"Microcosm" of the Global South

The Discursive Functionality of Migrant Christianity in World Christianity Discourses

Martha Frederiks
Utrecht University
m.t.frederiks@uu.nl

Abstract

This article investigates the discursive triangulation of migrant Christianity in Europe, European Christianity and Christianity in the 'global South' in certain world Christianity discourses, with particular attention for the representation and discursive functionality of migrant Christianity within this triangulation. It argues that this triangulation is brought into play to underscore the binary of the vibrancy and growth of Christianity in the 'global South' on the one hand and the decline and decay of European Christianity on the other, and that both the selective representation of migrant Christianity and its discursive functionality within triangulation aim to reinforce this binary. The article also argues that this binary forms the fulcrum of a particular conceptualization of world Christianity as a postcolonial project, theorized by Lamin Sanneh, and shows how this postcolonial agenda fashions the representation of migrant Christianity in Europe. The article concludes with a discussion of some of the problematic presuppositions of this construct.

Keywords

migrant Christianity – European Christianity – Christianity in the 'global South' – world Christianity – representation – binary thinking – postcolonial

1 Introduction

A few years ago, Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu gave a lecture in Amsterdam on what he called "African immigrant Christianity in global North settings". In the opening paragraph of his lecture he stated:

African immigrant Christianity (...) is a microcosm of wider develop-
ments in which (...) the demographic center of gravity of the faith has
shifted massively from the Northern to the Southern continents. "The era
of Western Christianity has passed within our lifetimes, and the day of the
Southern churches is dawning," is how Philip Jenkins casts the develop-
ment. African immigrant Christianity in global North settings, although
looked upon as "religious others", are illustrative of this transformation of
Christianity into a non-Western religion.[1]

In this quote, as in the remainder of his lecture, Asamoah-Gyadu links three
distinct, though entangled, developments: the growth of Christianity in what
he calls "the South", the decline of what he calls "Western Christianity", and
"immigrant Christianity in global North settings". Asamoah-Gyadu is neither
the first nor the only scholar to link the three. The lecture frequently refers to
Philip Jenkins, another prominent figure who conjoins "Southern" growth, the
decline of Christianity in "the First World" and immigrant Christianity. In his
influential book *The Next Christendom* Jenkins for example writes:

A largely secularized First World confronts a rapidly growing "South" in
which religion thrives and expands. (...) Looking at the spread of mosques
across urban Europe, it would be easy to believe that Islam might indeed
be Europe's future religion. Yet a great many other European immigrants
are Christian, and they raise the prospect of a revitalized Christian
presence on European soil. This was symbolized for me by an encoun-
ter while researching this book, as I was visiting Amsterdam, which is
at the heart of one of the world's most secular societies. Being there on
a Sunday morning, one becomes aware of how little religious activity,
Christian or otherwise, takes place in or near the center city. It was all the
more interesting, then, to venture into a working-class quarter to see a
swelling stream of individuals all clearly bound for the same destination.
Each was an African, clearly not terribly well-off, but each was in his or
her Sunday best, and everyone clutched a well-thumbed bible. (...) That
one congregation probably represents, in miniature, the future face of
Christianity in Western Europe. (...) [F]or the next few decades, the face
of religious practice across Europe should be painted in Brown and Black.

---

1 K. Asamoah-Gyadu, "Prayer, Power and Empowerment. Migration and Diaspora Mission." First
Hendrik Kraemer Lecture, Protestant Theological University Amsterdam 2013. https://www
.pthu.nl/actueel/agenda/Agenda%202013/WebtekstHendrikKraemerDef/ (accessed 25 May
2019). Note: grammatical incongruency in the original.

> When we measure the declining strength of Christianity in Europe we must remember how much leaner the statistics would be if not for the recent immigrants and their children, the new Europeans.[2]

In the quotations above, both Asamoah-Gyadu and Jenkins discursively triangulate immigrant Christianity in Europe, Christianity in "the global South", and Christianity in what—despite distinct etymologies—is interchangeably called the "West", the "global North" or the "First World". This article argues that the aforementioned triangulation typically features in a specific strand of world Christianity discourses where it serves the objective of buttressing a particular postcolonial agenda.[3] As will be shown, these world Christianity discourses construe and uphold certain (problematic) sets of discursive twins[4] to enhance and reinforce their distinct postcolonial conceptualization of world Christianity. The article demonstrates that this binary mechanism also informs and fashions the representation of migrant Christianity in Europe in these discourses and establishes that an intricate discursive triangulation revolving around the representation of migrant Christianity in Europe is brought into play to underscore the binary of a vibrant and burgeoning Christianity in the 'global South' on the one hand and a declining and decaying of European Christianity on the other.

Taking the discursive triangulation of migration Christianity, Christianity in 'the global South' and Christianity in the 'global North' as its analytical unit, this

---

2   Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom. The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 96, 98. Apart from the triangulation, discussed in this article, there are several other aspects in this passage, that would merit further exploration. To name just a few: the conceptualisation of religion tailored on Christianity, that seems to presume that Sunday is the day for communal devotion (both Muslims and Jews would tend to disagree), the supposition that faith is habitually expressed in collective rituality (Hindus would tend to disagree), the racialized construction of migration that routinely classifies Africans as immigrants (Dutch of Surinamese ancestry would tend to disagree), the conjecture that the majority of immigrant Christians is identifiable as exotic looking, Bible-thumbing individuals (Polish Catholics would tend to disagree) and so on.

3   Jenkins uses the word 'Global Christianity', rather than 'world Christianity', but subsumes under that term key issues and terminology of world Christianity scholarship, such as the shift of the centre of gravity of Christianity, the growth of churches in the 'global south' etc. See Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity. Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), vii (acknowledgements), x. Asamoah-Gyadu uses the term 'world Christianity' sparingly; J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Conversion, Converts, and Nation Identity", in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to World Christianity*, eds. Lamin O. Sanneh and Michael J. McClymond (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley/Blackwell, 2016), 176-189.

4   I owe this term to Lucien van Liere. I would like to express my indebtedness to my colleagues Lucien van Liere and David Onnekink for their comments on an earlier version of this text.

article unfolds its argument in a number of steps. First it explores the 'world Christianity' discourses that form the backdrop of the triangulation. This paragraph briefly sketches some of the more dominant conceptualizations of 'world Christianity', with particular attention for the term's discursive entanglements and identifies in which strand of world Christianity scholarship this triangulation mainly occurs. The article then analyses the construct "migrant Christianity in Europe" and its discursive functionality in this particular strand of world Christianity discourses, to finally interrogate some of the postulations of this discursive triangulation, arguing that these are problematic.

2   Conceptualising World Christianity

A brief but probably apt summary of the discussion on world Christianity is that world Christianity is an immensely popular, but utterly confusing term. In his article "Understanding the world-Christian turn in the history of Christianity and theology", Paul Kollman distinguishes two dominant interrelated clusters of conceptualizations: those who use the word 'world Christianity' for a subject matter and those who employ the term for a field of study; both clusters draw heavily on the work by Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh.[5]

According to Dana Robert, the genealogy of the conceptualization of 'world Christianity' as a subject matter can be traced to the first half of the twentieth century. Robert identifies the influential missiologist Kenneth Scott Latourette (1884-1968) as one of the prime movers of the idea 'world Christianity'. Latourette's attention for Christianity as a cross-cultural movement as well as his quest to move "the study of church history beyond its Eurocentric frame of reference" are two of his key contributions to what would eventually become 'world Christianity', according to Robert.[6] Scholars who work in Latourette's

---

5   Paul Kollman, "Understanding the World-Christian Turn in the History of Christianity and Theology," *Theology Today* 71/2 (2014), 164-177. Dorottya Nagy and I advocate interpreting 'world Christianity' as a particular approach to studying the Christian tradition in past and present, rather than conceptualising it as a subject matter or a field of studies. For details see: Martha Frederiks, "World Christianity. An Approach," in *World Christianity. Methodological Considerations*, eds. Dorottya Nagy and Martha Frederiks (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); Dorottya Nagy, "World Christianity as a Theological Approach. A Reflection from Central and Eastern Europe," in *Relocating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*, eds. Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 143-161.

6   Dana L. Robert, "Historiographic Foundations from Latourette and Van Dusen to Andrew F. Walls," in *Understanding World Christianity. The Vision and Work of Andrew F. Walls*, eds. William R. Burrows, Mark R. Gornik and Janice A. McLean (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 144, 148.

tradition, like Andrew Walls and the late Lamin Sanneh, underscore the versatility and transmutability of the Christian tradition as well as its histories "beyond its European frame of reference". Robert identifies Henry Pitney van Dusen (1897-1975) as another important contributor to the conceptualisation of 'world Christianity'.[7] According to Robert, Van Dusen colours the term 'world Christianity' with strong ecumenical overtones; in his work the concept 'world Christianity' is closely associated with terms such as 'world church' and 'world-fellowship', and expresses his anticipation of an imminent worldwide Christian cooperation and unity. Van Dusen's usage of 'world Christianity' therefore underscores the unity and integrative forces, rather than the diversity, of the Christian tradition.[8]

While both Latourette and Van Dusen contributed to the development of the notion 'world Christianity', historically speaking the concept only gained prominence in the late 1980s when the term was recalibrated by Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh. Often considered the architects of contemporary 'world Christianity' scholarship, Walls and Sanneh mainly draw on the Latourettean lineage of Christianity as a variegated, cross-cultural and multicultural movement. Despite similarities, Walls and Sanneh each give a different spin to the concept.

For Andrew Walls 'world Christianity' first of all signals a historiographic project. In Walls' work 'world Christianity' signifies Christianity's "geographical range, its linguistic profusion, its cultural diversity; and yet its cohesiveness, its sense of mutual belonging."[9] Diversity, according to Walls, is "the natural Christian condition. Christianity has always been global in principle, and for much of its history, global in practise too. And global inevitably means multicultural."[10] As eloquently argued in his article "Eusebius tries again. Reconceiving the study of Christian history", Walls calls for a reconceptualization and rewriting of the history of Christianity in such a way that it epitomizes world Christianity's multiplicity, variability and variegation of manifestations and narratives, in contrast to past endeavours that have often projected church history as a "glorified form of European clan history".[11]

---

7   Unlike Latourette, Van Dusen actually employed the word 'world Christianity', as is evidenced by his book *World Christianity. Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1947).

8   Robert, "Historiographic Foundations", 148-152.

9   Andrew F. Walls, *Crossing Cultural Frontiers. Studies in the History of World Christianity*, edited by Mark R. Gornik (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2017), 16.

10   Walls, *Crossing Cultural Frontiers*, 4.

11   Andrew F. Walls, "Eusebius Tries Again. Reconceiving the Study of Christian History," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24/3 (2000), 105-111; quote: page 107.

For Lamin Sanneh 'world Christianity' seems to be the central pivot in a postcolonial project that celebrates Christianity in the 'global South' as distinct from Christianity in the 'global North'.[12] In Sanneh's work 'world Christianity' refers to "a wide variety of original, indigenous expressions that do not necessarily share the Western Enlightenment frame", located mainly in Africa and Asia and to a lesser extent in Latin America and in migration settings.[13] According to Sanneh 'world Christianity' is the 'other' of 'global Christianity', a term which Sanneh stipulates to refer to "the faithful replication of Christian forms and patterns developed in Europe".[14] The polarity between 'global' or 'European' Christianity and 'world Christianity' echoes the western/non-western binary of postcolonial nation building.[15]

Sanneh's explicit postcolonial agenda is most conspicuous in works written shortly before his death. Where publications in the 1980s and 1990s centre on indigenous agency and the sovereign processes of translation over and against the missionary factor, in more recent years Sanneh also underscores that 'world Christianity' mainly began to thrive in the postcolonial period.[16]

---

12   In its radical stance that condemns hegemonic European or North Atlantic perspectives of the history of Christianity and its advocacy for a history of Christianity that takes on multiple perspectives, representing the manifold Christian communities through time and space, also Andrew Walls' conceptualization of 'world Christianity' as a historiographic project is informed by postcolonialism. However, where Walls' conceptualization is an endeavor at an inclusive story of Christianity in past and present, Sanneh's conceptualization is an attempt to underscore the vitality and viability of Christianity in Africa, Asia and Latin America over and against 'global Christianity'.

13   Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 22.

14   Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity*, 22; Lamin O. Sanneh and Michael J. McClymond, "Introduction," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to World Christianity*. Sanneh and McClymond. How artificial—and problematic—Sanneh's distinction between 'Global' and 'world Christianity' is, becomes most patent in his discussion of what he calls "the ambiguous status of Latin America", in which he classifies Latin American Catholicism "as the inheritor of the heritage of European Christendom", and "the rise of evangelical and charismatic forms of Christianity" as 'world Christianity'; Sanneh and McClymond, "Introduction," 14. Many scholars have critiqued Sanneh for his polarisation of 'world Christianity' and 'global Christianity'. See e.g. Dyron B. Daughrity, *To Whom Does Christianity Belong? Critical Issues in World Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 9-12; Joel Cabrita and David Maxwell, "Introduction. Relocating World Christianity," in *Relocating World Christianity*. Cabrita, Maxwell and Wild-Wood, 21-22; Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity*, vii.

15   Arun W. Jones, "Scholarly Transgressions. (Re)writing the History of World Christianity," *Theology Today* 71/2 (2014), 226.

16   See for example Sanneh and McClymond, "Introduction", 1: "The worldwide impact of Christianity that made it the religion of societies and cultures emerging outside the European heartlands came into greatest prominence in the post-World War II and

Sanneh's emphasis on Christianity's post-independence growth and on the indomitable and irreversible contextualising sway of Bible translation as beyond missionary control, are indicative of Sanneh's progressive attempts to disentangle 'world Christianity' from its missionary global Christian origins.[17]

Scholars who primarily draw on Walls' conceptualization, such as Dale Irvin, Thomas Thangaraj, Charles Farhadian, and Kirsteen and Sebastian Kim, interpret the notion 'world Christianity' to signify Christianity's geographic span and cultural diversity in past and present. In this conceptualisation 'world Christianity' signifies developments and manifestations of Christianity worldwide and includes the 'West'.[18] Others, who adopt Sanneh's conceptualization, such as Joel Carpenter, Jehu Hanciles and Raimundo Barretto, consider 'world Christianity' to refer to contemporary Christianity in what they call the 'global South', mainly conceptualised as Africa and Asia and to a lesser extent also Oceania and Latin America (esp. Pentecostalism).[19] The discursive triangulation of migrant Christianity, Christianity in the 'global South' and Christianity

---

subsequent post-colonial periods. (...) Behind the forces of nation building and the integration into the community of nations, Christianity was expanding its reach and strengthening its appeal, thanks to the effects of vernacular Bible translation and the accompanying cultural adaptation that gave the religion the advantage of indigenous credibility."

17   See Robert Wuthnow's critique of the inconsistency of this line of argumentation. Robert Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 55-57. Also other academics such as Namsoon Kang and Sathianathan Clarke have critiqued Sanneh's conceptualization and observed that literature that adopts this conceptualization of world Christianity often tends towards triumphalism, emphasizing particular aspects of Christianity, such as its vibrancy and progress, while disregarding other aspects, such as discontinuity and decline. See for example Cabrita and Maxwell, "Introduction. Relocating World Christianity," in *Relocating World Christianity*. Cabrita, Maxwell and Wild-Wood, 21-22; Sathianathan Clarke, "World Christianity and Postcolonial Mission. A Path Forward for the 21st Century", *Theology Today* 71/2 (2014), 195; Dale Irvin, "World Christianity. A Genealogy," *Journal of World Christianity* 9/1 (2019), 6, 18; Namsoon Kang, "Whose/Which World in World Christianity. Towards World Christianity as Christianity of Worldly-Responsibility," in *A New Day. Essays on World Christianity in Honor of Lamin Sanneh*, ed. Akintunde E. Akinade (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 33.

18   See for example Charles F. Farhadian, ed., *Introduction to World Christianity* (Malden, MA: Wiley and Blackwell, 2012), 1; Kirsteen Kim and Sebastian Kim, *Christianity as a World Religion. An Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), ix [2nd revised edition]; Thomas M. Thangaraj, "An Overview. Asian and Oceanic Christianity in the Age of World Christianity," in *Asian and Oceanic Christianities in Conversation. Exploring Theological Identities at Home and in Diaspora*, eds. Heup Young Kim, Fumitaka Matsuoka and Anri Marimoto (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 11-12.

19   See e.g. Daughrity, *To Whom Does Christianity Belong?*, 7. For a more extensive discussion see Frederiks, "World Christianity. An Approach," forthcoming.

in the 'global North' primarily occurs in the work of scholars who have taken on Sanneh's postcolonial conceptualization of world Christianity as signifying—and celebrating—Christianity in the 'global South'.

To complicate the terminological muddle even further, Kollman's article also highlights that 'world Christianity' is not merely used for a subject matter but also for an emerging field of studies that investigates the subject matter 'world Christianity'.[20] Dale Irvin and Klaus Koschorke are generally regarded as its main engineers and most ardent promoters. Corresponding to Walls' conceptualisation of 'world Christianity', Koschorke and Irvin assert that the field of 'world Christianity' seeks to understand manifestations of Christianity in present and past, and Christianity as practised on six continents, thus explicitly including the North Atlantic hemisphere.[21] Where Irvin foregrounds Christian expressions of the underrepresented and marginalized in the study of Christianity, reminiscent of a liberation theology approach and its 'preferential option for the poor', Koschorke has underscored the polycentric structures of world Christianity.[22]

---

20 Kollman, "The World-Christian Turn," 116.

21 In his oft-quoted 2008 positioning article in *The Journal of World Christianity*, Dale Irvin describes the field of 'world Christianity' as: "an emerging field that investigates and seeks to understand Christian communities, faith, and practice as they are found on six continents, expressed in diverse ecclesial traditions, and informed by the multitude of historical and cultural experiences ... It is concerned with both the diversity of local or indigenous expressions of Christian life and faith throughout the world, and the variety of ways these interact with one another critically and constructively across time and space. It is particularly concerned with under-represented and marginalized communities of faith, resulting in a greater degree of attention being paid to Asian, African, and Latin American experiences; the experience of marginalized communities within the North Atlantic world; and the experiences of women throughout the world." Dale Irvin, "Editorial introduction," *Journal of World Christianity* 1/1 (2008), 1-2. For Koschorke, see Adrian Hermann and Ciprian Burlacioiu, "Introduction. Klaus Koschorke and the 'Munich School' Perspective on the History of World Christianity," *The Journal of World Christianity* 6/1 (2016), 9.

22 Klaus Koschorke and Adrian Hermann, eds., *Polycentric Structures of in the History of World Christianity* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014). As David Thonghou Ngong has perceptively flagged: "Even though the whole world is often in view when we speak of world Christianity, the discipline is actually about making the voices of Christians in the non-Western world heard. (...) Thus, the discipline of world Christianity is born not only out of the realization that Christianity is declining in the global North while it is expanding in the global South but also out of the fact that Christians in the global South are challenging ways of being Christian which Western missionaries took for granted in their transmission of the faith." David Tonghou Ngong, "The Ethics of Identity and World Christianity," *Missionalia. Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 45/3 (2017), 254.

The world Christianity project—both as a subject matter and as a field of studies—is informed by postcolonial sentiments to move beyond "a Eurocentric frame of reference" and is conceptually and discursively embedded in theories on the translatability and indigenization of the gospel, with particular attention for contemporary 'southern Christianity'.[23]

World Christianity scholarship adopting what I would like to coin as the 'Sannehan' conceptualization of 'world Christianity' typically foregrounds the demographic robustness, vitality and versatility of contemporary Christianity in the 'global South', often buttressed by what is presented as 'missiometric proof' of its exponential growth. This is most clearly expressed through the popular phrase that the 'center of gravity of Christianity is moving South'. The postulated but frequently tacit subtext to this portrayal of 'Southern' Christianity's growth and vibrancy is a representation of contemporary European Christianity as a tale of secularisation and decline. In the literature produced by this type of world Christianity scholarship the construct 'world Christianity' seems to function as a discursive reassurance that despite Europe's renunciation of its Christian heritage, due to the "meteoric rise of non-Western Christianity" (both in loci and in its migration settings) and its "robust diversity" there is hope for the Christian faith after all.[24]

3   Migrant Christianity

World Christianity discourses refer again and again to a number of trope-like illustrations that serve to buttress key issues in the conceptualisation of world Christianity: Nestorian Christianity is cited to underscore the longitudinal

---

23   Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message. The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989); Andrew F. Walls, "The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture," *Faith and Thought* 1 & 2 (1982), 39-52 (republished in Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History. Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 3-15); Andrew F. Walls, "The Translation Principle in Christian History," in *Bible Translation and the Spread of the Church*, ed. Philip C. Stine (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 24-39.

24   Akintude E. Akinade, "Introduction. The Grandeur of Faith. Exploring World Christianity's Multiple Trajectories," in *A New Day*. Akinade, 5; Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 15. See also: Kwame Bediako, "The Emergence of World Christianity and the Remaking of Theology," in *Understanding World Christianity*. Burrows, Gornik and McLean, 246. Bediako writes: "Thus, the present shifts in the center of gravity may have secured for Christianity a future that would otherwise be precarious in the secularized environment of the Modern West. It has given the faith a new lease on life in the predominantly religious worlds of Africa, Latin America, the Pacific and parts of Asia."

diversity and polycentricity of Christianity, the 19th century Liberated African community in Sierra Leone (the Black Atlantic) as iconic example of indigenous agency and transatlantic connectivities, while the growth of Christianity in China and of immigrant Christianity in Europe serve to buttress the vibrancy and vitality of Christianity in the 'global South'.[25]

This paragraph explores the trope 'migrant Christianity in Europe' in more detail, and examines its representation and its discursive functionality in world Christianity discourses that draw on Lamin Sanneh's conceptualization of world Christianity, henceforth referred to by the, somewhat reductionist, abbreviation 'Sannehan' discourses.

Migration is a global phenomenon and contemporary migrant Christianity therefore takes on numerous shapes, localities and faces. Migrant Christianity could refer to Copts resettling in New Jersey, to South Indian labour migrants in Kuwait or West Africans in Israel, to Zimbabwean refugees in South Africa or to Filipino au pairs in Hong Kong or Norway.[26] It is striking however, that despite these numerous manifestations, migrant Christianity as invoked in Sannehan world Christianity discourses overwhelmingly seems to refer to migrant Christianity in Europe. The quotations by Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu and Philip Jenkins at the beginning of this article are a case in point.

More so, despite the numerous manifestations of migrant Christianity in Europe,—Polish Roman Catholics doing blue colour jobs in the Netherlands or Norway, Serbian and Romanian Orthodox working in factories in Germany or Austria, Chinese Protestant entrepreneurs in Hungary and Romania, Indian and Filipino Christian nurses in Germany and the United Kingdom or longstanding migrant communities such as the Armenian Apostolic and Syrian Orthodox churches in Western Europe that have become host to refugees from

---

25   Jehu Hanciles, "The Black Atlantic and the Shaping of African Christianity, 1820-1920," in *Polycentric Structures of in the History of World Christianity.* Koschorke and Hermann, 29-50; Dorottya Nagy, "Where is China in World Christianity?," *Diversities* 12/1 (2010), 70-83; Lamin Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad. American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa* (Cambridge, Mass. Etc.: Harvard U.P., 1999).

26   Deanna Ferree Womack, "Transnational Christianity and Converging Identities. Arabic Protestant Churches in New Jersey," *Mission Studies* 32/2 (2015), 250-270; Elina Hankela, *Ubuntu, Migration and Ministry. Being Human in a Johannesburg Church* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Stanley J.V.C. John, *Transnational Religious Organization and Practice. A Contextual Analysis of Kerala Pentecostal Churches in Kuwait* (Leiden: Brill, 2018); Galia Sabar, "The African Christian Diaspora in the 'Holy Land'," in *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, eds. Afe Adogame and Cordula Weissköppel (Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, 2005), 155-190; Gemma Tulud Cruz, *An Intercultural Theology of Migration. Pilgrims in the Wilderness* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

the Middle East—, references to migrant Christianity in Europe mainly spot-light African migrant Christianity.[27]

But even African migrant Christianity is portrayed selectively. As early as 2008, the late Ogbu Kalu signalled that academic representations of African migrant Christianity in Europe tend to be lopsided, stating that the research seems to take little notice of African immigrants in mainline churches and tends to show a bias towards West African Anglophone Pentecostal-type churches, mainly profiling "successful European churches such as the Kings-way International in London and Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God in Ukraine."[28] A quick survey proves that Kalu's observation still holds water. Representations of migrant Christianity in Sannehan discourses are far from random, mainly referencing specific, high profile Pentecostal-type churches, such as Kingsway International, Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God or the Redeemed Christian Church of God, and are presented as 'the other' of its discursive twin European Christianity, which is depicted as waning and decaying.

Before this representation is further unravelled and problematized, it is important to substantiate the claim that certain world Christianity discourses adopting Lamin Sanneh's postcolonial take on world Christianity, routinely triangulate and conjoin African migrant Christianity in Europe, the vitality of Christianity in 'the global South' and Europe's rapid dechristianization to underpin a particular discourse. In order corroborate this, two additional samples are presented to show how and why this triangulation is brought into play.

---

27   See for example; Marta Bivand Erdal, "'When Poland Became the Main Country of Birth Among Catholics in Norway. Polish Migrants' Everyday Narratives and Church Responses to a Demographic Re-Constitution," in *Migration, Transnationalism and Catholicism. Global Perspectives*, eds. Dominic Pasura and Marta Bivand Erdal (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 259-289; Maria Hämmerli and Jean-François Mayer, eds., *Orthodox Identities in Western Europe. Migration, Settlement, and Innovation* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014); Knut A. Jacobsen and Selva J. Raj, *South Asian Christian Diaspora. Invisible Diaspora in Europe and North America* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008); Dorottya Nagy, *Migration and Theology. The Case of Chinese Christian Communities in Hungary and Romania in the Globalisation-Context* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2009); Dorottya Nagy, "Displaying Diaspora: Chinese Christian Presence in Hungary After 1989," *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 5 (2012), 277-289; Nora Stene Preston, "Multiple Choice? Language-Usage and the Transmission of Religious Tradition in the Coptic Orthodox Community in London," *British Journal of Religious Education* 20/2 (1998), 90-101.

28   Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism. An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 283.

In a contribution entitled "Migration and the globalization of Christianity" Jehu Hanciles discusses (among other things) the European debate on migration. As part of his argument that secular Europe mainly focusses on Muslim immigrant concerns but that "the significance of Christian migrants is typically overlooked in the heated public debate about immigration", Hanciles references a WCC report which states that in 2003 there were an estimated 24 million migrants in the EU, half of whom were Christians.[29] With a reference to the report's observation that in 2003 more than half of the membership of Protestant churches in Italy consisted of migrants, Hanciles then contends that a "flood of Christian immigrants has infused moribund churches and denominations in Europe with new vitality". Where immigrants have established independent congregations, Hanciles maintains that "the largest and fastest-growing churches were established by African migrants", citing Sunday Adelaja's Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God and Matthew Ashimilowo's Kingsway Christian Center as examples.[30] What Hanciles seems to suggest is that the millions of Christian migrants mentioned in the WCC report originate from "the non-Western world" with its "extraordinary growth of Christianity" and that through these migrants "new vitality" is "infused" into Europe's Christianity, where "homegrown Christianity is experiencing dramatic decline in adherence".[31]

What Hanciles however seems to disregard, is that the WCC report's 24 million migrants comprise of both migrants from within Europe and outside Europe, and that a substantial part (if not the majority) of the report's 12 million Christian migrants consists of people from Central and Eastern European countries, migrating within Europe, i.e. Roman Catholics from Poland, Croatia and Slovakia, Orthodox Christians from Ukraine, Romania, Russia or Serbia, Protestants from Hungary and so on. Hanciles' text seems to suggest that these migrants are non-European Christians, many of them Africans of a Pentecostal persuasion, who have come to "infuse" Europe's "moribund churches and denominations" with "new vitality".[32]

---

29   Darrell Jackson and Alessia Passarelli (Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe), *Mapping Migration. Mapping Churches' Responses, Europe Study* (Geneva: WCC, 2008), 29.

30   Jehu Hanciles, "Migration and the Globalization of Christianity," in *Understanding World Christianity*. Burrows, Gornik and McLean, 237.

31   Hanciles, "Migration and the Globalization of Christianity," 236. In fairness to Hanciles: he also points to the more strenuous dimensions of migrant Christianity, such as racism, struggle for recognition etc.

32   Hanciles, "Migration and the Globalization of Christianity," 237.

Even more pronounced is Douglas Jacobsen's description which is worth quoting here at some length. In the Western Europe chapter of his book *The World's Christians*, Jacobsen writes:

> There are no other church groups in the UK that compare in size to the Catholic and Anglican churches, but most of them, regardless of size, have been affected by the same disenchantment with organized religion that has decimated the Church of England. The only obvious exceptions are found among the many immigrant churches that now exist in most of the UK's cities. Many of these immigrant churches are vibrant and growing, and often they stand out like shining lights in the otherwise bleak British religious environment.[33]

Jacobsen then singles out Kingsway to exemplify this immigrant Christianity. In a paragraph-long account, that lengthwise is comparable to Jacobsen's discussion of the Roman Catholic Church in the UK (5.5 million members), he describes Kingsway as a church that "packs in 10,000 worshipers every Sunday", where "a pulsating Pentecostal-Charismatic message of personal salvation and the power of God" is preached, with "branch churches popping up in the counties surrounding London as well as in the West African nations of Ghana and Nigeria", only to conclude:

> The overall picture of Christianity in the UK confirms the image of Western Europe as a region where Christianity is slowly dying, but churches like the Kingsway Centre provide evidence to the contrary— that, in some places, Christianity is still very much alive. Viewing the situation in that way, it is easy to envision churches like Kingsway as small religious seedlings growing out of the cracks of a landscape that is otherwise paved over by secularism.[34]

---

33   Douglas Jacobsen, *The World's Christians. Who They Are, Where They Are, and How They Got There* (Chichester Etc.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 153.

34   Jacobsen, *The World's Christians*, 153. For other examples see e.g. Afe Adogame: "The implications of reverse mission for world Christianity are not far to seek. (…) [A]s European churches are declining in number and in missionary significance, the impact of non-Western missions looms large in the revivification of Christianity in Europe. (…) This reverse trend in missions now offers the 'old heartlands of Christianity' a model for renewal, and calls for a structural reform of the Church to grapple with the challenges of migration." See: Afe Adogame, "Reverse Mission. Europe, A Prodigal Continent?" http://www.wcc2006.info/fileadmin/files/edinburgh2010/files/News/Afe_Reverse%20mission_edited.pdf, Accessed: 21-08-2019. See also: Daryl M. Balia and Kirsteen Kim, eds., *Witnessing to Christ Today* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 135 (report Working Group Edinburgh 2020,

Both Hanciles and Jacobsen describe European Christianity with words like 'bleak', 'dying', 'decline', 'moribund', and 'decimated', while migrant Christianity is associated with words like 'vibrant', 'vitality', 'pulsating', 'growth' and 'alive', with both authors flagging (West) African Pentecostal churches such as Kingsway and the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God as emblematic specimen of migrant Christianity. And while for example Philip Jenkins does acknowledge that "[s]uch spectacular success stories may be untypical", he also maintains that "they indicate the powerful boost supplied by global South communities", for "[t]hough the absolute numbers may be small, the potential for future growth is immense, as second- and third-generation members of the newer churches move them in the religious mainstream."[35]

Undergirding the representations by Jacobsen, Hanciles, Jenkins and others, with their emphasis on growth and vitality on the one hand and decline and decay on the other, is (cognizant or unaware) the philosophy of the Church Growth movement. In the words of sociologist Christian Smith,

> … evangelicals—especially those shaped by the church-growth movement—assume that numerical growth of a congregation indicates spiritual strength and vitality, which, in turn, indicates possession of the truth. Numerical growth, the assumption suggests, can be taken as an empirical indicator that the Holy Spirit is present and working and leading a congregation in the right beliefs. God must be "blessing" such a spiritually vibrant and faithful church with increased numbers of visitors and members.[36]

Thus, the selective representation of migrant Christianity in Europe, construed to foreground its vigour and vibrancy, serves to project migrant Christianity as "microcosm" of Christianity from the 'global South', located in Europe. The "empirical indicators" of the extra-ordinary growth and vibrancy of Christianity in the 'global South'—and by extension of its microcosm in Europe—irrefutably establish the workings of the Holy Spirit and therefore its "possession of the truth". Simultaneously, through strategies of othering which portray European Christianity as characterized by decline and

---

theme 5); Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenen and Douglas MacConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions. Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006), 150.

35   Jenkins, *God's Continent*, 89, 91-92; Jenkins seems to ignore or discard the option that the second or third generation of the "New Europeans" will secularize.

36   Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible. Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2012), 62-63.

decay, migrant Christianity is depicted as the antipode of its discursive twin, 'European' Christianity. The "empirical indicators" of disintegration and decrepitude in the representation of European Christianity betoken the withholding of God's blessing; therefore, according to the same logic, European Christianity must have deviated from the truth.

The narrative buttressed by this triangulation therefore seems to suggest that if there is a future for Christianity in Europe at all, this future depends on and revolves around this vibrant migrant Christianity from the "global South", as epitomized by "churches like Kingsway". That migrant Christianity, as vanguard of Christianity in the 'global South' despite all odds grows "out of the cracks of a landscape that is otherwise paved over by secularism", is the ultimate hallmark of the pre-eminence and veracity of southern Christianity. The selective representation of migrant Christianity in Europe and its triangulation with Christianity in the 'global South' and Europe, therefore seems to buttress the postcolonial agenda of certain strands of world Christianity scholarship working along the lines of Lamin Sanneh, that asserts that despite residual colonial hegemony in the form of (access to) resources and power, the true custodianship of the Christian tradition as well as its future—including its future in Europe—rests with Christians from the 'global South', in particular in Africa. To quote Philip Jenkins once more, "[i]n religious terms, the empire has struck back decisively"; and its impact reverberates through the very heart of the colonial metropoles.[37]

4   Critical Concerns

Whether or not a person subscribes to the premises of the Church Growth movement, is a matter of theological preference. Likewise, whether or not a person endorses Sanneh's conceptualisation of 'world Christianity' as a distinct postcolonial project, is a matter of choice. But even within these paradigms the manner in which certain Sannehan world Christianity discourses triangulate migrant Christianity in Europe, Christianity in the 'global South' and European Christianity is problematic. This paragraph merely flags two issues.[38]

---

37   Philip Jenkins, *God's Continent. Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 93.

38   I would like to emphasize that this critique is in no way intended to disavow the postcolonial aspirations of the project (who am I as a white European to do so) but rather intends to point to some of the scholarly problematic lines of argumentation that weaken rather than strengthen its postcolonial objectives.

The first concern involves the representativity—and therefore the academic equity—of the representations on which the triangulation hinges. If world Christianity scholarship is indeed about "an analysis of the histories, practices, and discourses of Christianity", than a fair rendering of these "histories, practices and discourses of Christianity" is called for.[39] While the triangulation and the selective representation of migrant Christianity in Europe, the celebratory emphasis on the advance and the vibrancy of Christianity in the 'global South' and the rhetorical stress on the bleak state of European Christianity—and persistent reproduction of these imageries as if they were actual realities—may have their uses from a discursive perspective, neither the portrayal of migrant Christianity in Europe, nor of European Christianity or Christianity in the 'global South' seems to do justice to the complex and diverse realities on the ground.

As argued above, the representation of migrant Christianity in Europe only foregrounds a fraction of its span and diversity. In the words of Ogbu Kalu, the spotlight on the vibrancy and growth of particular churches "runs the risk of missing the depth and nuance of the situation" and of turning a blind eye to matters that do not accord with the projected characteristics of vibrancy and growth.[40] Kalu has for example pointed out that "[m]any immigrant churches struggle with low attendance and inconsistent membership."[41] Also, Kevin Ward's research has shown that Ugandan Christian communities in Britain wrestle with deep internal divisions and ethno-favouritism imported from their homeland, thus debunking any facile 'home away from home' rhetoric, while scholars like Gerrie ter Haar, Miriam Schader and others have highlighted the challenges of discrimination, racism and poverty that many of the churches and their pastors face.[42] Moreover, research by Etienne Smith as well as by Clair Adida, David Laitin and Marie-Anne Valfort has pointed to the impact of secularisation on second and third generation Christians with a

---

39   Sanneh and McClymond, "Introduction," 6; Irvin, "Editorial introduction", 1-2.
40   Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 283.
41   Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 283.
42   Gerrie Ter Haar, *Rats, Cockroaches and People Like Us. Views of Humanity and Human Rights* (The Hague: Institute of Social Studies, 2000); Jutta Lindert, Meryam Schouler-Ocak, Andreas Heinz, and Stefan Priebe, "Mental Health, Health Care Utilisation of Migrants in Europe," *European Psychiatry. The Journal of the Association of European Psychiatrists* 23/1 (2008), 14-20; Mirjam Schader, "Religion as a Resource for the Political Involvement of Migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa in Berlin," *Religion, Ethnicity and Transnational Migration between West Africa and Europe*, eds. Stanisław Grodź and Gina Gertrud Smith (Boston: Brill, 2014), 145-167; Kevin Ward, "Ugandan Christian Communities in Britain," *International Review of Mission* 89/354 (2000), 320-328.

migrant background.[43] The findings of the empirical studies cited above call the celebratory 'vibrant and growing migrant Christianity' narrative into question and cast doubt on claims like those made by Jenkins that "the potential for future growth is immense, as second- and third-generation members of the newer churches move them in the religious mainstream."

Similarly, also the representations of European Christianity and Christianity in the 'global South' are one-dimensional reductions of complex and diverse realities. The portrayal of European Christianity indiscriminatingly extrapolates the narrative of secularisation and decline to the whole of Europe, ignoring developments such as reinstatement of religion as a public factor in countries like Poland, Russia and Romania, and pays no heed to trends such as the popularity of movements like Taizé, Focolare, New Monasticism and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, or to initiatives such as Emerging Churches and Mission Shaped Church.[44] Similarly, the portrayal of the unspecified (and therefore unspecific) category of Christianity in 'the global South' revolves around imageries of growth and vibrancy, but is silent on matters that are at odds with this imagery, such as the limited growth potential of Christianity in the Middle East and the Sahel, the persistence of caste in Indian churches, the corruption and ethnic favouritism in numerous African churches or the verbal violence of certain religious leaders against the LGBTQ community.[45]

---

43   Clair L. Adida, David D. Laitin, and Marie-Anne Valfort, *Why Muslim Integration Fails in Christian-Heritage Societies* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 133-134; Etienne Smith, "Religious Pluralism and Secularism between Senegal and France. A View from Senegalese Families in France," in *Religion, Ethnicity and Transnational Migration between West Africa and Europe*. Grodź and Smith, 83 ff.

44   Graham Cray, Ian Mobsby, and Aaron Kennedy, *New Monasticism As Fresh Expression of Church. Ancient Faith, Future Mission* (Norwich, England: Canterbury Press, 2010); Aleksandra Đurić Milovanović and Radmila Radić, *Orthodox Christian Renewal Movements in Eastern Europe* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); John Eade and Mario Katić, eds., *Pilgrimage, Politics and Place-Making in Eastern Europe. Crossing the Borders* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2014); David Goodhew, *Church Growth in Britain. 1980 to the Present* (Farnham: Ashgate Pub, 2012); Anna-Karina Hermkens, Willy Jansen, and Catrien Notermans, eds., *Moved by Mary. The Power of Pilgrimage in the Modern World* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009); Sebastian Kim and Kirsteen Kim, *Christianity As a World Religion* (London: Continuum, 2016) (2nd edition), 159-162; Mikhal Vavzhonek, *Religion and Politics in Ukraine. The Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches As Elements of Ukraine's Political System* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

45   Ezra Chitando and Adriaan van Klinken, *Christianity and Controversies Over Homosexuality in Contemporary Africa* (London: Routledge, 2016); Barbara MacGowan Cooper, *Evangelical Christians in the Muslim Sahel* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2010); Martha Frederiks, "The Gambia," in *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South*, eds. Mark A. Lamport (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield), 295-298; Adriaan van Klinken and Masiiwa Ragies Gunda, "Taking Up the Cudgels against Gay Rights? Trends and

While some generalization in discursive strategies is inevitable, selective representation becomes deeply disturbing when it refrains from even so much as acknowledging matters that (negatively) affect the very heart of the representation. Reports on recurring instances of nepotism, financial irregularities and pastoral sexual abuse involving the leadership of Kingsway International and the Blessed Embassy of God for instance would seem to cast grave doubts on the confident upbeat representation of migrant Christianity in Europe by Sannehan world Christianity discourses, that, as was argued earlier, to a large extent hinges on these churches.[46] The silence on the implications (discursive and otherwise) of these ethical imbroglios is both disturbing and inappropriate and raises questions about academic equity and integrity.

A second concern pertains to the fact that the triangulation of migrant Christianity in Europe, Christianity in the 'global South' and Christianity in Europe as well as the agenda it advances, is strongly informed by binary thinking, both with regard to its discursive strategies and its analytical concepts, as is in fact the whole Sannehan world Christianity project. As evidenced in the analysis of the triangulation, the discursive strategies seem to revolve around processes of othering, in which, to quote Cordula Weissköppel, "opposites are created and stereotyped images are assigned by disparaging or upgrading the qualities of the other in comparison to oneself."[47] The imagery of Europe as the 'dark continent', where "Christianity is slowly dying" and "the church is decimated", contrasted with the imagery of the "extra-ordinary growth",

---

Trajectories in African Christian Theologies on Homosexuality," *Journal of Homosexuality* 59/1 (2012), 114-38; Adriaan van Klinken, "Gay Rights, the Devil and the End Times. Public Religion and the Enchantment of the Homosexuality Debate in Zambia," *Religion* 43/4 (2013), 519-40; Adriaan van Klinken and Ezra Chitando, eds., *Public Religion and the Politics of Homosexuality in Africa* (London: Routledge, 2016); Rebecca Shah and Joel A. Carpenter, eds., *Christianity in India. Conversion, Community Development, and Religious Freedom* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018); Aquiline Tarimo, *Ethnicity, Citizenship and State in Eastern Africa* (Mankon: Langaa Research & Publishing CIG, 2011), 31-32.

46   "UK Church accused of misconduct", *BBC News*, October 7 2005. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4319856.stm (accessed 15 July 2019); "Police investigates 'mismanagement' after church lost £3.9m investments", *Christian Today*, February 13 2017. https://www.christiantoday.com/article/police-investigate-mismanagement-after-church-lost-3-9m-investments/104648.htm (accessed 15 July 2019); Jeremy Weber, "Will Europe's Third Largest Church Punish Pastor for Multiple Affairs?," *Christianity Today* 17 (2017). https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2016/may/will-embassy-of-god-punish-sunday-adelaja-multiple-affairs.html (accessed 15 July 2019).

47   Cordula Weissköppel, "In and Out. Doing Ethnographic Research in a German-Sudanese Sufi Brotherhood," in *Religion in the Context of African Migration*. Adogame and Weissköppel, 128.

"vibrancy" and "vitality" of Christianity in the 'global South' both in loci and in its migration settings, exemplifies such a discursive strategy of disavowing the other, as does the stratagem of comparing what are considered the most feeble aspects of one manifestation of Christianity with the most robust and vibrant aspects of another manifestation.[48]

Likewise, the representations seem to be construed around boundary-demarcating categories and classifications that underscore otherness and non-belonging. Examples include categories drawing on ethnic, regional or geographic otherness, such as African versus European, non-Western verses Western, the 'global South' versus the 'global North', or binary classifications that underscore non-belonging such as the migration verses the non-migration status of Christian communities or the migrant/missionary versus the native/indigenous. Already a number of years ago, Arun Jones flagged concern over the fact that much world Christianity scholarship, unwittingly or as an ideological stance, continues to reproduce these binary categories.[49] Jones argues that binary categories such as 'North' versus 'global South', 'Western' versus 'rest', 'missionary versus 'indigenous/native', 'migrant' versus 'local',—which ironically find their origin in the very colonial ideologies that Sannehan postcolonial world Christianity scholarship endeavours to challenge and contest—, have been called into question by globalization theories that stress the interconnectedness of the world in both present and past, a stance also belabored by Robert Wuthnow.[50] In her discussion of sister church relationships Janet Kragt Bakker neatly summarizes the critique; she writes, "the prevailing tendency to portray northern and southern Christians using an us/them dichotomy misses the central logic of the globalization thesis: that different parts of the world are becoming more closely connected. Instead of a bipolar map

---

48 Elijah Obinna, "African Christians in Scotland. Contesting the Rhetoric of Reverse Mission," in *Christianity in the Modern World. Changes and Controversies*, eds. Giselle Vincett (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), 89-90.

49 Jones, "Scholarly Transgressions", 231-232. Irvin's need for example of having to reference "marginalized communities" (read: African, Asian and Latin American communities) "in the North Atlantic world" in his delineation of the field of world Christianity epitomizes the consequences of such binary thinking. The fact that 'marginalized communities' refers to Asian, African and Latin American communities can be inferred from the sentence: "It is particularly concerned with under-represented and marginalized communities of faith, resulting in a greater degree of attention being paid to Asian, African, and Latin American experiences; the experience of marginalized communities within the North Atlantic world; and the experiences of women throughout the world." Irvin, "Editorial introduction", 1-2.

50 Jones, "Scholarly Transgression," 222; Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith*, 55-57.

of global Christianity in which the North and South are seen as competing centers, a truer picture of global Christianity is pluriform and multi-centric."[51]

The deliberate reproduction of conceptual binaries that seems at the heart of many of the strategies of othering of the Sannehan discourses indeed appears to flout the manifold continuities, connectivities and interconnections that entangle the numerous manifestations of Christianity world-wide, be they in the form of shared creeds, liturgies or beliefs and practices, be they in the form of denominational, interdenominational or ecumenical networks, be they in the form of joint academic projects, material objects or human agents. This despite the fact, that sensitivity for connectivities and entanglements is considered to be a hallmark of world Christianity as a field of studies.[52]

5   By Means of Conclusion

In its analysis of the seemingly upfront discursive triangulation of migrant Christianity in Europe, Christianity in the 'global South' and European Christianity, this article has demonstrated that the triangulation is informed by a particular postcolonial conceptualisation of world Christianity theorized by Lamin Sanneh, that hinges on sustaining problematic binaries such as Western/non-Western and global North/global South and on discursive strategies of othering. It has shown that the strategic aim of the triangulation and its selective representations is to advance and reinforce the postcolonial agenda of the Sannehan world Christianity project, that promulgates the vibrancy,

---

51   Janel Kragt Bakker, "Southern Saints and their Northern Siblings. Christians Crossing Boundaries through Sister Church Relationships," in *Religion on the Move!: New Dynamics of Religious Expansion in a Globalizing World*. eds. Afeosemime Adogame and Shobana Shankar (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 75-76.

52   Cabrita and Maxwell have for example pointed to integrating and globalising factors in Christianity world-wide. Cabrita and Maxwell, "Introduction," 21-22; Irvin, "World Christianity. A Genealogy," 6, 18. Likewise Dana Robert has stressed the continuities between 'missionary Christianity' and 'world Christianity'; Dana L. Robert, "Shifting Southward. Global Christianity Since 1945," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24/2 (2000), 53. For connectivities and entanglements as markers of a world Christianity approach, see e.g. Martha Frederiks, "World Christianity. An Approach", forthcoming; Dorottya Nagy, "World Christianity as a Theological Approach. A Reflection from Central and Eastern Europe," in *Relocating World Christianity*. Cabrita, Maxwell and Wild-Wood, 143-161. In a recent article Irvin has pointed to interconnectedness as a distinctive marker of the field: "World Christianity as a field of study is at its best when studying things that are crossing (transcultural, transconfessional, transreligious) or things that take place in the interstices (intercultural, interconfessional, interreligious)." Irvin, "World Christianity. A Genealogy," 18.

authenticity and veracity of Christianity in the 'global South' over against European Christianity. The article also established that the selective representations in general and migrant Christianity in particular cast doubts on the scholarly claims and impartiality of the project, while its use of binary categories originating in the colonial period seems to defy its postcolonial aims.

On a more metalevel, this analytical exercise has spotlit how scholarly tools such categories, analytical concepts, representations and discursive strategies construct realities rather than reflect realities. This may sound as stating the obvious. However, with regard to the topic at hand it means that whether Christians with a migration story that once upon a time started in Africa or Asia or Latin America "are studied as ethnic churches in foreign sites—a veritable image of oil on water—or as a part of the new religious landscape of European Christianity", and whether they are represented as 'microcosm' of Christianity in the 'global South' or as one of the many expressions of Christianity in Europe, is in the end an academic decision.[53]

---

53   Kalu, "Introduction to Pentecostalism," 283.