

Whose Religion Is Christianity?: The Gospel beyond the West

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Many historians of religion now recognize that Christianity is a global faith whose most vibrant expression and growth are found today in the non-Western world. But no one explores this reality and its implications for modern life with the depth of learning and personal insight of Lamin Sanneh.

This book is unique in the literature of world Christianity, not least for its novel structure. Sanneh's engaging narrative takes the form of a self-interview in which he asks questions about the cross-cultural expansion of Christianity and provides insightful answers and meaningful predictions about the future. This technique also allows Sanneh to track developments in world Christianity even while giving attention to the responses and involvement of indigenous peoples around the world.

Sanneh's own background and lifelong involvement with non-Western cultures bring a richness of perspective not found in any other book on world Christianity. For example, Sanneh highlights what is distinctive about Christianity as a world religion, and he offers a timely comparison of Christianity with Islam's own missionary tradition. The book also gives pride of place to the recipients of the Christian message rather than to the missionaries themselves. Indeed, Sanneh argues here that the gospel is not owned by the West and that the future of the tradition lies in its "world" character.

Literate, relevant, and highly original, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?* presents a stimulating new outlook on faith and culture that will interest a wide range of readers.

A native of Gambia, Lamin Sanneh is the D. Willis James Professor of Missions and World Christianity and professor of history at Yale Divinity School. His many books include *Encountering the West: Christianity and the Global Cultural Process* and *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa*. "International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Outstanding Books for Mission Studies (2003)

Christianity Today, Award of Merit, Christianity and Culture (2004)

Association of Theological Booksellers, Theologos Award for Best General Interest Book (2004)

The Mennonite

"Lamin Sanneh uses a question-and-answer format to consider the rise of what he calls 'world Christianity,' a religion that comes from local cultural contexts and challenges assumptions held by Western Christianity. Sanneh is a scholarly, wise and irenic conversation partner."

Andrew F. Walls

"The astonishing religious changes of the twentieth century have produced a post-Christian West and a post-Western Christianity. Historical and cultural factors often prevent those who live in the post-Christian West from seeing the true face of world Christianity. This intriguing little book disperses these fogs to reveal the new contours of Christianity in the world. The argument moves at a cracking pace, and Lamin Sanneh characteristically provides plenty of supporting information in a highly readable form and with the freshness

of perspective we expect from him. A most valuable statement of the place and nature of Christianity in the world."

Frederick W. Norris

"Lamin Sanneh's accessible dialogue about world Christianity offers a clear vision. Having listened to questions from his students and colleagues, he prints them and answers them. Because 60 percent of the world's Christians live outside of the United States and Europe, we need a view that contrasts globalization and mission, guilt and faith, confusion and confession. This small volume should be the first anyone reads to see that view. All interested persons, including experts, will find these pages eye-opening."

Philip Jenkins

"Lamin Sanneh is both a formidable scholar and an elegant writer. To nobody's surprise, then, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?* is a thoughtful, learned, provocative, and truly stirring analysis of the growth of global Christianity, including its phenomenal rise in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This book is essential reading for anyone interested in missions, in the impact of the Bible, in the relationship between religion and politics - in short, for anyone interested in how Christianity stands in the twenty-first-century world."

International Bulletin of Missionary Research

"A gem of a book, in an imaginative style: evangelistic, recapitulative, apologetic. Worth buying? even an extra copy to give away."

Mission Today

"The secular fundamentalists may choose to stand obtuse and dry in the little cave of their own parochialism, but the Niagara of religious fervour is cascading down around them. This is precisely the thesis the book attempts to establish."

The Expository Times

"This small book is a must for every minister or priest as well as an important book for the concerned laity. . . This book is, as with all Sanneh's writing, clearly and elegantly written."

Other Books

Wayward Christian Soldiers. In *Wayward Christian Soldiers*, leading evangelical theologian Charles Marsh offers a powerful indictment of the political activism of evangelical Christian leaders and churches in the United States. With emphasis on repentance and renewal, this important work advises Christians how to understand past mistakes and to avoid making them in the future. Over the past several years, Marsh observes, American evangelicals have achieved more political power than at any time in their history. But access and influence have come at a cost to their witness in the world and the integrity of their message. The author offers a sobering contrast between the contemporary evangelical elite, which forms the core of the Republican Party, and the historic Christian tradition of respect for the mystery of God and appreciation for human fallibility. The author shows that the most prominent voices in American evangelicalism have arrogantly redefined Christianity on the basis of partisan politics rather than scripture and tradition. The role of politics in distorting the Christian message can be seen most dramatically in the invasion of Iraq, he argues: Some 87% of American evangelicals supported going to war, while every

single evangelical church outside the United States opposed it. The Jesus who storms into Baghdad behind the wheel of a Humvee, Marsh points out, is not the Jesus of the Gospel. Indeed, not since the nazification of the German church under Hitler has the political misuse of Christianity led to such catastrophic global consequences. Is there an alternative? This book proposes that the renewal of American churches requires a season of concentrated attention to faith's essential affirmations--a time of hospitality, peacemaking, and contemplative prayer. Offering an authentic Christian alternative to the narcissistic piety of popular evangelicalism, *Wayward Christian Soldiers* represents a unique entry into the increasingly pivotal debate over the role of faith in American politics. "With *Wayward Christian Soldiers*, Charles Marsh again shows that he is one of the most astute observers of evangelicalism today." --Jim Wallis, author of *God's Politics*

⌘ ⌘ ⌘ ⌘ ⌘ . *Invitation to Solitude and Silence : Experiencing God's Transforming Presence*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004. Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Edited by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn."