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and the Church**

Müller, Sabrina

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*Multicultural Kingdom: Ethnic Diversity,
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HARVEY KWIYANI WAS, UNTIL recently, a Lecturer in African Christianity and Theology at Liverpool Hope University. He has been appointed as CEO of Global Connections (the UK Evangelical Network for World Mission Agencies) and is also leading a Master's programme in African Diaspora Christianity at the Church Mission Society in Oxford. Kwiyani grew up in Malawi, has lived in Switzerland, Austria, Germany and the USA, and now lives in the UK. During his time in the USA as a PhD student in Mission Theology, he realized that he was only reading about white mission theologians (male) in his studies and wondered what African voices could contribute to the discourse. His PhD and his book *Multicultural Kingdom* were based on this thought. The focus is then on the two-in-one question of what African mission theology can contribute

to the western discourse and, more practically, whether African mission can religiously animate the secular west. His questions also lead directly to questions of diversity and racism. Therefore, he combines his missionary theological concern with the concern to open the discourse to voices from other parts of the world.

His latest book, *Multicultural Kingdom*, is divided into eleven chapters. It begins with the image of the mosaic and ends with an appeal to break up the monocultural setting in the churches (Chapters 1 and 11). In the first chapter, the author narrates personally and narratively how he realised that the church should be a multicultural mosaic. In doing so, he refers to his home country Malawi, where he experienced church as fundamentally multicultural and polyphonic. He experiences this differently in the Western context, and in this book, specifically in the British context. The church is segregated, people of different skin colours and backgrounds do not worship together (Chapter 1). From there Kwiyani builds his argument, first drawing attention to the growth of Christianity in Africa and the growth of migrant churches, and then charting the missionary movements from Asia, Africa and Latin America to Europe. In doing so, he notes that Europe itself has become one of the new and central mission fields (Chapters 3 and 4). At the end of Chapter 4, Kwiyani reveals the concern and aim of his book: “It is the argument of this book that a proper engagement between British and non-Western Christians resident in Britain will enrich British Christianity, and hopefully help it rediscover its missional impulses to re-evangelize Britain” (61).

In the fifth chapter, the author presents the multicultural Christian reality in Britain with the conclusion that the number of Asian, African and Latino believers far exceeds the number of white British (Chapter 5). In Chapters 6–10, Kwiyani discusses the chances of a multicultural church and a multicultural kingdom. In doing so, he argues theologically, drawing on the practice of the early Church, insights from contemporary theology and his background. In Chapter 10, the author first introduces a multicultural inclusive church and then discusses three concepts that can increase diversity in congregations and churches: Hospitality, Learning to listen and Cross-cultural relationships. At the end of Chapter 10 he states that a new post-colonial theology in a multicultural world is needed, one “that will discredit the racial prejudices that prevail in the Church today. In Christ, race should not matter” (142). In conclusion, the author draws a church of the future that is colourful, diverse and multicultural.

Multicultural Kingdom deals with two exciting phenomena that many theologians, pastors and believers in Europe are not even aware of: the rapid growth of migration churches and the re-missionization of Europe. Both topics

are marginal or non-existent in the theological discourse and church practice of traditional state and national churches. The book does an excellent job of raising awareness and at the same time shows the biblical contexts of justification and the opportunities of a multicultural church. The strength of the book lies in the many, often personal, narrative sections. Kwiyani excellently illustrates experiences that have shaped his thoughts and how his reflections relate to practice. At the same time, this book offers an African theological contribution to the European situation, which is highly exciting. The weaknesses of the book lie in three areas:

1. There is some repetition, which does not offer a new perspective on the discourse.
2. Not all concepts have been clarified: Christianity and Church are sometimes used analogously. Mission theology mainly refers to the Protestant mission, which is then again used as a concept for the whole mission theological discourse.
3. I would have liked to see more critical questioning of whether and why mission, especially from a multicultural perspective, is necessary at all. Does Europe need to be re-missionized, and if so, what are the decisive arguments for this, apart from the biblical motives and the decline of Christianity in Europe?

Despite these critical points, I highly recommend this book. It takes the reader on a multicultural journey in their own context, brings to mind things that are only marginally considered and is, especially through the narrative parts, very catchy – even while on the last page, the story of Kwiyani's mother from the first page was still fresh in my memory.