhoods.

European Christianity needs to allow itself to be challenged by what God is doing in other parts of the world. It needs to extend the horizons of its theological thought to hear from and learn again about the God whose Spirit anointed Jesus to set the oppressed free. Indeed, understanding God in this way will help European Christians resolve their superiority complex – I cannot count how many times I have heard Europeans say there is nothing they can learn from an Asian, African, or a Latin America – and their colonial tendencies – “everyone must assimilate our ways of talking about God and being church.” Of course, just like everyone in the world, European Christianity cannot change itself. It cannot bring itself into the 21st century where world Christianity is a reality without the help of world Christians, many of whom are right in their own cities.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the rise of world Christianity has direct implications for European Christianity, especially because of migration. Now, at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, world Christianity is in Europe, trying to find its way to live and work with European Christians. Even though their Christianity is somewhat different from European Christianity, they are actually propping Christianity up in some European cities. This essay has discussed three key aspects of their presence in Europe; they are here to stay, they are not the enemy, and God's mission needs them here and involved. Overall, I am optimistic about God's work through Diaspora Christians in Europe. God loves Europe so much that God is moving evangelists and missionaries into European cities. The future is very promising.

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# THE LANGUAGE OF WORLD CHRISTIANITY

Jim Memory

When we speak or write, we choose the words that we think will best communicate our meaning. We put labels on things and establish categories that enable us to make generalisations. And we trust that if we communicate clearly, any intelligent reader or listener, will understand exactly what we are saying.

When William Carey wrote his famous *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use means for the Conversion of the Heathens*<sup>1</sup> in 1792 he used the language and categories of his time to describe the world. Though Carey prefaced his treatise with the words of Paul in Romans 10:12 “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all, is

**Carey divided humanity largely into Protestants, Papists and Greek Christians, Mahometans and Pagans.**

rich unto all that call upon him”, he then went on to divide humanity largely into Protestants, Papists and Greek Christians, Mahometans and Pagans.

If we jump forward to the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 the language had changed. A key distinction was made between “fully missionised lands” and “not yet fully missionised lands”.<sup>2</sup> Territories were marked off as effectively Christian and not-yet Christian. This territorial concept of expansion from Christian heartlands to the rest of the world is the essence of the “Christendom model” of mission from which much of our mission language still derives. When I was at primary school, we did a project on India. It was the first time I had ever heard the expression “Third World countries”. This was not Christian language, but it did conserve something of the civilisational superiority of the largely Christian European Empires. We lived in the “First World”, the developed world, and we learned that the poor or developing nations of the world were grouped together as Third World countries.<sup>3</sup> Even today it is common to hear about the “developing world” or the “emerging economies”, with all their implied inferiority. The expression Global South is somewhat less problematic, but not all the countries of Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and South America are actually in the southern hemisphere and some countries which are not considered as Global South, like Australia or New Zealand, evidently are.

## Andrew Walls (1928-2021)

Yet away from the perceived European heartlands of Christianity, an astonishing shift was underway. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, well over 90% of Christians lived in Europe and North America, whereas by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, over 60% lived in Africa, Asia, South America and the Pacific. It was the historian and missiologist Andrew Walls, who died just last month, who among the first to notice and study this shift in “the Christian centre of gravity”. Before Walls<sup>5</sup>, the study of the growth of Christianity beyond Europe and North America was considered of secondary interest to theologians. Yet through his research, teaching, and publishing, Walls gradually changed perceptions, opening our eyes to the striking fact that World Christianity was actually “normative” Christianity. As Phillip Jenkins would memorably put it in his book *Next Christendom* “today, the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in Africa and Latin America. 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.”<sup>6</sup>



Andrew Walls

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Walls' insights were often the result of his reflection on trends in the light of Christian history. He observed that throughout the history of the church, places that had been the centres of Christianity often declined yet, through mission, new centres were created at the periphery: "By the time Christianity was receding in Europe, the churches of Africa, Asia and Latin America were coming into their own. The movement of Christianity is one of serial, not progressive, expansion."<sup>7</sup>

### Humility and Hope

For those of us who are engaged in Christian mission in Europe today there can be no escaping the reality that we find ourselves on a mission frontier, on the periphery of World Christianity. That should cause European Christians to be humble but also hopeful.

In respect to humility, we would do well to drop the language of "Third World", "developing world", and "Global South", and rather to speak of the Majority World.

Not only is this the demographic reality, since the majority

of the world's population is to be found in these regions, but it also reflects the shift in the centre of gravity of World Christianity. Majority World Christians are the Christian majority today. Furthermore, "Majority World" is not a label that has been assigned to them by us, but rather one that they have chosen to describe themselves.<sup>8</sup>

**Given the reality of Christian faith in Europe, this is a moment for humility, but it is also a moment for hope.**

Given the reality of Christian faith in Europe, this is a moment for humility, but it is also a moment for hope. For it is always on the periphery that Christian revival begins. In my recent missiological report on Europe<sup>9</sup>, I suggest that this is a moment of tremendous opportunity for collaboration between Majority World churches and native European churches. We often talk of mission today as participation in the Mission of God. That today, thousands and thousands of diaspora churches can be found from Dublin to Dubrovnik is no accident. As Andrew Walls would put it, this is simply how the Christian movement expands.

Will European Churches wake up to what God is doing in their midst? Will we adopt a more humble language and attitude with respect to our brothers and sisters from the Majority World? Will we seize the opportunity for collaboration that God has put before us in our day? The future of Europe depends on it.

Jim Memory

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# RESEARCHING MIGRATION IN EUROPE: An eighteen-year retrospective

Darrell Jackson

In April 2010, the Polish president, Lech Kaczynski and his wife were killed in a Russian plane crash, Eyjafjallajökull erupted and crippled airline schedules across the continent, Matt Smith made his first appearance as Dr Who for the BBC, and... the first edition of VISTA was released on an unsuspecting public!

As its editors, we were all connected closely with the former Redcliffe College and were all equally committed to a better understanding of Christianity and mission. Henrietta Cozens, won herself a teapot in the 'suggest a name for our new e-bulletin' competition. Following our launch edition, we have not looked back. Thirty-nine editions, and eleven years later, VISTA continues to publish information-led analysis and commentary of intercultural Christianity and mission in Europe.

I have personally contributed articles dealing with nationalism, migration, secularisation, Islam, spirituality and young people, European politics, church planting, religious freedom, demographics, biblical social vision, historical perspectives on migration, innovation and urban mission, Mike Frost's 'excarnation', the State of Europe, spirituality in Europe, the 25th anniversary of the reunification of Germany, Bible translation, human trafficking, political extremism, refugees, creation-care, Brexit, multicultural congregations, Muslims in Europe, Christianity in 'western' Europe, Charles Taylor, reimagining Europe, COVID, migrant religiosity, and a self-indulgent piece about my contributions over the last eleven years.

The Nova Research Centre and Vista represented an effective research-led contribution to the robust, evidence-based approach to the academic study of mission in Europe, culminating in the design and introduction of an MA in Intercultural Christianity and Mission in Europe, validated by the University of Gloucestershire. Vista editorial team played key roles in teaching and mentoring students in the various cohorts who gained their MA through this programme.

After almost fifteen years researching European intercultural Christianity and mission in Europe, I remain as committed as ever to a better understanding of the phenomenon of migration in Europe. This has remained a focus for my research since 2003 and most recently has seen the publication of a third edition of Mapping Migration, Mapping Churches Responses in Europe, co-authored with Alessia Passarelli, an Italian Baptist and a co-researcher of migration in Europe since 2006. Our latest collaboration was published late in 2020 and focuses on the experience of 'being church together': migrant and non-migrant. I have consistently argued, and our latest edition only reinforces this view, that despite the naysayers, the vitality of migrant faith does not represent the de-Christianisation of Europe but the de-Europeanisation of European Christianity. This is a vital observation, for it speaks to the truth that European Christianity is multiethnic, multilingual, and multicultural (or perhaps better, diverse in all three areas).

What this edition of Mapping Migration reveals is fascinating and important for an honest and accurate account of the contemporary European churches. A questionnaire was deployed over a 12-month period and results had been submitted before Europe experienced the



[Mapping Migration 3<sup>rd</sup> edition](#)



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closures and lockdowns of COVID. Whereas our research for the second edition, in 2016, had pre-dated the Syrian refugee crisis, we were determined to try to capture something of the impact of COVID on the experience of migrant for this third edition. Several online conferences allowed a less systematic gathering of narratives and experiences and these shape commentary on our statistical data at key points.

Our 2019-20 research refined our gathering of data relating to the self-description of migrant Christians and migrant churches, their membership, status, and roles within the churches. Our data was supplied by over 74 denominations in Europe, a significant increase in the number of churches willing to respond over the 2016 edition. With this edition we also continue to develop our use of the terms integration and intercultural as the most appropriate to describe our understanding of the way that migrants and non-migrants can more effectively be the church together.

Readers of Vista will be interested to know that of the 74 denominations, 11 were Pentecostal and 7 were evangelical denominations. The significance of this is reflected in my analysis of the European Values Survey. This shows that where migrant religious practice exceeds that of the non-migrant population in Europe, it is Muslims and Evangelicals who are each more active and who make up a greater percentage of migrants than they do among the non-migrant population. By implication, Evangelical churches in Europe are much more likely to be impacted by Christian migrants than are the mainline protestants of Europe.

How would you define your Church based on membership and attendance?	Number of churches	Percentage of responses
A Church composed mainly of 'indigenous' (non-migrant) churchgoers	24	32%
A Church composed mainly of 'indigenous' (non-migrant) churchgoers with an established minority presence of churchgoers with a migrant background	19	26%
A Church composed of people whose parents or grandparents had a migrant background coming from different areas of the world	6	8%
A Church composed of people whose parents or grandparents had a migrant background coming from the same geographical area	3	4%
A Church composed of people with a RECENT migrant background (first generation) coming from different areas of the world	6	8%
A Church composed of people with a RECENT migrant background (first generation) coming from the same geographical area	15	20%
Other/Network of Lutheran churches	1	1%

*Table 5: Self-description of Churches, listed by number and percentage of responses*

Of the 74 denominations or networks surveyed, we were especially interested in how these understood themselves. The following self-descriptions were developed, and respondents were invited to identify with the description that best suited their own self-understanding. Of these denominations, one in five reported that their migrant membership was over twenty

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percent, with just under ten percent having a migrant membership of over 60 percent. However, there seems to be something of a gap between migrant membership and the leadership offered by migrants in those churches. Only eleven percent of churches have migrants filling more than twenty percent of the leadership positions within the denomination.

As indicated earlier, COVID-related questions were explored through several online events and these suggested that COVID-related restrictions had significant impact upon the informal and highly relational patterns of diaspora churches. Diaspora church leaders reported feelings of isolation, lack of support across already stretched and vulnerable networks, and a struggle with the theological questions of God's healing during a pandemic. In contrast, several migrant church leaders praised the value of strong links with historic European churches, from whom they had been able to request and draw resources. Several welcomed the creativity that the pandemic had stimulated, and changes were proposed and embraced that might otherwise have been resisted or even thwarted during normal circumstances. Of course, there is much more that could be said, and elsewhere in this edition you should find a link to a pdf version of our work, or you may purchase a copy from Amazon or other online platforms. It's even possible that from time to time you might see future versions of our migration research reported here in Vista.

But for now, dear readers of Vista, I bid you adieu, as I write my final piece as an editor of what has become an enduring and reliable organ of accurate information and welcome analysis for the evangelical mission community in Europe and beyond. It has been a special joy to see my former co-editors joined by Dr Harvey Kwiyani and I wish them, and he, God's blessing as they continue with their labour of love and service.

*Darrell Jackson, Director of Research and Associate Professor, Whitley College, University of Divinity, Melbourne.*

## INTRODUCING... HARVEY KWIYANI

### An interview with Jo Appleton

*We are delighted that Harvey Kwiyani is joining the Vista editorial team. Originally from Malawi, Harvey was until very recently Lecturer in African Theology at Liverpool Hope University. He has just been appointed as the CEO of Global Connections, the UK Network for World Mission, alongside leading a Masters program in African Diaspora Christianity at CMS. He is the founder of the Missio Africanus learning community, and his latest book is Multicultural Kingdom, Ethnic Diversity Mission and the Church (SCM Press, 2020) We spoke to Harvey to find out more about his background and motivation for his work*

#### **What are the major influences on you growing up?**

I grew up in Malawi, at Magomero, in the village where the very first British mission station in the country, was established, founded by the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) with the help of David Livingstone in 1861. I go back six generations of Christians, and my father's great grandfather was one of the very first two Africans to come and study in Scotland in 1885. This is one of the stories that shapes my life – a context where Christianity and mission are normative.

The second is about the impact of mission and colonialism among my people at Magomero. The UMCA mission station became the Livingstone's colonial property in 1891 when Malawi became a British colony. Soon, it became a prime example of colonial brutality against Africans. By 1915, locals decided to uprising against colonialism, per se, and killed 2 white men (a Livingstone and a McCormick) who are buried in our village. This story about that uprising against the Livingstones and the British colonial government continues to shape the world I grew up in until today.

My family were all Presbyterian until the 1980s when my father joined the Pentecostal charismatic movement. Back then, joining the charismatic movement was reason enough to be excommunicated, and we gladly surrendered our membership cards. At the same time, I started to feel the call to mission, which was confirmed and encouraged numerous times by many leaders in

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the church. So, I grew up with the sense I was called to be in mission (in Europe). I spent my teenage years reading mission biographies – David Livingstone, William Carey, Jim Elliot, Adoniram Judson, and many others. By the time I graduated high school, I had some understanding mission and what it takes to follow God's lead to unknownlands.

### When did you first come to Europe?

While in college in Malawi, I helped in the mission department of the church I attended (which had a collaborative partnership with a Swiss congregation in Saint Gallen). They invited me in 2000 to help them set up a school of ministry. Upon arrival in Switzerland, I was shocked that Christianity seemed to be non-existent. This realization made me decide to stay and work in Switzerland, Germany and Austria for three years during which time I was also surprised to see the growing presence of African churches in Europe. I noticed that even though they were very lively, they could not engage in cross cultural mission with Europeans. After those three years, I came to England for studies, moving on the US for further studies, exploring the subject of evangelism among Westerners in both studies. I returned to England in 2013.

### What impact have these experiences had on you?

My time in Switzerland was important. It showed me what a post-Christian world looks like. A Malawian evangelist, Chris Daza, (he worked with Wolfgang Simpson at the time in the House Church movement) took me around Germany, showing me that the land of the Reformation now needed a revival. I had seen the German evangelist, Rienhard Bonnke, easily gather 500,000 people in Africa, but in Europe he could only draw 800 people. That caused me to think that Europe needs a different missional engagement from what we use in Africa and made me wonder if African Christians in Europe could be of help.

It also taught me that race matters. I came to understand that African Christians in Germany had a lot to offer, even though their gifts could not be received because of their being black. I learned a great deal about the implications of racism on mission which I would later experience this first-hand in Minnesota, USA. What I saw in Germany and continues to be case in Britain can be summed up in Walter Hollenweger's statement that "British Christians prayed for revival and could not recognise it when it came because it was black."

About halfway through my PhD in the US, I had a conversion experience. It suddenly dawned on me that all the missional scholars I was studying – Stuart Murray Williams, Martin Robinson, Alan Hirsch, Darrell Guder, Lois Barrett, Craig van Gelder

– were white Western and were basically saying the same thing, just using different words. I began to imagine what would happen if we brought in foreign voices—African voices—to the missional conversation. I then read many key African theologians to help me imagine an African mission theology that

could speak to the West. John Mbiti had a great influence on me, but I also Kwame Bediako, Ogbu Kalu, and Jehu Hanciles very helpful. My PhD ended up being an attempt at building a bridge for African Christians to contribute to Western mission theology.

### How is the Diaspora church shaping faith in Europe today?

We know that the branch of the church growing in Europe is really the immigrant church. In 2011 Peter Brierly said that 49% of church attendance in London was black people. Anecdotal reports suggest that more than 60% of church attendance in



Harvey Kwiyani

**All our expressions of Christianity are culturally shaped.  
We need to understand that**



## INTRODUCING HARVEY KWIYANI ctd

black in London today. Yet, black people form only 14% of London's population. If we took Africans out of London, London Christianity would look different! One thing I love about these churches is their love for prayer one which is one of the things European Christians need to remember how to do. I hope that this is part of the gifts that we bring.

The African expression of Christianity is very communal, and that speaks volumes in the context where individualism is understood that way. The Christian faith is communal. Loving your neighbour as yourself is communal – you need to know your neighbour!

### What things do we need to let go of and need to learn?

All our expressions of Christianity are culturally shaped. We need to understand that. That allows us to recognise and respect other people's cultures, and makes it possible for us to come together to figure out how to create a new multicultural context that allows the culture to thrive but also allows us to come together to enjoy the best of what each other has to offer.

**“a missiology that works for the 21<sup>st</sup> century has to sound different from how it sounded 100 years ago.”**

I argue in *Multi-cultural Kingdom* that the theology of the body says that God has given the body gifts that are scattered around the world. Life is made possible through the mutual exchange of the parts of the body functioning together – exchange between European and African, European and Asian, African and Asian, etc.

Every member has something for the whole world but no member has everything it needs, only a portion. Africa has something, Europe has something – the parts need to come together so that working together we can be glued into one body.

### What practical steps should we take?

Learning to listen to each other, and being intentional about hearing voices from people you wouldn't engage with otherwise. There is no theology that is self-sufficient, and when we come together theologically, we understand God better. That is quite a challenge for people who believe that all theology must come from their perspective.

Africans are also struggling with this. For most of Africa, Christianity is in its second century, so we are still trying to figure out what it means to be a Christian and an African in the context of neo-colonialism. Out of that discourse, we will address issues that Europeans are not thinking about.

### What do you want to contribute to Vista as its newest editor?

I think that a great deal of our missiological discourse has to open up to voices from other parts of the world, so I hope to contribute in a small way as one of those voices. I think that a missiology that works for the 21<sup>st</sup> century has to sound different from how it sounded 100 years ago. It has to be intentional about letting go of the colonial aids that mission has taken advantage of before. It has to be able to talk about mission with the understanding that God can send anyone regardless of their race and where they come from.

A paradigm shift is needed and Vista is an expression of us trying to work with that paradigm shift – and hopefully catalyse it.

*Jo Appleton*

## Lausanne Europe 20/21 Gathering 17-20 November 2021 Dynamic Gospel – New Europe



**DYNAMIC GOSPEL  
NEW EUROPE**  
CONVERSATION  
AND GATHERING

In November 2021, Lausanne Europe will hold its first major European gathering for a generation online, to seek God and to consider together how we might respond to the challenges of today's Europe. The plenary sessions from each day will be livestreamed via YouTube. Register here: [Live Stream Registration - Lausanne Europe](#)

# WHAT ON EARTH IS GOD DOING IN EUROPE?

Jim Memory

When you look at what is happening in Britain and the rest of Europe today it is easy to despair. There are church buildings everywhere but many of their congregations are ageing or dwindling. Christian values appear to be under attack left, right and centre. The Christian voice in the public square is muted by those who suggest that all public debate should be free from “God talk”. And when we watch the news, the issues can so easily overwhelm us: migration, Brexit, populist nationalism, climate change, transgender rights, not to mention the Covid pandemic. What on earth is God doing?

It has become ever more common to hear Christians say that mission is about joining in with what God is doing. So what is

**“how can we understand the times in which we are living so that we would know what God’s people should do?”**

God doing? If I am allowed to paraphrase the description of the sons of Issachar in 1 Chronicles 12, how can we understand the times in which we are living so that we would know what God’s people should do? Instead of exclaiming, “what on earth is God doing?”, how can we open our eyes to

see what God is actually doing on the earth: in our continent, our country and our neighbourhood?

That was the question that prompted me to write a report on the context in which we find ourselves today. Most reports focus on just one issue, but this report resists the temptation to simplify things to one thing and takes a broad view. It provides an analysis of the key political, economic, social, environmental, and technological trends in Europe today. It then looks at the spiritual context, and the changes in thinking regarding our understanding of mission. However, any evaluation of our contemporary situation that does not consider the impact of Covid-19 is going to be inadequate. Covid-19 is probably the most significant shared experience in Europe since WWII. So, for every issue I highlight, I also consider how the pandemic might have impacted the trends, before turning to consider some of the implications of all of that.



## WHAT IS GOD DOING IN EUROPE? ctd

There are fifteen issues and trends which are highlighted in the report but here are a couple to whet your appetite.

### Technology

Information Technology has transformed our lives in innumerable ways over the last fifty years but one of the most profound impacts of the digital revolution is on our ability to discern what is true. In a digital world, information whether true or false, spreads rapidly. Whether in the form of media reports, data or social media posts, information can be used to manipulate behaviour whether or not it is real or true.

Research is revealing that this vulnerability is the result of “the illusory truth effect”, a phenomenon where people rate repeated statements as more truthful than non-repeated ones. The more times we see a piece of information repeated, the more likely we are to believe it is true. Whether it is factually true or not is almost irrelevant. If it produces the desired result, whether that is the purchase of a certain product, a vote for a given party, or a more radical political response, that is all that matters.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown just how powerful this effect can be. Misinformation and conspiracy theories around Covid-19 and, more recently, about the vaccines that have been developed, have undermined prevention measures, popularised dangerous treatments, and frustrated the possibility of achieving immunity in some countries. Most of us will know people who have refused the vaccine because of a video, a post, or a story they have seen on their smartphone.

How can we present the truth of the gospel today when people are so susceptible to digital deception? What does it mean to “guard your heart” (Proverbs 24:3) and “renew your mind” (Romans 12:2) when our heart and mind are being disciplined by digital media 24 hours a day? Are church leaders equipping our congregations for discipleship in a digital world? These are important questions which require serious reflection.

### Secularisation and Desecularisation

Data from the most recent edition of the European Values Survey (EVS 2017-20) indicates that 61% of Swedes, 53% of Dutch, 51% of Brits and Norwegians, and 50% of Czechs say they do not believe in God. Another study of 16-29-year-old young people from across Europe published by Professor Stephen Bullivant of St Mary's University in 2018 found that 70% of British youth say they have “no religion”. These statistics are sobering, yet God has not abandoned Europe.

Over the past fifty years, millions of Christians from the Majority World have migrated to Europe. Every large city from Dublin to Dubrovnik has African or Latin American or Asian churches and often many from all three! Diaspora churches are changing the face of the church in Europe and the UK.

Yet here too there are challenges. Many diaspora churches find evangelising European difficult. The answer is for closer collaboration between diaspora and native churches. As Harvey Kwiyani puts it “The Africans have the zeal to pray and evangelise, while the Europeans may have a better grasp of the cultural gap that needs to be bridged in order to connect with the people. If we put these two together, we may have what we need for European Christianity.”

As secular Europeans face an uncertain future post-pandemic, we must make the most of this season of opportunity to preach the gospel of hope. Far from an eschatology of despair, these are times for us to be faithful in hope and expectant for the signs of resurrection and revival in Britain and Europe today.

[Download the full report and discussion guide on the Vista website](#)

*Jim Memory, European Christian Mission and All Nations Christian College*



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