



Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series

VOLUME 33

# Mission and Power

## History, Relevance and Perils



**Edited By Atola Longkumer,  
Jørgen Skov Sørensen  
and Michael Biehl**



## Mission and Power

Mission cannot ignore its engagement with power. Christian mission is unavoidably located within matrices of power structures: religion, culture, colonial power, economic and gender. It is not only in the missionary movement largely emanating from the West that Christian mission is linked to structures of power. The Christian communities of today also present significant images, practices, expressions, and sometimes exploitations of power. This volume explores the notion of power in relation to Christian mission and critically engages questions such as: What notions of power have informed mission? How have power structures been negotiated between Christian mission and local culture/religions? Which of these manifestations of power are disturbing and counter to the values of the Gospel?

*This book is must read for theologians, missiologists, missionaries and Christians in general because we are called to engage in mission and we also encounter power in different ways.*

Agnes Aboum, Moderator, World Council of Churches

*This volume, another in the important Edinburgh 2010 series, probes the complex relation between mission and power and offers ways that unjust power relations might be finally made relations of justice and equality."*

Stephen Bevans, SVD, Louis J. Luzbetak, SVD Professor of Mission and Culture, Emeritus, Catholic Theological Union

*What could be more relevant now a day than to see and debate the structures of power within Christian missions. To understand the initial terms of Christianity compared with the faces of Christianity and power in a missionary context through time. What is Christian power? I recommend this volume to all theological students, educators, pastors and lay people.*

Bishop Sofie Petersen , Greenland

*Acts of the Apostles 1: 8 points to three basic elements of God's Mission, namely, witnessing to the gospel of Jesus Christ, empowerment by the Holy Spirit, incarnated in various contexts (both local and global). This volume on Mission and Power covers in depth all the three dimensions of Missio Dei, challenging the churches in situations of bad news, to share the good news in words and deeds.*

Carlos Emilio Ham-Stanard, President, Evangelical Theological Seminary, Matanzas, Cuba

*The volume on Mission and Power provides an opportunity for the community of faith and scholars to continue the conversation on power and its expression as vital to building just communities, particularly gender justice.*

Fulata L. Moyo, Programme Executive

A Just Community of Women and Men (Women in Church and Society), World Council of Churches



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[www.edinburgh2010.org](http://www.edinburgh2010.org)

Postcolonial thought, feminism, and liberation theology have all taught us that what often passes as service and ministry is really about forms of unequal power and even domination. This volume, another in the important Edinburgh 2010 series, probes the complex relation between mission and power and offers ways that unjust power relations might be finally made relations of justice and equality.

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Bishop Sofie Petersen, Greenland

*Mission and Power: History, Relevance and Perils. This book is must read for theologians, missiologists, missionaries and Christians in general because we are called to engage in mission and we also encounter power in different ways. This book is come out at a critical juncture in the history of missions when the epicenter of Christianity has shifted to the south and questions of power in mission have not received the due attention. It is also a time when missionaries from the global south for example, South Korea and India are moving to global North and South to share the gospel and this book will be of assistance when addressing questions of power in partnership in mission as the book raises new perspectives and issues. This book will not only provide new insights on the relationship between mission and power a concept that remains ambiguous, but will make it possible for those within the Christian communities who have recently read "Together for Life: Missions from the Margins" to think through issues pertaining to power a fresh.*

Agnes Aboum, Moderator, World Council of Churches

*Acts of the Apostles 1:8 points to three basic elements of God's Mission, namely, witnessing to the gospel of Jesus Christ, empowerment by the Holy Spirit, incarnated in various contexts (both local and global). This volume on Mission and Power covers in depth all the three dimensions of Missio Dei, challenging the churches in situations of bad news, to share the good news in words and deeds."*

Carlos Emilio Ham-Stanard, President, Evangelical Theological Seminary,  
Matanzas, Cuba.

*It is a missional imperative of the church to engage in a holistic and inclusive approach to ministry. If the church is to have integrity of its mission and purpose, it must embody and reflect equality and equity for all gender identities. Thus, women's participation, gender equality and justice are a priority of the church. The volume on Mission and Power provides an opportunity for the community of faith and scholars to continue the conversation on power and its expression as vital to building just communities, particularly gender justice.*

Fulata L. Moyo, Programme Executive  
A Just Community of Women and Men (Women in Church and Society)  
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## REGNUM EDINBURGH CENTENARY SERIES

The centenary of the World Missionary Conference of 1910, held in Edinburgh, was a suggestive moment for many people seeking direction for Christian mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Several different constituencies within world Christianity held significant events around 2010. From 2005, an international group worked collaboratively to develop an intercontinental and multi-denominational project, known as Edinburgh 2010, based at New College, University of Edinburgh. This initiative brought together representatives of twenty different global Christian bodies, representing all major Christian denominations and confessions, and many different strands of mission and church life, to mark the centenary.

Essential to the work of the Edinburgh 1910 Conference, and of abiding value, were the findings of the eight think-tanks or ‘commissions’. These inspired the idea of a new round of collaborative reflection on Christian mission – but now focused on nine themes identified as being key to mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The study process was polycentric, open-ended, and as inclusive as possible of the different genders, regions of the world, and theological and confessional perspectives in today’s church. It was overseen by the Study Process Monitoring Group: Miss Maria Aranzazu Aguado (Spain, The Vatican), Dr Daryl Balia (South Africa, Edinburgh 2010), Mrs Rosemary Dowsett (UK, World Evangelical Alliance), Dr Knud Jørgensen (Norway, Areopagos), Rev John Kafwanka (Zambia, Anglican Communion), Rev Dr Jooseop Keum (Korea, World Council of Churches), Dr Wonsuk Ma (Korea, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies), Rev Dr Kenneth R. Ross (UK, Church of Scotland), Dr Petros Vassiliadis (Greece, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), and co-ordinated by Dr Kirsteen Kim (UK, Edinburgh 2010).

These publications reflect the ethos of Edinburgh 2010 and will make a significant contribution to ongoing studies in mission. It should be clear that material published in this series will inevitably reflect a diverse range of views and positions. These will not necessarily represent those of the series’ editors or of the Edinburgh 2010 General Council, but in publishing them the leadership of Edinburgh 2010 hopes to encourage conversation between Christians and collaboration in mission. All the series’ volumes are commended for study and reflection in both church and academy.

### Series Editors

Knud Jørgensen	Areopagos, Norway, MF Norwegian School of Theology & the Lutheran School of Theology, Hong Kong. Former Chair of Edinburgh 2010 Study Process Monitoring Group
Kirsteen Kim	Leeds Trinity University and former Edinburgh 2010 Research Co-ordinator, UK
Wonsuk Ma	Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Oxford, UK
Tony Gray	Words by Design, Bicester, UK

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Edited by  
Atola Longkumer,  
Jørgen Skov Sørensen,  
and Michael Biehl

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## PREFACE

The Edinburgh 2010 Common Call emerged from the Edinburgh 2010 study process and conference marking the centenary of the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910. The Common Call, cited below, was affirmed in the Church of Scotland Assembly Hall in Edinburgh on 6 June 2010, by representatives of world Christianity, including Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical, Pentecostal, and other major Protestant churches.

As we gather for the centenary of the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh 1910, we believe the church, as a sign and symbol of the reign of God, is called to witness to Christ today by sharing in God's mission of love through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

*1. Trusting in the Triune God and with a renewed sense of urgency, we are called to incarnate and proclaim the good news of salvation, of forgiveness of sin, of life in abundance, and of liberation for all poor and oppressed. We are challenged to witness and evangelism in such a way that we are a living demonstration of the love, righteousness and justice that God intends for the whole world.*

*2. Remembering Christ's sacrifice on the Cross and his resurrection for the world's salvation, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are called to authentic dialogue, respectful engagement and humble witness among people of other faiths – and no faith – to the uniqueness of Christ. Our approach is marked with bold confidence in the gospel message; it builds friendship, seeks reconciliation and practises hospitality.*

*3. Knowing the Holy Spirit who blows over the world at will, reconnecting creation and bringing authentic life, we are called to become communities of compassion and healing, where young people are actively participating in mission, and women and men share power and responsibilities fairly, where there is a new zeal for justice, peace and the protection of the environment, and renewed liturgy reflecting the beauties of the Creator and creation.*

*4. Disturbed by the asymmetries and imbalances of power that divide and trouble us in church and world, we are called to repentance, to critical reflection on systems of power, and to accountable use of power structures. We are called to find practical ways to live as members of One Body in full awareness that God resists the proud, Christ welcomes and empowers the poor and afflicted, and the power of the Holy Spirit is manifested in our vulnerability.*

*5. Affirming the importance of the biblical foundations of our missional engagement and valuing the witness of the Apostles and martyrs, we are called to rejoice in the expressions of the gospel in many nations all over*

*the world. We celebrate the renewal experienced through movements of migration and mission in all directions, the way all are equipped for mission by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and God's continual calling of children and young people to further the gospel.*

*6. Recognising the need to shape a new generation of leaders with authenticity for mission in a world of diversities in the twenty-first century, we are called to work together in new forms of theological education. Because we are all made in the image of God, these will draw on one another's unique charisms, challenge each other to grow in faith and understanding, share resources equitably worldwide, involve the entire human being and the whole family of God, and respect the wisdom of our elders while also fostering the participation of children.*

*7. Hearing the call of Jesus to make disciples of all people – poor, wealthy, marginalised, ignored, powerful, living with disability, young, and old – we are called as communities of faith to mission from everywhere to everywhere. In joy we hear the call to receive from one another in our witness by word and action, in streets, fields, offices, homes, and schools, offering reconciliation, showing love, demonstrating grace and speaking out truth.*

*8. Recalling Christ, the host at the banquet, and committed to that unity for which he lived and prayed, we are called to ongoing co-operation, to deal with controversial issues and to work towards a common vision. We are challenged to welcome one another in our diversity, affirm our membership through baptism in the One Body of Christ, and recognise our need for mutuality, partnership, collaboration and networking in mission, so that the world might believe.*

*9. Remembering Jesus' way of witness and service, we believe we are called by God to follow this way joyfully, inspired, anointed, sent and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and nurtured by Christian disciplines in community. As we look to Christ's coming in glory and judgment, we experience his presence with us in the Holy Spirit, and we invite all to join with us as we participate in God's transforming and reconciling mission of love to the whole creation.*

### **Themes Explored**

The 2010 conference was shaped around the following nine study themes:

1. Foundations for mission
2. Christian mission among other faiths
3. Mission and post-modernities
4. Mission and power
5. Forms of missionary engagement
6. Theological education and formation
7. Christian communities in contemporary contexts
8. Mission and unity – ecclesiology and mission
9. Mission spirituality and authentic discipleship

### The Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series to Date

Against this background a series of books was commissioned, with the intention of making a significant contribution to ongoing studies of mission. This series currently includes:<sup>1</sup>

*Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now*, David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross (eds).

*Edinburgh 2010 Volume II: Witnessing to Christ Today*, Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds).

*Mission Continues: Global Impulses for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Claudia Wahrisch-Oblau and Fidon Mwombeki (eds).

*Holistic Mission: God's Plan for God's People*, Brian Woolnough and Wonsuk Ma (eds).

*Mission Today and Tomorrow*, Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds).

*The Church Going Local: Mission and Globalization*, Tormod Engelsviken, Erling Lundeby and Dagfinn Solheim (eds).

*Evangelical and Frontier Mission: Perspectives on the Global Progress of the Gospel*, A. Scott Moreau and Beth Snodderly (eds).

*Interfaith Relations after One Hundred Years: Christian Mission among Other Faiths*, Marina Ngursangzeli Behera (ed).

*Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age: Christian Mission among Other Faiths*, Lalsangkima Pachuau and Knud Jørgensen (eds).

*Mission and Post Modernities*, Rolv Olsen (ed).

*A Learning Missional Church: Reflections from Young Missiologists*, Beate Fagerli, Knud Jørgensen, Rolv Olsen, Kari Storstein Haug and Knut Tveitereid (eds).

*Life-Widening Mission: Global Anglican Perspectives*, Cathy Ross (ed).

*Foundations for Mission*, Emma Wild-Wood and Peniel Rajkumar (eds).

*Mission Spirituality and Authentic Discipleship*, Wonsuk Ma and Kenneth R. Ross (eds).

*A Century of Catholic Missions*, Stephen Bevans (ed).

*Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation*, Robert Schreiter and Knud Jørgensen (eds).

*Orthodox Perspectives on Mission*, Petros Vassiliadis (ed).

*Bible in Mission*, Pauline Hoggarth, Fergus Macdonald, Knud Jørgensen and Bill Mitchell (eds).

*Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity*, Wonsuk Ma, Veli-Matti Karkkainen and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (eds).

*Engaging the World: Christian Communities in Contemporary Global Society*, Afe Adogame, Janice McLean and Anderson Jeremiah (eds).

*Mission At and From the Margins: Patterns, Protagonists and Perspectives*, Peniel Rajkumar, Joseph Dayam, I.P. Asheervadham (eds).

*The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives*, Margunn Serigstad Dahle, Lars Dahle and Knud Jørgensen (eds).

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<sup>1</sup> For an up-to-date list and full publication details, see [www.ocms.ac.uk/regnum/](http://www.ocms.ac.uk/regnum/)

*Global Diasporas and Mission*, Chandler H Im & Amos Yong (eds).

*Theology, Mission and Child: Global Perspectives*, B Prevette, K White, CR Velloso Ewell & DJ Konz (eds).

*Called to Unity for the Sake of Mission*, John Gibaut and Knud Jørgensen (eds).

*Freedom of Belief and Christian Mission*, Hans Aage Gravaas, Christof Sauer, Tormod Engelsviken, Maqsood Kamil and Knud Jørgensen (eds).

*Korean Church, God's Mission, Global Christianity*, Wonsuk Ma and Kyo Seong Ahn (eds).

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The publication of this volume has been a long process which included a search how to approach the complex issue of 'Mission and Power' in the wake of the Edinburgh 2010 conference. It took some time until the current editorial team was called to start the journey and it took some more time to identify the themes and possible contributors. The final choice we present here consists of the work of twenty people from various theological backgrounds and church traditions hailing from five continents. The editors thank all the contributors for their positive replies and contributions.

Atola co-ordinated the project, and Jørgen and Michael thank her for often holding the fort. The editors have enjoyed working together, with the mutual encouragement of one another.

Kirsteen Kim, the moderator of the Series Editors of the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, invited us to take this responsibility and opportunity of working on this volume. In the process, Kim has provided ample advice and patience. We are grateful to her.

Evangelische Kirche Deutschland (EKD, Germany) and Danmission, Denmark, provided the necessary funds towards the cost of printing this volume. We express appreciation for their support in this global project of providing theological resources.

As a team, the editors can eventually submit this volume with a deep sense of gratitude to the series editors who exhibited patience with the long production process. We are also grateful to the proofreader and Tony Gray of Regnum for their kind assistance in the final preparation and publication of this volume. It is inspiring to see that, by the power of co-operation and supported by the Holy Spirit, this volume could be completed and become part of the impressive Edinburgh 2010 series.

Atola Longkumer (India)  
Jørgen Skov Sørensen (Denmark)  
Michael Biehl (Germany)

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# MISSION AND POWER: HISTORY, RELEVANCE AND PERILS: INTRODUCTION

Atola Longkumer, Jørgen Skov Sørensen  
and Michael Biehl

Power is an ambiguous category of theology and human society. Starting from images of the Almighty God to the image of Christ who denied all power (*kenosis*), and ranging to the call for the empowerment of human beings, the biblical voices resonate ambiguously in mission and evangelism.

Christianity, both in its historical manifestations and contemporary lived communities, shares in that ambiguous heritage of understanding of and engagement with power. Christians continue to have the experience of being marginalized – and mission continues to side with the marginalized. Christians persist to have the experience of striving for and being in power – and mission often strives to side with the powerful. In some contexts, Christians are among those who suffer, while on the other hand, there are Christians who are powerful – what does it then mean if mission persevere to believe in the power of God and his empowering Spirit? Being empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of the transforming gospel, and at the same time becoming vulnerable for the sake of a reconciled humanity, calls for continued reflection in understanding the concept and expression of power in relation to Christian mission.

The missionary movement largely emanating from the West in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was inevitably linked with the structures of power of those times, particularly of colonial power. In a comparable way, the Christian communities of today exist and witness within the complex matrixes of power of both global and local constellations: religion, culture, colonial power, economic and gender disparities, etc. In these processes, they present significant images, practices, expressions, and sometimes exploitations of power, especially ecclesiastical power.

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While power and its structures are inevitable aspects of human communities, power is more often than not exploited by the powerful for their own vested interests. Thus, the socio-cultural category of power is often misappropriated by the powerful, defined either by cultural, regional or economic positions and gender.

The lop-sided perspective of power has been markedly emphasized in the documents produced by the Edinburgh 2010 Conference participants and the WCC/CWME New Mission Document, 2012. The *Common Call of Edinburgh 2010* states: ‘Disturbed by the asymmetries and imbalances of power that divide and trouble us in church and world, we are called to

repentance, to critical reflection on systems of power, and to accountable use of power structures...'<sup>1</sup>

In the same vein, *Together Towards Life*, the New Mission Document, reckons with the failure of the church in mission in relation to power, 'sometimes in practice it [the church] is much more concerned with being in the centres of power, eating with the rich, and lobbying for money to maintain ecclesial bureaucracy'.<sup>2</sup> One of the newly offered approaches of the New Mission Document is mission from the margins.

Structures of power and the matrixes of networks that create the powerful and the powerless remain constant mission concerns. Rigid power structures continue to be discussed in conventional binaries: male over female, global North over global South, majorities over minorities. However, new debates (e.g. post-colonial or subaltern studies) have pushed us to deepen our analyses of power and power structures, and consider these binaries not as the starting points but as integral categories of the imposition of power structures.

Within this backdrop, the present volume in the Regnum Edinburgh 2010 series envisages exploring critically the notion of power in relation to Christian mission and constructively engaging the following questions: What notions of power have informed mission? How have structures of power defined mission projects? How have power structures been negotiated between Christian mission and local cultures/religions? What can be drawn from notions of power in the Bible? What is the legitimate source of power for Christians? What are the dimensions in the churches and Christian organizations/institutions that need to engage in critical reflection on power and its influence for ill or good? Are structures/systems of power relevant in the pursuit of the common good? What are some of the regional distinctions, the experience of power abuse or the accountable employment of power structures, in which equal participation and the distribution of power are evident?

In order to answer some of these questions, this volume presents an array of contributions by researchers and practitioners of mission from a wide range of countries and contexts. In Part I, under the heading 'Mission and Power – Scripture and Spirit/s', is opened by Klaus Hock, Professor of History of Religions – Religion and Society at the University of Rostock, who maintains that hegemonic power relations are not isolated events or particularities, which can be challenged by juxtaposing counter-narratives

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<sup>1</sup> See: [www.edinburgh2010.org](http://www.edinburgh2010.org). See also the respective chapters on 'Mission and Power' in the volume Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds), *Witnessing to Christ Today. Edinburgh 2010, Vol. II* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), and in the report of the Edinburgh 2010 conference, Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes>

or practices. Klaus Hock places the discussion of mission and power at the very heart of theology, and proposes the potential of Intercultural Theology that calls for intercultural interpretations in the context of the transformation of global Christianity, bringing its own spiritual powers and powerful spiritualities. Mission understood as ‘God in Christ’ needs a re-telling and a re-performing that centres on the rejection of power – i.e. *kenosis*.

Jørgen Skov Sørensen, General Secretary of the Copenhagen-based development and mission organization Danmission, continues the debate by analysing the epistemological move from 1910 to 2010, from the authority of modernity to the authenticity of post-modernity. The ‘natural authority’ of the western world that made up the foundation of the missiological elaborations of Edinburgh 1910 has evaporated. The main question for contemporary theologians is this: What is authentic Christian, and post-colonial, theology after modernity? The investigation takes its point of departure from Lutheran tradition, in particular from the Lutheran concept of ‘the priesthood of all people’ which is employed as a potential key for dealing with the atomization of theology that the world has witnessed since 1910.

Werner Kahl, Associate Professor of New Testament at Frankfurt University, Germany, finishes the section with a discussion of the culture-conditioned variations in New Testament hermeneutics and Bible translations in general, drawing in particular on his extended experience from West Africa and Ghana. As a poignant example, he takes the discrepancies between the Presbyterian Church in Ghana and her western partners on the issue of homosexuality. Kahl concludes that cultural variations will play a significant role between churches in years to come, but also the new cultural insights brought to Europe by migrating Christians will open new hermeneutical horizons for western Christians.

Part II, ‘Mission and Power: Moments, Regions, Contexts’, opens with an article by Samuel Ngun Ling, Professor of Theology of Religions and president of the Myanmar Institute of Theology in Yangon. Ling presents Myanmar through the power it exerts on different areas of the socio-political identity of a nation. Ling provides a narrative portrayal of the contest and conflict asserted by a dominant religion, creating challenges in modern Myanmar. As Myanmar begins a fragile path towards freedom, Ling identifies and proposes areas for inter-religious conversation as a vital resource for Christian mission to engage in new opportunities towards freedom.

Another contribution from the region comes from Atola Longkumer, Professor of Religions and Missions at the South Asian Institute of Advanced Christian Studies in Bangalore, India. Longkumer questions the common conception of power in traditional understandings or critiques of mission issues by drawing a multifaceted picture of the dynamics between the missionary and ‘the other’. The article thus links missionary activity

and the rise of educated, outspoken contextual alternatives to western conceptions of Christianity, and points to this as a prerequisite for understanding today's relationship between North and South.

Hiroshi Chiba, teacher of International Relations and American Studies at Fukuoka Jo Gakuin University in Japan, demonstrates how churches and missions in the USA reacted to the government order of 1942 to displace Japanese nationals living in the USA and to detain them in camps. She demonstrates how Protestant churches and their missions confronted the civil powers and the government policies developed in an atmosphere of public war hysteria and injustice. The second part of her article focuses on the Methodist Church's attitudes and actions, and highlights some limitations: that the church was divided due to lay members not approving of their leaders' decision to help. She concludes by proposing the inclusion of the churches' opposition in that period in a long-term perspective on civil rights activism.

Turning to issues of power and leadership, Knud Jørgensen, Adjunct Professor at the MF Norwegian School of Theology, takes as his starting point power as an ambiguous category of society, theology and mission. Power is a real world issue. However, from a Biblical point of view we see that Jesus – by emphasizing leadership as service/*diakonia* – turns our models of leadership and power upside down. The function of leadership is to prepare God's people for service. Thus, the central power of leadership is to empower others – with power as a thing to be shared, not possessed. This must be reflected in the leadership of the church and of mission.

Returning to an Asian context, Arun Jones of the Dan and Lillian Hankey Associate Professor of World Christianity at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, demonstrates the complex relationship between the message of Protestant missionaries and that of the Bhakti tradition, especially of North India. Jones identifies three ways in which power was made available through Christian missions during colonial times: material gain, social improvement and divine spirituality. It is Jones' thesis that these three power issues reflected recognisable and to some extent similar power gains within the Bhakti tradition. Thus, Christian evangelization carried with it ideas and concepts familiar to Indian tradition, and Christian converts thus secured social and religious mobility within Indian society.

Turning to the global implications of power shifts, Nico Botha, Professor of Missiology at the University of South Africa, challenges the church to look at mission on a global scale. He issues a call to look beyond a shift of power defined merely by numbers, e.g. from the 'North' defined by dwindling membership numbers, to the 'South' where churches grow. Instead, he maintains that globalization is the matrix of power in which mission, both in North and South, is embedded and has to respond to its effects – like economic injustice or poverty. For churches of the South, Botha considers one important question to be whether growth is

theologically and spiritually well founded, and as one possible answer from the South, he proposes to develop radical discipleship for a renewed mission paradigm. Raimundo Barretto, Assistant Professor of World Christianity at Princeton Theological Seminary, USA, brings in South American perspectives on mission and power as he contends that Christianity in Latin America, particularly in Brazil as *cristianismo moreno* (dark-skinned Christianity). Understanding the vitality and vibrancy of Christianity in its pluralistic forms in Latin America, he maintains, requires the recognition of the residual elements of Afro-spiritualities and their accommodation in the many forms of Christianity. The revitalization of Christianity in the continent is a sign of the power of self-awareness of a Christianity that is culturally shaped.

Wilhelm Richerbächer, Professor of Systematic Theology in Intercultural Perspective at the University of Applied Sciences for Intercultural Theology, Hermannsburg, Germany, brings us back to Europe and the impact of migration on the continent. He addresses the recent movements of people presenting both challenges and opportunities for Christian missions. The Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) has developed a policy to partner constructively and more intentionally with the 'migration churches' of the country. Wilhelm Richerbächer elaborates this vision of EKD from a biblical perspective, calling for transcultural communication as inherent in the gospel.

Josef Estermann, director of Romero Haus in Lucerne, Switzerland, and lecturer at the University of Lucerne, also addresses the potential impact on European churches of theology from the South. He launches a stern critique of what he terms western-dominated worldviews such as the free market economy and consumerism and, as a proposal for an alternative paradigm of human interactions, he presents the concept of *Buen Vivir* (good living) from the perspective of *Abya Yala* (an indigenous name for Latin America). For *Buen Vivir* to be appropriated as a prelude to the Kingdom of God, a critical review of the traditions inherited from western mission is necessary.

Part III is entitled 'Mission and Power and Global Themes'. It is opened by Frieder Ludwig, Professor of History of World Christianity and Mission Studies at the Fachhochschule für Interkulturelle Theologie in Hermannsburg, Germany, who in his contribution discusses the importance of an understanding marked by critical thinking in intercultural contexts, which often have been ambiguous in mission history. He develops this by providing examples from the chapters of Christian mission. Ludwig then presents the opportunities for intercultural education provided by initiatives being developed in theological education that are intentionally intercultural such as the MA programme in Intercultural Theology that has been established in 2009 at the University of Göttingen in collaboration with the Fachhochschule für Interkulturelle Theologie, Hermannsburg, Germany.

Meehyun Chung, an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and Professor of Theology at Yonsei University, Seoul,

turns to issues of gender and eco-justice as she argues that the dominant expression of Christian faith brought to the global South identified the human being with the powerful and presumably more rational male sex, stressing his relationship with nature as one of power and exploitation. Chung emphasizes that this western patriarchy sat well with the cultural patriarchy of the new converts. With these attitudes, any relationship with nature as conceptualized in many Asian traditions where nature has been feared and considered to be sacred, were ruled out by missions as pagan and anti-Christian. The dominating Christian theology of today still follows the concept of the power of rationality, and this aggravates the gender and ecological crisis.

Michael Biehl, head of Desk for Mission Studies and Theological Education at the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW), focuses on the structures chosen for co-operation in mission, mainly within the ecumenical movement traced to Edinburgh 1910. The search for participative and power-sensitive structures is followed through the discussions of the last decades and characterized by identifying certain positions with the debates at world missionary conferences where the concept evolved that power can be creative. Further, another dimension of the worldwide missionary movement is examined which emphasize the sending of missionaries as the appropriate means of 'finishing the task': to evangelize the whole world, a goal which links back in a different way to Edinburgh 1910. These attempts establish different structures which are evaluated by those proposing them as to how far they help to fulfil intended goals, and less how they allow the establishing of power-sensitive relationships between active organizations.

Gemma Tulud Cruz, Senior Lecturer in Theology at the Australian Catholic University in Melbourne, takes as her starting point in the fact of the 21st century as a century of migration, a development due to structures and processes of globalization. This new situation is, according to Cruz, an opportunity to rethink mission and Christian hospitality: migration is a major source of missiological thinking that rocks the anticipation that mission goes from the West to the Rest. The Rest has come to the West. Thus 'hospitality' becomes a key word for Cruz. Mission is still related to and dependent on crossing borders, but today in more complex and diverse manners.

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Isabel Phiri, Associate General Secretary for Public Witness and Diakonia of the World Council of Churches and Honorary Professor in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, along with Chammah J. Kaunda, a post-doctoral research fellow in the Department of Christian Spirituality, University of South Africa, Pretoria, in their co-written entry, understand health and healing as grounded in God's salvific mission to the world so that the power of healing contributes to the establishment of whole and just relationships and ultimately God's *shalom*. They demonstrate first how

much the traditional African concept of health and healing is in accordance with biblical understanding. Jesus' ministry is then placed in the context of his messianic mission which encompassed bringing food to the hungry, healing the sick and casting out demons.

South Africa presents another crucial aspect of Christian mission and power as Henry Mbaya, senior lecturer of Missiology at the University of Stellenbosch, argues that the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) established in 1996 had missional dimensions. These dimensions lay precisely in its efforts to provide a 'safe space' that enabled the disclosure of some measure of truth relating to apartheid atrocities to emerge. To Mbaya, this act was critical in the process of healing and reconciliation. The study also argues that the 'space' provided by the TRC hearings enabled issues of power relations to emerge which were in fact critical approaches towards the process of telling the truth and subsequently towards the initiation of national healing and reconciliation.

The section is closed by Jonathan Bonk, former Executive Director of the Overseas Ministries Study Center and Editor of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research. Bonk reflects on power as relational. The gospel, too, is relational by calling us to take 'the other' as a point of reference, while he quotes psychological studies showing that, generally, the more money an individual possesses, the less he or she cares for others. Given that cross-cultural missionaries are often better off than the people they work among, fundamental questions arise as to how missionaries could ensure to avoid being seduced by the power of affluence. Bonk's counter-proposal is a missiology based on the incarnation, the Cross, weakness as power, and the Biblical image of the righteous rich.

The final part of this compilation, Part IV, falls under the heading 'Mission and Power: Potentials and Pitfalls'. Here Charles Hardwick, director of Theology, Formation, and Evangelism for the Presbyterian Church (USA) in Louisville, takes a kenotic approach to power by putting others first, as Jesus did. In this light, Hardwick scrutinizes the way the national mission agency of the Presbyterian Church in the USA exerts its power as an institution. More recently, for Hardwick, the kenotic model has also been used to redefine the relationship between the national agency and local congregations. The congregation is considered as the primary locus of ministry. The Presbyterian Mission Agency now uses its power to enhance and empower the local congregation in their mission – even if their goals differ from the positions which the national church institution holds in majority.

It is the aim of this volume to bring together the contributions and reflections of experts in the area of mission and power for the benefit of the larger Christian community, particularly by providing a reference resource for theological education libraries on this theme of mission and power. In addition, it is our vision that this volume will provide a constructive reference resource for church and mission agencies in their critical

reflection and policy-making on the accountable use of power as well as providing a historical and theological resource for Christian missions in its vision and participation towards a healed world.

We hope 'Mission and Power: History, Relevance and Perils' will generate interest and conversations at many levels of Christian scholarship and witness. We hope it will serve as a preview to the multiple issues of mission and power that need continued ecumenical collaboration for critical reflection. Even if it provides insights and perspectives from specific contexts on the theme, we realise it is only a first step on a much longer journey. As much as we have been empowered and enlightened with the experience of working together on this volume, we hope it will be a helpful resource for continued conversation and research into mission and power.

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# PART ONE

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# MISSION AND POWER: THEORETICAL FRAGMENTS FROM TRANSCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES: AN EXPLANATORY ESSAY ON THE POWER OF INTERPRETATION IN MISSION STUDIES

Klaus Hock

## Prologue

Since the anniversary of the Edinburgh conference in memory of the first World Missionary congress, the topic of the interplay between mission and power has become a major thread in theological discourse following this event. Though being just one of the themes in the study process for this event, the subject-matter itself has been in the focus of continued discussions since the outset of the modern missionary movement, and it continues to feature high on the agenda of mission studies, both inside and outside the theological world – and beyond. This should not take us by surprise. In view of the essential relevance of mission in history (and not only in the history of religion), on the one hand, and in theology (and not only in missiology), on the other, discourses on the relationship between mission and power are in the process of gradually generating two elliptic foci: a critical reassessment of the politics of religion and the religions of politics past and present<sup>1</sup> – both in view of Christian mission, specifically, and mission, generally – and a tentative reconfiguration of theology as a theory of power, or more precisely: as a theory of the power of interpretation.<sup>2</sup> This itself, however, is the outcome of a ‘power discourse’, that is, of discourses whereby certain interpretative traditions striving to gain hegemonic importance have succeeded in establishing at least some kind of prevalence. Again, from the perspective of Intercultural Theology, it is important to position these discourses in the particular contexts from which they arise and, likewise, to expose one’s own starting point and approach in order to frame the respective considerations in specific settings. Thereby, these contextualized – or ‘provincialized’<sup>3</sup> – reflections on

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<sup>1</sup> Alistair Welchman (ed), *Politics of Religion/Religions of Politics* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Philipp Stoellger, ‘Theologie als Deutungsmachttheorie: Zur Hermeneutik von Deutungsmacht im systematischen Diskurs’, in Philipp Stoellger (ed), *Deutungsmacht: Religion und belief systems in Deutungsmachtkonflikten* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 431-523.

<sup>3</sup> Here, ‘provincialized’ is understood according to its usage in Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2nd edition, 2008).

mission and power cannot any longer be taken as universally valid by apriority. However, they can be related to universalizing theories and discourses, thus logging into broader academic discourses on ‘mission and power’.

The very term ‘Intercultural Theology’ (with capitalized initials referring to the discipline) discloses a specific frame of reference against the background of peculiar academic discourses mainly in German-speaking contexts. However, contrary to widespread and diehard misapprehensions, Intercultural Theology does not enclose programmatic provisions. Rather, it is used to describe a field of studies that is otherwise referred to by terms like ‘Cross-Cultural Theology’ or the like. Nevertheless, by processing Intercultural Theology in its operational modus of intercultural theology (with lower-case initials, describing a specific way of doing theology), programmatic perspectives are implied. In the subsequent considerations, this becomes evident in the application of the notion ‘transcultural’. As a very general expression, the term itself is open to manifold interpretations whereby it can even take the meaning of ‘beyond any culture(s)’. Here however, it is used in the tradition deriving from Fernando Ortiz, stressing variegated process-related as well as transformative and ambiguous aspects.<sup>4</sup> Thereby, it acquires programmatic qualities that can be fed into the debates on mission and power, linking data from the realm of the empirical field (in the broadest sense) with theoretical reflection. Below, I try to unfold the theme by outlining three areas where momentous intersections of power and mission prevail, and where historical, systematic and practical perspectives are reflected.<sup>5</sup> I may add that the notion ‘mission’ is not hereby restricted to an understanding of ‘an organized effort for the propagation of the Christian faith’<sup>6</sup> beyond consanguinity-based ethnic and cultural boundaries. Rather, it refers to a more primary conception of discourses and operations arising from the primal incident of ‘God in Christ’ as focal point of reference, actuating processes of ‘transcending boundaries’ that will be made objects of further systematic reflection and deliberation.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, see Klaus Hock, ‘Beyond the Multi-Religious: Transculturation and Religious Differentiation; in Search of a New Paradigm in the Academic Study of Religious Change and Interreligious Encounter’, in Viggo Mortensen (ed), *Theology and the Religions: A Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 52-63.

<sup>5</sup> This contribution is a kind of paraphrase, borrowing from and being based upon my article on first-step programmatic considerations: Klaus Hock, ‘Interkulturelle Theologie: programmatische Assoziationen’, in *Interkulturelle Theologie. Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, 37.1 (January, 2011), 53-69, here specified by focusing on power-related aspects.

<sup>6</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica*: [www.britannica.com/topic/missions-Christianity](http://www.britannica.com/topic/missions-Christianity) (accessed 16th February 2016).

### Intercultural History of Christianity

The notion ‘Intercultural History of Christianity’ points to the correspondent publication series launched about more than four decades ago.<sup>7</sup> As has been summarized, the founding fathers of this series envisioned: ‘Intercultural theology does not think on behalf of others, but reflects its own premises in the presence of these others and, if things go well, together with them.’<sup>8</sup> If this interpretation of their intention is right – and there is nothing being said against it – then the issue of power has been at the very heart of the series’ rationale ever since. Meanwhile, research into and debates on the intercultural history of Christianity have evolved both inside and outside the theological world, and brought about micro- and macro-studies scrutinizing power relations associated with the spread of the Christian faith.

In this regard, I would like to refer to three or four randomly selected aspects, thereby shedding some light on exemplary intricate power constellations that deserve further analysis and evaluation. I do so by picking up the catchwords *expansion*, *Christendom* and *Christianization*. All three terms are closely interconnected, and all of them bear traces of power structures and power relations.

#### *Expansion*

For quite some time, the expansion of the Christian faith has been perceived primarily as the ‘successful’ establishment of a political, ideological, cultural and economic aggregate in terms of an historical assertion. Thereby, power is considered a parameter being at work as a unilateral, continuous, coherent and linear force bringing about the widespread hegemony of Christianity and its dominance, at least in certain geographical areas over more or less extended historical phases. If mission is related to the notion of the expansion of the Christian faith, power is intrinsically tied to mission in a purposeful or even teleological sense. Conversely, programmatic counter-narratives deriving from a perspective that takes its starting point from the explication of pluralizing, non-linear and diffusing (instead of expanding) trajectories of the spread of the Christian faith would discover discontinuities, a lack of coherence, and a variegation of modes of Christian expansion that challenge the ‘expansionist’ paradigm. Consequently, intercultural history focuses on mission as providing a sphere for countervailing powers whereby the

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<sup>7</sup> Hans Jochen Margull, Walter Hollenweger, Richard Friedli (eds), *Studien zur interkulturellen Geschichte des Christentums / Etudes d’histoire interculturelle de christianisme / Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity* (Bern, Switzerland/Frankfurt, Germany: Lang, 1975ff).

<sup>8</sup> Werner Ustorf, ‘The Cultural Origins of “Intercultural Theology”’, in *Mission Studies*, 25 (2008), 244-45.

interplay of mission and power opens spaces of conflict and negotiation beyond merely ascertaining the implementation of a Christian hegemony.

### *Christendom*

This further challenges theories and models of 'Christendom' in its condition of a corporate entity, a *corpus Christianum* that has found historic manifestation in a 'Christian Europe' but equally, to a minor degree, in formations like Byzantine or Axumite-Ethiopian Christianity. It is worth pointing out that these religio-politico-economic formations have in a way brought to a halt mission as transformative power, as was observed long ago by David Bosch or even Ivan Illich *avant la lettre*, as it were.<sup>9</sup> In these contexts, 'the church often became an end in itself and proud of its own achievements while it compromised itself in association with the powerful and dominant'.<sup>10</sup> For uncovering mission as an emancipative dimension against the overpowering and thereby potentially annihilating effects of 'Christendom', any critical intercultural history of Christianity aims at describing and analyzing the 'deployments of power'<sup>11</sup> inherent in any formation of *corpus Christianum*. In this case, mission itself takes the form of a countervailing power in order to thwart excessive manifestations of hegemonic power with its both excluding and homogenizing effects.

### *Christianization*

Similar trends to implement hegemonic formation by exclusion/homogenization can be observed in processes of Christianization that may not head straight towards establishing a *corpus Christianum* but that are intrinsically seeking to establish Christian cultural hegemony by applying low intensity strategies with power creeping into subtle mechanisms of expansion and domination. Against all the odds, a critical intercultural history of Christianity endeavours to describe and analyze the 'backside' of Christian expansion for the sake of rediscovering and re-telling the

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<sup>9</sup> According to Illich, 'Missiology ... is the study of the Church as surprise' – Ivan Illich, *Mission and Midwifery: Essays on Missionary Formation* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo, 1974), 6-7. Cf. Idem, *The Church: Change and Development* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2nd edition, 1970), quoted likewise from David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), who also takes up from the German theologian Martin Kähler (1835-1912) the notion of the 'emergency function of missiology', 16.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Fensham, *Emerging from the Dark Age Ahead: The Future of the North American Church* (Toronto, Canada: Novalis, 2008), 60.

<sup>11</sup> This term originates from Michel Foucault (in French: *Les dispositifs de pouvoir*, 'dispositifs of power'), as worked out in his *L'Ordre du discours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), and *Surveiller et punir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

(hi)stories of those silenced. This is in line with the project of Subaltern Studies,<sup>12</sup> but it also shares its limits, shortcomings and contradictions.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, this perspective unfolds the filigree ambiguous structures of power pervading any notion of mission that envisages a criticism of Christian hegemony. This criticism is primarily directed against any type of Christian hegemony that claims to base its authorization on mission as the divinely sanctioned exertion of manifest power and domination.

By critically examining the global expansion of Christianity as a project linking the modern missionary movement with the venture of European colonialism, the intercultural history of Christianity is positioned within the wider frame of a history of ‘entangled modernities’.<sup>14</sup> Thereby, the focus of analysis is on the ‘twin project of European modernity’ – mission and colonialism.<sup>15</sup> Historically, this twin project has forged the entire arena of ‘glocal’ interaction beyond the religious field, which in turn has influenced the mode and quality of inter-religious encounters.<sup>16</sup> A critical analysis of the interplay between power and mission aims at discovering counter-narratives that have served as foundations for alternative Christian designs, turning the external enforcement of *othering* into the empowering experience of ‘otherness’ within the framework of glocal transformation – the rise of (African, Nigerian, Yoruba, Asian, Chinese, Han, Latin American, Peruan, Aymara, etc.) hybrid Christianities.

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<sup>12</sup> For the South-Asian Subaltern Studies Group, see, for example, Vinayak Chaturvedi (ed), *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London/New York: Verso, 2000); for the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group, see, for example, Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2003), or idem, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>13</sup> For a radical critique from a Marxist point of view, see Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London/New York: Verso, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> The notion has been broadly discussed for the first time by Göran Therborn, ‘Entangled Modernities’, in *European Journal of Social Theory*, 6. 3 (2003), 293-305. There are related concepts on ‘multiple modernities’ (Samuel Eisenstadt) or ‘liquid modernity’ (Zygmund Bauman).

<sup>15</sup> Albert Wirz et al, ‘Transculturation – Mission and Modernity: A Manifesto’, in Adam Jones (ed), *Transculturation – Mission and Modernity in Africa* (University of Leipzig Papers on Africa: Mission Archives Series No. 22, 2003), 6.

<sup>16</sup> On the term glocal / glocalization, popularized in the academia by Roland Robertson, see ‘Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity’, in Michael Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (eds), *Global Modernities* (London: Sage, 1995), 25-44.

### Fields of Action: Doing Intercultural Theology

The project of implementing the hegemony of European Christianity at a global level has failed, including corresponding programmes of establishing homogenizing religio-cultural universals. Any serious theology after the failure of that expansionist venture is *eo ipso* post-colonial theology, combining anti-hegemonic momenta with efforts for dissolving sclerotic formations of forced homogeneities. However, this is not to advocate an anything-goes-strategy in favour of peculiar, insulated theologies, sectionalism in justice and social ethics, or denominational compartmentalization. Rather, what should rank high on the agenda is an effort to determine Christian responsibilities and liabilities towards the world in theory and practice. This again can be conceptualized in categories of power and the power of interpretation: whose theologies, what justice, which unity?

#### *Whose Theologies?*

Contextual theologies are the primary outcome of emancipation processes bringing about a dissociation of non-European theologies from paternalistic European discourses. In terms of power negotiations, these processes are more complex and ambiguous than they seem to be at first glance. By denouncing the prevalence of European theologies, contextual theologies have initially played down any substantial transcultural continuity. Consequently, all theologies were disabled from claiming hegemonic primacy by simply referring to divinely sanctioned power derived from revelation, which caused trends towards immunization and self-reference. This again brought about a situation of mutual isolation and compartmentalization of theologies that seemed to be incapable of transcending their respective contextual boundaries. However, the empowerment of contextual theologies induced transculturation effecting exchange between and the transformation of, for example, African Cultural, North American Black, and Latin America Liberation Theologies, Dalit and Minjung Theologies, Eco-Theologies and Feminist Theologies, etc. The outcome of this exchange was and is – by the means of de-contextualizing and re-contextualizing contextual theologies – a transculturation of theologies for the sake of the emergence of theology as contouring a dynamic interface between particularity and universality, thereby mediating and negotiating manifest and discursive modes of power. This ‘transcultural theology’ would by no means refer to a homogenizing global theology. Rather, it refers to fluid dynamics and a critical reflection of fundamental disparities. Thereby, transcultural theology offers a conceptual framework for theological discourses broaching the issue of interpretation, difference and power as major parameters of intercultural theology.

### What Justice?

Justice, participation and inclusion are further areas that have been and are, from the perspective of intercultural theology, not only at the very heart of Christian mission but which sketch out arenas where issues of power structures, power relations and negotiations of power are high on the agenda. This is particularly the case in view of questions relating to justice in a global perspective. Thereby, justice is not just an entity that is confined to its judicial dimensions. Rather, it encloses features of economy, society and politics, and in view of redistributive aspects emerging in all these realms, the issue of power is involved. By way of example, this can be highlighted in three randomly selected areas, namely, *development*, *migration* and *partnership*. Any of these topics refers back to the question of *human agents and human agency*, which is embedded in the larger field of discourses on almightiness/ omnipotence, powerlessness, hegemony, power struggles and empowerment.

Considering these terms, *development* is the most contested. Maybe this is due to the fact that it equally both encloses and discloses most ambiguously the issue of power. Depending on the particular point of view, development is the most neo-colonial notion – or a concept with the highest emancipative potential. Be that as it may, it marks a field where power and power relations are applied and negotiated, camouflaged and unmasked, utilized and disapproved. From the perspective of intercultural theology, this does not come as a surprise, as ‘development’ is the venue where conflicting values, codes and courses of action meet, all of them both claiming and applying both manifest power and the power of interpretation. While approaches starting from the rationale of ecumenical charity may assert power by referring back to God’s mission (in the sense of sending his Son for the sake of mankind, thereby exposing signs of his coming kingdom), more matter-of-fact related attitudes may point to the pragmatism of redistributive justice as a means for transforming and balancing power relations. Somewhere else I have taken *shalom* as a theoretical framework where competing and conflicting parameters of power can be mutually correlated, thereby representing notions of justice and poverty.<sup>17</sup> In that way, poverty takes on proportions beyond purely politically induced, socially conveyed and economically bolstered phenomena. Consequently, it includes dimensions transcending those parameters, as becomes evident in the notion of ‘spiritual poverty’. For a long time, intercultural theology has settled for the preferential option for the poor, thus taking up the challenge of handling power as a means of pursuing the implementation of theologically validated aims and objectives – *for* this world, and *in* this world. By going beyond dressing a wound, this option for the poor implicates political action that has to deal with power in

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<sup>17</sup> Klaus Hock, *Einführung in die Interkulturelle Theologie* (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2011), 121-46.

its instrumental mode. Conversely, with reference to justice, intercultural theology would go beyond a policy of strictly executing and unilinearly enforcing formal principles of justice, placing justice in a more comprehensive theological frame of reference. Thereby, the notion of justice transcends a more static concept of balance or a more dynamic model of redistribution. The perspective is now broadened, including the question of God's justice and the challenge for humankind to act forcefully against all manifestations of the power of death, including poverty as one of its possible forms of appearance. We can see how in this case, manifold entangled powers are at work. Consequently, we are required to discern the powers thoroughly and diligently. On the one hand, doing the justice of God for the sake of securing a share in *shalom* for all human beings makes demands on the power and on powers that are essentially in and from God's domain. On the other hand, it is mandatory to distinguish between God's power(s) and ours in order to differentiate between what is potentially possible by our own deeds and what is actually unlocked by God's acts. Only then can we justify our commitment for justice, right and righteousness as deduced from the justice of God, and not as just inferred from abstract and formal modes of legitimacy – a justice that in its orientation towards mankind's well-being and rescue is partial, though not partisan in an abstract manner.

The mega-themes and challenges of *glocalization and transmigration* are rooted in the very involvement of God in history. In this regard, the god going along with his people and humankind's itinerant destiny mirrored in her diaspora existence 'in the world but not from it', on the one hand, and the world that in its entirety is aligned with the Kingdom of God, on the other, form the two poles of the relationship between God and humankind. The joint focus of these multifarious connections is found in paradigms of human communities that uncover the 'materiality of salvation'<sup>18</sup> against the background of displacement, persecution and marginalization. These communities, ideally made up of affiliates of migrant populations and members of the 'indigenous' society, should practise mutual participation and hospitality. From the perspective of intercultural theology, the history of Christianity resurfaces as a history of migration. Put in terms of a mission history, this sheds new light on the discussion about the alleged 're-mission' of the secularized global North by Christian 'diaspora' communities from the global South. Preferably, the relationship between migrants and host communities should be theologically conceptualized in terms of a paradigm that focuses on *diakonia* and pastoral care as expressions of a theology of (mutual) receiving instead of a theology of

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<sup>18</sup> First elaborated by Miroslav Volf, 'Materiality of Salvation: An Investigation in the Soteriologies of Liberation and Pentecostal Theologies', in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 26 (1989), 447-67, today broadly adopted both in Liberation and Pentecostal Theologies: see Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 36 and passim.

giving. As far as the human condition is concerned, this would represent power relations between communities in reference to power relations between God and humankind in a more appropriate theological frame of reference, accentuating the importance of receiving instead of giving and thereby preserving both the sovereignty of God and the privilege of humankind. Consequently, migrants can be accepted and acknowledged as a gift.

*Partnership* has been and is a big word. Ecumenical partnership issues form a major point of culmination for conflicting claims to power. Both on the level of global *diakonia* and of partnership between church parishes or districts, any co-operation and exchange involve power struggles by some means or other. Intercultural theology is challenged to establish partnership as a place of mutual learning for the sake of developing and testing models of sustainable transcultural communion. This is a project transcending institutional politics or pragmatics, namely, an endeavour towards implementing conceptual designs of *koinonia* by reconfiguring the basic parameters of what *missio Dei* is all about. Consequently, the discourse on partnership is extracted from the context of programmatic pragmatism and put on the agenda of intercultural theology, making power, the power of interpretation, and conflicting claims to power, one of its main topics.

All these examples, sketchily taken from the broad areas here referred to as justice, participation and inclusion, converge in the primal question of human agency and its potentiality and actuality. This makes the quest for an intercultural theological anthropology a major subject of discussion, putting both 'power' and 'mission' in the very focus of reflection. In relation to the topics mentioned, the human being is positioned as a responsible agent, but s/he is likewise embedded in variegated dimensions of the human condition (e.g. gender) that are less fixed than appear to be at first glance, not to mention points of reference that again are related to this human condition in view of various distinct aspects with theological implications (e.g. the relationship between healing and salvation). So one of the challenges faced by intercultural theological anthropology is to keep the balance between fundamental and comprehensive statements on the human being without ending up in assertions on human essentiality beyond any historical and current contexts. The ideal outcome could be outlined as a kind of theologically reflected 'fluid anthropology' that takes its starting point not from a substantialism of intrinsically conceived essential constants but from parameters that are conceptualized as flexible parameters, being fixed solely in view of their relational aspects. This gains further significance against the background that, theologically speaking, man *is* only thanks to God, and cannot be thought of without this primordial existential *relationship*. From another perspective, again, questions of power and mission are implicated in view of this relationship between God and man – issues like (God's) almightiness and (man's) powerlessness, Jesus' (God's) abdication of power (in Jesus), Jesus' being sent in the world – God's

*mission* – and man as being *commissioned* by Jesus, etc. Thus corresponding to theology as a theory of power of interpretation, intercultural theological anthropology could be arranged as a theory of mission-power relationship, searching for conceptions which emphasize traits of a ‘negative’ anthropology.

### *Which Unity?*

Christian mission, both in its generic theological and in its historical dimensions, has always been a project addressing unity – the unity of God, of humankind, of God and man, of the Christian family, of the Christian church, etc. But unity cannot be thought of without considering its ‘other’: ‘otherness’ and, thereby, diversity. ‘Another World is Possible’ – this watchword of the global justice movement, championing models of counter-hegemonic globalization, puts in a nutshell what Christian mission – in view of its spheres of activity between justice and unity – is all about. How can we conceptualize unity (of the Christian church, of mankind...) beyond uniformity, by accountably correlating identity and difference – in culture(s), religion(s), society/societies, in the world (and in the worlds – as far as we hold on to the idea that another world is possible)? The issue of unity has been a recurrent theme in the ecumenical movement – against the background of globalization in the wake of colonialism and decolonization. Again, the stage is set for discourses on power (and counter-power) and mission, and thus on the power of interpretation concerning unity and mission. This came to the fore where post-colonial studies had unmasked the continued hegemony of colonial discourses, exposing the outcome of their forceful standardizing and unitizing ramifications as an ideology of ‘wrong’ unity. But so far, the venture of making subaltern voices heard, thus establishing powerful counter-discourses that are capable of establishing new visions of a differentiated unity, is still subject to validation.

### **Mission and Power in Inter-Religious Relations**

Here, the question of mission and power is positioned within the proper field of inter-religious theology by focusing on the religious dimension. This field can be divided into some specific but nevertheless closely related sub-fields.

#### *God’s Mission – a Mode of God’s Almightiness?*

Any theological reflection on mission must start from the observation that, in the first instance, mission has to go through a comprehensive and radical critique of ‘mission’, both as to its practice past and present, and as to discourses on mission. Simply saying ‘mission’ and being understood

correspondingly in a simply positive manner is to speak un-historically,<sup>19</sup> thereby disclaiming the historical dimension of mission and mission discourses, and denying the destructive trails generated by the one form of 'mission' or another. Consequently, the first task of intercultural theology in this respect is to take an anamnesis of mission and mission discourses, beginning with a systematic analysis by means of typification and classification. This is the starting point for identifying different connections between motivation and substantiation of 'mission', on the one hand, and its aims and objectives, on the other. In view of either dimension, power and power discourses are involved, and some of the fundamental, maybe insoluble, paradoxes of 'mission' are, for example, the relationship between mission as something intangible (a power beyond the human realm) and the utilization, even instrumentalization, of mission (a humanly applied power), or the relationship between mission and dialogue as both closely interwoven (power-related) and necessarily detached from each other (power-equalized).

In view of systematically positioning power in mission and mission discourses, it is indispensable to once again refer back to the paradigm of *missio Dei*. Thereby, the question of power seems to be answered, as power (and through it, mission) is unconditionally attributed to the Triune God. Nevertheless, there is the danger of too easily obscuring actual power relations by referring to abstract theological models. Furthermore, the end of traditional master-narratives in view of mission should not, and in fact must not, be replaced by (a) new 'master-narrative(s)' or another principal paradigm from which all discourses on mission are derived. Rather, even by referring to *missio Dei* as a shared point of reference, mission discourses will of necessity be characterized by plurality, diversity and even paradoxes, but *missio Dei* could serve as a common denominator for finding a shared language that qualifies for unveiling hidden power relations behind 'mission' as practice and discourse.

### *Transformations of Dialogue – Dialogical Theology*

We have to differentiate between an 'intercultural theology of dialogue' and the 'practice of dialogue in action'. The first could be further differentiated by distinguishing between 'discourses on dialogue' and 'dialogical discourses'. Nevertheless, the focus is on the programmatic implementation of dialogue as a practical venture, whereby preferably the concrete practice of dialogue is connected with the more detached field of theological reflection, linking theoretical and practical dimensions of 'dialogue'. This could happen, for example, by conceptualizing dialogue as 'research in residence', while making 'dialogue in action' part of a self-

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<sup>19</sup> Thus the sober diagnosis presented by Hans Jochen Margull, 'Die beschränkte Suche nach der Gemeinschaft', in *Ökumenische Rundschau*, 25 (1975), 199.

reflective endeavour. Thus, power relations and the power of interpretation become part and parcel of the programmatic design and implementation of dialogue. Who is talking – to whom, in which language(s), and in which context? Here again, power and discourses on power are at the very heart of this important field of intercultural theology. Without disclosing the allocation and circulation, the targets and directions, the stakeholders and agents of power, dialogue would run the risk of turning into a naïve talk on the practical and an academic camouflage tactic at a theoretical level. Dialogue, likewise, is about power.

### *The Theology of Religions as an Intercultural Project*

The multifaceted interrelation between the theology of religions, mission and dialogue, augmented by a cross-cultural dimension, brings about specific challenges for intercultural theology. Again, we have to start from the observation of a fundamental paradox, namely, based on the *a priori* assumption that all religions are comparable, Christian and non-Christian theologies are generally interrelated to each other by implicitly basing them on mainly Christian categories and notions. Thereby, non-Christian theologies are deprived of their (non-Christian) self and in a way incorporated as 'the other' into the Christian self. This indicates a problematic power constellation. It could be countered by developing models of a theology of inter-religious relations that take their point of departure from a hermeneutic of difference. The first implication would be to draft the programmatic agenda for a critique of hegemonic formations of discourses (negatively), aiming at jointly developing inter-religious and cross-cultural concepts (positively). This again could open the perspective on correlating evident contradictions and paradoxes that cannot be (dis)solved with experiments of linking similar and proximal phenomena across different cultural theologies.

### **Conclusion**

By re-reading 'mission' past and present from the perspective of power relations, some recurrent configurations begin to emerge. On the one hand, there are patterns of thought and practice, gradually yielding processes of homogenization and linearity with implicit hegemonic tendencies. These are subject to further critique, particularly in view of the danger that they may generate 'imperial' models of power relations. On the other hand, there are ways of thinking and applying that are primarily characterized by features of non-homogeneity, non-appropriability, fluidity, difference, resistivity, oppositionality, etc., bringing about counter-hegemonic drifts. These again are instrumental in identifying and safeguarding subaltern or ousted discourses and practices located at the background of history or the hidden flank of present power constellations. But how do we deal with

those conflicting configurations while analyzing the interplay of mission and power? Surely not by simply juxtaposing counter-narrative/counter-institutional difference/particularity, here and master-narratives/established institutions of a hegemonic universalism, there. In this case, we would just reiterate the alleged clash between universal hegemonic claims in the shape of European enlightenment and western modernity, on the one hand, and particular subaltern assertions in the realm of a ‘counter-world’, on the other.

In order to challenge hegemonic power relations, we must go beyond a model that just antithetically refers to the hegemonic universalism accompanying the venture of European expansion, thereby itself persistently clinging to the hegemonic structure that it rejects. Looking for a more promising option from the perspective of intercultural theology, I would suggest reconfiguring theological reflection on ‘mission’ by analogy with a theory of power or a theory of the power of interpretation. This would position the debate on mission and power within the very heart of theology, and furthermore open up perspectives for challenging the manifest functionalization of mission discourses and practices against the background of disclosing (intentional) camouflage tactics or (unintentional) hidden power structures. The modern missionary movement, for example, is inherently ambivalent as it combines the self-appointed authorization of man with the usurpation of godly power or, to put it in different words, while mission as *missio Dei* is (unconditioned) power, the modern missionary movement discursively and performatively claims to transmute mission from godly actuality into human potentiality, thereby passing entirely conditioned power off as unconditioned power, and furnishing human potentiality with the aura of divine actuality. Uncovering these usages and mechanisms of power, we can pave the way for a radical critique of mission as an ideological paradigm in theological disguise, legitimizing colonial mission and European expansion. This allows for tagging both particular agents and ownerless structures of power at work that are obscuring the hegemonic and expansionist intent behind this appropriation of ‘mission’. On the other hand, we can rediscover the Gospel narrative of God’s mission, taking the primal incident of ‘God in Christ’ as a focal point of reference. Re-telling and re-performing this event can reinvent ‘mission’ for the sake of empowering those sidelined and excluded, and have it reinstalled as an ultimate principle from where both faithfulness towards God and witness and service towards mankind emanate.

One, maybe the fundamental, point of reference, taken from Philippians 2:7, points to a possible configuration of the theme in conjunction with theological reflection. While what is referred to as *kenosis* – Jesus’ rejection of power – cannot immediately be applied to areas outside the theological realm, on a conceptional level it nevertheless represents general fundamentals of a heuristics for and a hermeneutics of a critique of

ideology, as well as initial guidelines for conceptualizing substantial cultural differences in expressions of the Christian faith by concurrently referring to the event addressed in Philippians 2:7. If it is true that mission is power, then there can be no mission without power. The challenge is how to differentiate terms and modes of power as well as its authorization and legitimation. Here we may point to the requirement of discerning the spirits (1 John 4). This, however, would call for turning over a new leaf. Meanwhile, the transformation of global Christianity with its political spiritualities (and spiritual politics) accentuates the urgent need for taking up this challenge – in view of the interplay between the power of the Spirit, the power of the spirits, and spiritual power(s). Here, we face new configurations of ‘mission and power’. So the stage is set for continued reflection on a centrepiece of intercultural theology.

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# POLYCENTRIC CHRISTIAN MISSION IN A POST-COLONIAL WORLD: A LUTHERAN PERSPECTIVE

Jørgen Skov Sørensen

## The Modern Mission Movement – a Well-oiled Machine

Kenneth Ross, in his book *Edinburgh 2010: Springboard for Mission*, describes the proponents of the modern missions movement, a movement which peaked at the 1910 Edinburgh World Mission Conference, as having a ‘sense of a modern, efficient, well-oiled machine which was geared to the attainment of its objective’.<sup>1</sup> By this description, Ross seeks to give the reader an impression of the mentality or mindset that penetrated the whole enterprise of ‘world mission’ at the beginning of the twentieth century: a well-oiled machinery, put into movement by industrious and pietistic believers in the western, Christian world.

The motto of the conference, indicating the successful evangelization of the world within the very same century that had just seen its beginning, carries with it the same sense of machinery and precision in the global mission enterprise, and confirms the sense of accuracy and meticulousness intrinsic to the modern mission movement in Ross’s description. Modern means of communication – it was believed – would make it possible for missionaries from the Christian West to literally roll out the gospel message to the rest of the world in virtually no time at all, and in a manner never before anticipated.

Such imagery clearly points to the fact that the modern mission movement was indeed ‘modern’ in the sense that it had become part of the technological progress witnessed by the ‘modernized’ western world at the turn of the century. Technology made mission work possible in new and innovative ways. In fact, the very idea of a world mission conference could not have come into being were it not for the technological progress, spearheaded by the western world. In this way, Ross’s illustration is spot-on as an image of the modern mindset of the modern mission movement.

However, modernity carries with it more than technology. It could be argued that modernity is also a ‘mindset’, a certain way of looking at and perceiving the world as it lies before us. The modern mindset can be characterized by concepts of expansion, control and universality, three

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Ross, *Edinburgh 2010: Springboard for Mission* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press, 2009), 13.

terms that to a large degree belong to the mentality forming the very core values of the modern mission movement.

### A Child of Modernity

Ross more than indicates that the phenomenon that we know as ‘the modern mission movement’ is indeed born and bred as a child of modernity – it is, as the terminology implies, ‘modern’. Ross touches upon factors behind the movement with headlines like ‘A territorial idea of Christian expansion’ and ‘Complicity with imperialism and colonialism’.<sup>2</sup> However, below we will attempt to dig deeper and move even closer to some indicative parameters of a modern mindset.

Sociologist Gregor McLennan, in an article on the nature and characteristics of the Enlightenment, and that which scholars have subsequently termed ‘modernity’, questions whether it is appropriate to talk about the ‘Enlightenment Project’ or the ‘Project of Modernity’ as scholars at times tend to do. The plethora of voices that belong to the modern period and which identify themselves with the Enlightenment – and, later on, with modernity – are far from unified in their understanding of what their presuppositions are.

However, McLennan does make the observation that what we, in general, term ‘modernity’ has certain coherent features which are typical for a certain standpoint or foundation from which modernity finds its starting point and builds up as a concrete expression. So even if there is ‘something slightly misleading’ about the ‘project’ terminology so often employed both within and outside modernity’s own ranks, McLennan, when he looks to his own professional field of social science, believes that there is a ‘cluster of underlying assumptions and expectations about the nature of modern social theory which are shared by a significant number of social scientists and which stem from classical eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scientific aspirations’.<sup>3</sup>

### The Modern Mentality

McLennan employs social science for his illustration. However, this is an observation that is not restricted to his area of concern, but indeed found in all spheres of specialist research and in lived (modern) life in general, including Christian mission. Missiologist Werner Ustorf in his and church historian Hugh McLeod’s *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe*,

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 29-30.

<sup>3</sup> Gregor McLennan, ‘The Enlightenment Project Revisited’, in Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew (eds), *Modernity and its Futures*, Understanding Modern Societies Series, Book 4 (Buckingham, UK/Philadelphia, PA: Polity Press in association with Blackwell and The Open University, 1992), 328.

1750-2000 remarks that ‘we can only work in the culture we have got’, and does so with a reference to the fact that ‘Christian Faith is in a constant conversation with the realities of the past’, and later on to the fact that ‘the European past is that of the Enlightenment’<sup>4</sup> (Ustorf, 2003:224). Thus, the argument is that, as a matter of course, the modern mission movement springs from European Enlightenment thought and thus reflects the derived modern mindset. In the quote below, Ustorf illustrates this with vocabulary that indirectly refers to and to a large extent supplements Ross’s imagery of machinery, pointing however to a larger degree of ‘mentality’ than Ross’s more ‘technological’ illustration contains. Ustorf writes:

Protestant missions [...] had repackaged the knowledge of God, putting it within the safe confines of a modern interpretation of Christianity as an absolute religion, and came to see themselves as the executors of divine history. This divine mandate included the conversion of anybody who might think differently [...]. At the centre stood a desire to tame any independent or local designs for life and religion, and with this to take control of their social forms. The intention was to master the ambiguity and fuzziness of the world by applying a universal religious rationality.

Terminology such as ‘safe confines’, ‘absolute religion’, ‘tame’, ‘to take control’, ‘to master’ and ‘universal rationality’ are used as constitutive labels for an ethos of modernity as, in Ustorf’s example, it is mirrored within the modern mission movement, which he sees is a contextual theological expression born in modern western society. Ustorf touches upon lines similar to this significant and historical point of his at the very beginning of his article in McGrath’s and Marks’ *The Blackwell Companion to Protestantism* where he argues:

Missionary (in the Victorian sense of the term) Protestantism is a very particular phenomenon; that it was not born out of the reformation, but rather in the colonial encounter; that it was ambiguously inculturated in the European drive to unify the world through a twofold process involving modernization and Christianization; and that, with the collapse of this project, it was forced to radically reinvent itself.<sup>5</sup>

What is here reaffirmed is the relationship between the modern mission movement and the marks of modernity in western cultural and epistemological history. Applying the word ‘inculturated’, Ustorf conveys the lucid message that modernity was reflected in a no less than profound manner in the way mission and mission theories were conceived and acted out by western missionaries and mission agencies.

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<sup>4</sup> Werner Ustorf, ‘A missiological postscript’, in Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf (eds), *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 297-98.

<sup>5</sup> Werner Ustorf, ‘Protestantism and Missions’, in Alister E. McGrath and Darren C. Marks (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Protestantism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 392.

### Enlightenment Orthodoxy

One of the most significant missiological publications dealing substantially with the issues relating to mission and modernity is Brian Stanley's *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*. This publication is significant due to the fact that it comprehensively deals with the 'alliance' between modern mission, on the one hand, and modernity as an epistemological paradigm or mindset, on the other. It has since long been commonplace to identify the modern mission movement with an anti-modern and anti-Enlightenment ethos. However, Stanley points to the fact, and does so implicitly in support of Ustorf above, that evangelical circles – and, among these, the missionary zealots of the traditional churches of the West – represented a movement 'whose origins and contours owe an immense debt to the philosophical and cultural patterns of the Enlightenment'.<sup>6</sup>

This thesis is supported by Daniel W. Hardy. Hardy maintains that the modern mission movement was limited by and governed by what he terms 'Enlightenment orthodoxy' which, according to Hardy, can be associated mainly with the universalizing ideas of the European Enlightenment. In this way, modern mission was made possible not only through the newly developed means of transport and communication, although such indisputably also made their marks on it, but furthermore and importantly so by the 'the enhanced sense of unity and potential of humanity that Enlightenment thought and practice embodied'. According to Hardy, however, the potential for unity builds on yet another fundamental presupposition, viz. the 'space' between oneself and the other. This sense of 'space', Hardy argues, was enhanced and further developed or, in his own terminology, 'construed' by the way of Enlightenment thought. Hardy writes:

'They' – the others – were to be identified, understood, civilized, and utilized according to the criteria of Enlightenment orthodoxy, with at least some benefit for Europe. Accordingly, the 'space' between those who went and those to whom they went was construed as *difference* and the *asymmetrical* provision by one part of the 'benefits'<sup>7</sup> (Hardy 2001:215).

Hardy thus additionally illustrates Stanley's argument by pointing towards the enhancing and to some extent metamorphosing the impact of modernity on existing characteristics of human life, e.g. the transfiguration of 'space' into 'difference' and 'asymmetry', both notions essential in an understanding of what modern thought has brought to the modern mission

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<sup>6</sup> Brian Stanley, *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, Studies in the History of Christian Missions (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, and Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 2001), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel W. Hardy, 'Upholding Orthodoxy in Missionary Encounters', in Brian Stanley (ed), *Christian Missions and The Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, and Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 2001), 215.

movement, and largely identical with the legitimizing notions, in different shapes and forms, of the movement.

### Christianity and Other Religions

This latter observation has been made also with a particular review of the relationship between Christianity and other religions, one of the key issues pertaining to the proceedings of the 1910 Edinburgh conference. Kenneth Ross touches upon the issue as it was seen then by the majority of the Edinburgh delegates and does so by pointing to the *Report of the Commission Four*. The report shows a ‘sympathetic appreciation of other faiths’ – allegedly, according to Ross, reflecting the good relationship many missionaries ‘in the field’ had developed with followers of other religions; however, ‘its militaristic and triumphant language [struck] a note of antagonism which could hardly be expected to make for cordial inter-faith relations or for a culture of peace’.<sup>8</sup>

The American Methodist and missiologist Kenneth Cracknell makes it a significant point in his monograph on missionary perceptions of the world religions that, even if a negative view of non-Christian religions indeed had a history before the Enlightenment with its dominant modern worldview, the new rationality embodied within modern thought supplied a new impetus behind the conceptions of superstition and idolatry as constitutive for religious traditions outside Christianity. Thus, Cracknell writes:

It is [...] important to see that [a] radical denial of salvific significance in other religious traditions was attributable not only to their mediæval and reformation inheritances but to the new rationalism which was becoming prevalent in both Europe and America. Its dominant conviction was that the way to knowledge in every sphere in life lay in reason.<sup>9</sup>

In this view, ‘the other’ was seen not only as fallacious and characterized by a void in terms of salvific capabilities or powers, but simply an irrational construction compared with Christianity’s rational systematic nature and qualities. Important to notice, too, is the fact that even if newly converted (i.e. to Christianity) individuals were considered part of the Christian family, so to speak, they were treated in a not so dissimilar way. It would take another 50-60 years before theologies from the South gained ground as legitimate expressions of Christianity.

If essential, the examples above are but a few illustrations of an apparent interconnection and deep penetration by modernity of the modern mission movement as the world had come to know it since the Enlightenment. They are illustrations as to how modernity’s decisive marks was added on to the way the West perceived and acted upon the rest of the world and upon the

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<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 31.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Cracknell, *Justice, Courtesy and Love. Theologians and Missionaries Encountering World Religions, 1846-1914* (London: Epworth Press, 1995), 14.

‘otherness’ inherent within global realities such as these were laid bare for the western political powers and ecclesial principalities.

### From Modernity to Post-modernity

The question is now, however, as indicated in the heading of this article: Are we moving on a road between mindsets or paradigms, approaching a change in perceptions? Ustorff, in the second substantial quote above, alludes to a change in mission behaviour and self-understanding. He terms it a ‘radical reinvention’ as a result of the fall of modernity’s universalizing project. This observation is crucial in order to understand the profound changes that have taken place since the time of the Edinburgh conference of 1910, and since the ‘well-oiled machine’ was running at its peak.

This move can effortlessly and constructively be related to Ross’s reminder of the fact that the ‘confidence [of the Edinburgh participants] was ill-founded’, that ‘Edinburgh 1910 which understood itself to be on the brink of a great new surge of missionary advance was, in fact, the high point of the movement’, and that ‘the scenario envisaged by the Edinburgh delegates never came to pass’.<sup>10</sup> Just as the modern mindset peaked at the beginning of that last century, but got profoundly and devastatingly questioned four years later by the Great War, the mission movement that was – as we have demonstrated it – the product of that mindset also peaked. From Edinburgh onwards, it was downwards from that very peak.

A common denominator for the signs of the times with regard to a shift in the western mindset is the shift from what we may aptly term a modern frame of understanding to a post-modern interpretative ethos. What kind of change, then, will such a shift indicate in the history of Christian mission? Kenneth Ross speaks of post-modernity as a powerful intellectual and cultural force, suspicious of meta-narratives, questioning the absolute, and thus as a reaction and an intellectual redirection against the universalizing project of the modern mindset. Post-modernity is, briefly and somehow popularly put, all that which modernity was not.

Even though Ross will not – unlike a number of more conservative missiologists – ascertain that post-modernity is impenetrable by the gospel, he does speak of the phenomenon as a ‘new cultural *frontier* for the Gospel’.<sup>11</sup> In other words, post-modernity must be encountered in an evangelistic way. However, there is still more to be said about that which the French thinker Jean-François Lyotard has appropriately termed, ‘La condition postmoderne’ – the post-modern condition of our western

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 33-34.

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 60 (my emphasis).

societies.<sup>12</sup> Not an option. A condition. Now, what does that imply? Let us take a missiological look at it.

### A Cry for Authenticity

Ross points to a decisive change of mind which characterises the transformation from modernity to post-modernity insofar as he exemplifies the new condition as a 'cry for authenticity'.<sup>13</sup> Whereas the modern mission movement took its starting point in the 'obvious', almost 'God-given', fact of religious and cultural superiority and unrivalled authority of the western Christian hemisphere applied to the encounter with the non-Christian and newly-Christianized world, Christian mission under post-modern conditions demands authenticity rather than authority.

Symptomatically for these new post-colonial and polycentric times in mission, Ross quotes not a western expert on the issue, but an Indian missiologist, Ken Gnanakan, who stands as a representative of the global and thus much more complex condition in which mission today takes its starting point. Ken Gnanakan says:

While there is need to renew our allegiance to proclaim the word faithfully, there is greater need to flesh the message out in acts that express this Kingdom. Proclamation is urgent, but demonstration is the priority. The world must hear the message of the Kingdom, but it will also want to see some concrete demonstration of this message.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, it is not enough to proclaim, even with all the powers and principalities of the modern western world behind one, any longer. Authority is not enough – authenticity is needed: in the words of Ken Gnanakan, the Christian message must be demonstrated, fleshed out in acts.

Yet another Asian theologian, the Korean Kyo-Seong Ahn, finds his way into Ross's article in an attempt to put into words what is needed in contemporary mission as part of the appeal for authenticity. Kyo-Seong Ahn suggests that an ample term is 'orthopathy',<sup>15</sup> an expression Ross interprets as 'relationship, emotional intelligence, symbiosis, community, interdependence, pathos and respect', concluding on that note that 'self-emptying, humility and sacrifice are sorely needed to liberate the gospel from captivity to projects of self-aggrandisement'.<sup>16</sup> He thus establishes a

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<sup>12</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir* (Collection 'Critique', Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1979).

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 61.

<sup>14</sup> Ken Gnanakan, 'To Proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom', in Andrew F. Walls and Cathy Ross (eds), *Mission in the 21st Century* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2008), 9.

<sup>15</sup> Ahn, Kyo-Seong, 'From Mission to Church and Beyond: the Metamorphosis of post-Edinburgh Christianity', in David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross (eds), *Edinburgh 2010. Mission Then and Now* (Oxford: Regnum, 2009), 82.

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 62.

loop back to Ustorf's characteristics of the modern mission movement founded on concepts of 'safe confines', 'absolute religion' and 'universal rationality', as well as with terms like 'to tame', 'to take control' and 'to master' – most certainly words of 'self-aggrandisement'.

Here post-modernity indeed stands out as that which modernity is not. James K.A. Smith, in his introduction to Carl Raschke's monograph *Globochrist: The Great Commission Takes a Postmodern Turn*, suggests that this 'post-modern turn' means leaving one of the core ideas of the modern mission movement behind, when he states that mission is:

... not the communication of 'messages' or the proliferation of programmes – not even the planting of Churches. It might not even be primarily about communicating some 'truth' to those who are without it. Rather it is about being Christ to and for the world.<sup>17</sup>

### Relational Christianity

Raschke himself goes biblical in an attempt to legitimize a post-modern understanding of being a Christian as first and foremost a relational exercise, thus quoting St Paul's letter to the Romans 8:18-19: 'For the creation waits in eager expectation for the revealing of the children of God.' He hereafter asks the reader if that is 'not what is implied in the teaching that the word became flesh'? or if that is 'not just the historical but also the eschatological meaning of "incarnation"?' – and he finishes concluding that 'relational Christianity is post-modern Christianity'.<sup>18</sup>

Overall, the concept of 'relationality' seems to be one that time and again pops up among post-modern-minded theologians. An additional voice working along these lines is that of Australian John D. May, for many years based at the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College, Dublin. May is straightforward in his critique of a modern universalizing religious project:

The 'meliority principle', the conviction of uniqueness and superiority based on divine revelation or the exclusive possession of higher truth, [...] in the end makes [the universalist religions] impossible, because their purported universality is in fact *someone's* particularity projected onto all.<sup>19</sup>

In his monograph *Transcendence and Violence*, May points to the fact that what was once possible, viz. to live out one's religious tradition in isolation from other traditions, is no longer tenable. The quotation above alludes to this condition hinting at the fact that – in today's polycentric,

<sup>17</sup> Carl Raschke, *GloboChrist: The Great Commission Takes a Postmodern Turn* (Church and Postmodern Culture Series), (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2008), 11.

<sup>18</sup> Carl Raschke, *GloboChrist*, 20.

<sup>19</sup> John D'Arcy May, *Transcendence and Violence. The Encounter of Buddhist, Christian and Primal Traditions* (London and New York: Continuum Books), 149.

however interconnected and globalized, world – a system of complete and unambiguous truth always represents ‘*someone’s* particularity projected unto all’. Critical of various attempts to create a ‘global ethic’, arguing that such attempts are extremely ‘thin’ and eligible for the critique associated with an alleged but questionable universalism, May implies that neither a withdrawal in a separatist fashion of segregated local traditions, nor aggressive and competitive scenarios based on religious assumptions of uniqueness and superiority, are viable options in a globalized world.<sup>20</sup>

May confirms the global religious traditions as distinct contextual expressions. However, at the same time he acknowledges the role of globalization as a force which affects the variety of religious traditions which ‘in the new context of globalization [...] need to be mutually translatable without the threat of alienation or identity loss’. May’s conclusion from this insight is that – whereas the traditions until recently could (and did) live relatively isolated lives as traditions in their separate cultural contexts, clarifying their identities for their own sake, so to speak ‘in the new context of globalization – they can only do [that], if at all, together’.<sup>21</sup>

Again, we see how the importance of ‘relation’ is stressed. The delegates of the Edinburgh 1910 Mission Conference cannot exactly be blamed that they wanted Christianity to live isolated: the whole impetus of the modern mission movement was indeed to disseminate the gospel to virtually all corners of the world. However, it was a centrifugal movement, a centrifugal and a Eurocentric movement. Edinburgh 1910 was the authoritative mission centre of the world. Edinburgh 2010 was not.

### **Problem, Challenge or Simply a New Way...?**

What is – more specifically – questioned here is the way of modernity’s mission thinking and practice, again, rather accurately described with the helpful terminology applied by Werner Ustorf as ‘safe confines’, ‘absolute religion’, ‘universal rationality’, ‘to tame’, ‘to take control’ and ‘to master’. Such vocabulary barely suits a world that has moved from being Eurocentric to becoming polycentric. In the following, we will take a slight turn away from the main concern of Edinburgh 1910 – the relationship between Christianity and other religions – and move towards the relationship between old and new churches.

A polycentric world: not just in the sense that today’s large and still growing churches are situated in what has in recent years been termed ‘the South’ as compared to the ‘old churches’ in ‘the North’. This is yesterday’s news. What is at stake today is more than a matter of where churches are situated. What needs the full church’s attention is the fact that theologians,

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<sup>20</sup> John D’Arcy May, *Transcendence*, 150 and 149.

<sup>21</sup> John D’Arcy May, *Transcendence*, 151.

lay and ordained, in the ‘new churches’ are increasingly vocal in putting into words and distributing their theological points of view. What is witnessed in global theology today is more than ‘theology’ in the singular; it is rather a plethora of ‘theologies’, evolving from the variety of cultural, socio-economic and political contexts that make up global society. This is indeed not good news if one’s aim is ‘to tame’ and ‘to control’.

The American missiologists Paul G. Hiebert – himself a proponent of modernity’s mission paradigm, as is demonstrated in my book *Missiological Mutilations*,<sup>22</sup> has described this new situation as ‘a morass of theological pluralism’<sup>23</sup> which he, for his part, is rather critical towards – hence the use of the term ‘morass’, which – one may dare to say – seems to reveal the theological wish for a ‘universal rationality’. Hiebert is not alone with his rather critical view on ‘theological pluralism’. Theological pluralism is gravel in the well-oiled machinery which Ross saw the modern Edinburgh missiology to be.

Current globalization shows no signs that the clock will be turned back to modern times, a sort of Edinburgh 1910 state of affairs where Europe – or any other region, for that matter – is in charge of mission endeavours throughout the world. If this analysis is true, I believe this new situation leaves at least some Christians of the ‘old Christian world’ with a lack of theological legitimization of the fact that the church is today a globalized, highly contextualized and fragmented entity, and not with one unifying theology but built up with a plethora of theologies. Interestingly, this state of affairs has in the old churches moved theologians to look into their various traditions in order to ground themselves in the new situation.

Even if this can be seen as a defensive move, it may also – on a more positive note – be taken as an acceptance of the fact that traditional European (or western) theology, too, is coined in a particular context. It is contextual and part of a wider jigsaw puzzle of global contextual theologies. This does not make it invalid – by no means – but it does make western theology particular. The false teaching of western theology as a universal theology must go, itself a move towards theological acceptance of ‘theologies’ rather than ‘theology’.

### **What Would Luther Do...?**

However, digging into one’s own tradition and theological history, we may also find elements by which we are given tools to grasp and work with our new plural situation today. Celebrating the 500th anniversary of the reformation in 2017, as a Lutheran speaking on mission, where could I

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<sup>22</sup> Jørgen Skov Sørensen, *Missiological Mutilations – Prospective Paralogies. Language and Power in Contemporary Mission Theory* (Studies in the intercultural history of Christianity series, Vol. 141), (Frankfurt, Germany: Lang, 2007), 144-56.

<sup>23</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 30.

pinpoint constructive bits and pieces coming out of my particular Christian tradition? Where could Lutheran thought add to a contemporary and not least theologically legitimized understanding of Christian, theological plurality?

Let us start by referring to the American Lutheran Richard Bliese who – in his article ‘Lutheran Missiology: Struggling to Move from Reactive Reform to Innovative Initiative’ – questions a distinctive Lutheran missiology as such, demonstrating the fact of ‘a divorce between Lutheran theology and Lutheran missiology’, leading to Lutherans ‘borrowing mission theology from other traditions’.<sup>24</sup> Bliese is here indicating that maybe we should not expect to gain too much in missiological thinking by turning towards our Lutheran heritage.

Still, may I suggest – possibly moving from stagnant ‘reactive’ to emerging ‘innovative’ as part of the Lutheran struggle suggested by Bliese above – that Martin Luther’s idea of ‘the priesthood of all believers’ may turn out as a theological tool, potentially capable of adding to our understanding of the new plurality of theologies that is the very condition of any missiological endeavour today? The theological concept of ‘the priesthood of all believers’ has become central to Lutheran theology. Let me be clear, however, that I cannot entirely subscribe to the popular interpretation of ‘the priesthood of all believers’. That Luther should have wanted and theologically argued that all believers have the same authority as interpreters of the biblical texts and administrators of the sacraments is a plain misunderstanding.

What Luther taught on the issue was part of a larger political context – as was so much of reformation theology. This has been rather clearly demonstrated by Timothy J. Wengert in his monograph, *Priesthood, Pastors, Bishops*, where he reveals how the concept of the priesthood of all believers is rather to be seen as a pious myth than a dictum by the reformer himself. ‘The priesthood of all believers’ is not a final showdown with pastoral or priestly leadership in the church. Neither is it authority given to all believers in the sense that all are believers are spiritually powerful individuals.

On the contrary, Wengert lays bare, through his meticulous working through Luther’s writings, that a more authentic reading of Luther would suggest that the idea of the reformer was not that ‘anyone can act as a pastor’, but rather that he means that ‘all of us are members of the one body of Christ and individually servants to each other in our respective offices’.<sup>25</sup> I venture experimentally in this elaboration to suggest that, by this

<sup>24</sup> Richard H. Bliese ‘Lutheran Missiology: Struggling to Move from Reactive Reform to Innovative Initiative’, in Niels Henrik Gregersen et al (eds), *The Gift of Grace: The Future of Lutheran Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 221.

<sup>25</sup> Timothy J. Wengert, *Priesthood, Pastors, Bishops: Public Ministry for the Reformation and Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 8.

interpretation of Luther's intention behind that which has popularly come to be termed as 'the priesthood of all believers', we see some initial steps in a move from authority to authenticity in our understanding of the church.

The body of Christ has expanded and become a global entity with authentic and autonomous churches and strong church leaders on every continent. This is the new situation and one that constitutes the major difference between Edinburgh 1910 and Edinburgh 2010. To many people who adhere to the 'old Christendom' paradigm, i.e. a Christianity dominated by European and modernity's paradigms of perceiving and understanding the world and all that comes with it, this constitutes both a joy and a challenge. New churches emerge: Joy...! Christianity is changing its face as it grows into the world, the West hereby losing control: Concern...! Now, what would Luther have done in a situation like this?

Being a committed reformer who managed to convince larger parts of Europe to follow him and not the Pope, Luther would have been concerned, too, by losing control. His agenda was for the prevailing church hierarchy, the papal church, to lose control, and for him and his followers to gain it. But we can still apply his 'priesthood of all believers' idea to the current situation, especially if we work under the interpretation suggested by Wengert. By applying the idea of 'the priesthood of all believers', we do not necessarily say that everything is equally good or equally qualified. This was not Luther's intention either. We do, however, open up for a splintering process, leaving behind the certainty that lies within having one uniform, or relatively uniform, church tradition.

Speaking of 'the priesthood of all believers' is rather a reaction against all authorities of the global church. Luther reacted against the unequal powers and principalities of his own church, which ultimately led to the questioning of concepts like control and universality. In that sense, one can talk about Luther as a reformer with early traces of post-colonialism within his thoughts. Or at least – even though the reformer hardly anticipated such – one can say that the consequences of the Reformation prepared the ground for the multiplicity of theologies which are a reality of the global church today. Seen in this perspective, that very same multiplicity is to some extent that for which post-colonial theologians in various 'reformation-like ways' are struggling to gain recognition.

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### **The 'Meliority Principle' under Pressure**

Ken Gnanakan and Kyo-Seong Ahn, both quoted above, are but two living illustrations of the fact that Europe is no longer the world centre of mission. In its own peculiar way, Lutheran reformation through Edinburgh 1910 is a cornerstone in the development towards Christianity becoming a multicultural and truly global religion. At the same time, both of these church historical events have to a large extent situated the churches in Europe under pressure to give up what John D. May, quoted above, terms

the ‘meliority principle’. The conviction of uniqueness and superiority based on divine revelation or the exclusive possession of higher truth is no longer viable in a globalized world.

To us today, it is obvious that western Christianity’s ‘purported universality is in fact *someone’s* particularity projected onto all’. Indeed, globalization of the world is one of the major if not *the* major precondition of ‘la condition postmoderne’, the post-modern condition, the mindset we live with, the emerging framework of our intellectual reasoning deriving from the fact of global plurality. Europe’s Christian authority, based on the ‘meliority principle’ of modern reasoning and applied in mission history – and possibly nowhere more unmistakably and forthrightly demonstrated than in the planning and proceedings of Edinburgh 1910 – is questioned in all corners of the world. Possibly even by a German reformer situated in the 16th century.

### From Authority to Authenticity

Whereas May’s showdown with the Christian meliority principle might seem theoretical, both Smith and Raschke, quoted above, point to more concrete conclusions with their understanding of incarnation theology as the impetus of mission: mission is not about transmitting a ‘message’, building churches or conveying a ‘truth’ that is unavoidably somebody’s truth rather than everybody’s truth. Mission is relational – it is about ‘being Christ to and for the world’.

Expressed in theological terms, that which is being argued here is really a move from being Eurocentric to becoming Christocentric through the incarnation of Christ in all missional doings and ecclesial beings, in whatever context one finds oneself. This may not in fact be far from Luther’s original theological *sola fide* intention: a move from ecclesiocentrism to Christocentrism. In short, moving from Edinburgh 1910 to Edinburgh 2010, moving from a modern framework into a post-modern context, is not about giving up one’s own tradition and identity. On the contrary, it is a journey where an authoritarian church and mission attitude is indeed left behind, but at the same time a glimpse towards being authentic in faith, tradition and current context through the interpretative ethos of post-modernity and in a witnessing encounter with a culturally and religiously polycentric world.

‘Might it be,’ Kenneth Ross asks in the conclusion to his deliberations, ‘that Edinburgh 2010 will enable a new appreciation of the identity and significance of Jesus Christ?’<sup>26</sup> This may indeed be a precise recollection of our times. However, Christians will have to show courage, leave the certainty of authoritarian modernity behind, and believe in the authenticity of Christ.

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<sup>26</sup> Kenneth Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 74.

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# THE POWER OF INTERPRETATION – THE INTERPRETATION OF POWER: THE GOSPEL AND THE BIBLE AS CONTESTED SPACES IN GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY

Werner Kahl

## Introduction

At the end of the twentieth century, a delegation of West African migrant pastors met for the first time with church officials of a member-church of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD). The meeting took place at EKD's headquarters. At that time, African Pentecostal migrant churches were still widely denounced as 'sects' by representatives of the Protestant church. At the meeting, the church officials tried to intimidate the African pastors. They asked the Pentecostals if they had learned the biblical languages so that they could understand the Holy Scripture properly. The swift response was: We did not learn those languages as you did, but *we* got the Holy Spirit!

This anecdote illustrates that the encounter of representatives from churches of the global South and the North involves issues of power relations. It also shows that the Pentecostalization of Christianity in West Africa has brought about the emancipation of much of African Christianity from western prescriptions. West African Pentecostal pastors and Christians at the grassroots level tend to be quite self-confident. After all, they feel empowered by the Holy Spirit, and with this confidence Pentecostal pastors from West Africa, but also from Asia, have migrated to Europe claiming to be on a mission from God to 'bring back the gospel' and to 'win the Germans, the Dutch, etc. for Christ'.<sup>1</sup>

Daniel Boyarin, Talmud scholar from Berkeley, USA, in his seminal contribution on the interpretation of Paul, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*,<sup>2</sup> has made us aware of a problematic tendency in Christianity – as comes to expression most clearly in mission history – to annex, subdue, domesticate and even eradicate 'the other', due to a particular universalistic reading of Galatians 3:28 that does not take difference – the *physis* – seriously since it tends to spiritualize difference. Even though church history, and especially mission history are replete with

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the instructive research by Claudia Währisch-Oblau, *The Missionary Self-Perception of Pentecostal/Charismatic Church Leaders from the Global South in Europe: Bringing Back the Gospel* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1994.

examples of the denial of cultural difference by missionaries, leading to the extinction of other cultures and at times of other peoples, I doubt that this attitude reflects an appropriate reading of Paul. Galatians 3:28 should rather be interpreted in line with Paul's *relativization and appreciation of all cultures or identities, including his own culture*, in the light of the gospel,<sup>3</sup> and rendered in syntagmatic connection with verse 27 (due to the arrangement of the argument in 3:23-29 by means of *gar*): 'For as much as you have been baptized into Christ, you have put on Christ – *be it as Jew or Gentile, as slave or free person, as male or female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.*' Identities *do* matter, even though *all of them* are – in the light of the gospel – subject to and in need of transformation.<sup>4</sup> Identifying one's own culture and identity with the gospel is at best naïve, theologically untenable and sociologically dangerous.

In this article, I will describe some trends in the post-colonial debate on the interpretation of the gospel and the Bible from African perspectives.<sup>5</sup> This discourse – against the background of mission and colonial history, on the one hand, and the existing global power and economic structures, on the other – is poisoned. It calls for reconciliation, informed by the concept of 'costly grace' since it involves strategies of power-sharing.

In this contested space, we have become aware recently of attempts at an integration of dissenting interpretations into a polyphony of voices, informed by a *critical* appreciation of difference, in the sense of Boyarin's critical re-reading of Paul. By this I mean an appreciation of 'the other' that is open to *self-critical reflection*, i.e. an *openness for transformations* of one's own perspective and identity as a result of the encounter with 'the other'.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Paul's self-understanding as an evangelist according to 1 Corinthians 9:19-22 (NIV): 'Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.'

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. C. West, *Race Matters* (Boston, MA: 1993).

<sup>5</sup> This paper reflects a lecture I gave at an international conference at the University of Rostock, Germany, in 2015 on 'The Power of Interpretation: Imagined Authenticity – Appropriated Identity'. A different version of this paper may be found in K. Hock (ed), *The Power of Interpretation: Imagined Authenticity – Appropriated Identity. Conflicting Discourses on New Forms of African Christianity*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> This is the subject-matter of intercultural Biblical hermeneutics which is currently being elaborated, cf. W. Kahl, 'Transgressing Boundaries: The Need for Intercultural Biblical Hermeneutics', in D.S. Schipani, M. Brinkman and H. Snoek (eds), *New Perspectives on Intercultural Reading of the Bible* (Elkhart, Indiana:

In what follows I will limit myself to academic debates in sub-Saharan Africa, focusing mostly, but not exclusively, on Ghana.<sup>7</sup>

### Defusing Translational Explosives

The New Testament scholar, Musa W. Dube from Botswana, has drawn the attention of theologians to problematic Bible translations of western missionaries to Africa during colonial times.<sup>8</sup> Many of these translations used to be the first written texts in an African language, and they proved to be extremely influential in shaping the mindset of whole populations. From a post-colonial perspective, and drawing on the insights of the South African ethnologists Jean and John Comaroff,<sup>9</sup> Dube has convincingly shown that, linguistically, those classical Bible translations were not the result of innocent endeavours by pious missionaries. These translations were all too often informed by preconceived notions of African cultures and spirituality as manifestations of devilish and uncivilized evil.<sup>10</sup> In fact, Dube's analysis of those Bible translations comes to the conclusion that these were the results of deliberate misrepresentations, aiming at destroying a given culture and spirituality and replacing them by western cultural and religious values.<sup>11</sup> As in many other regions of sub-Saharan Africa, those who 'reduced the local oral languages to writing' for the sake of Bible translation – as part of the colonizing project – were often the same individuals who created the first dictionaries for these languages. These dictionaries were usually in uncontested usage for more than one hundred years, i.e. until the final decade of the twentieth century! As such, both the Bible and dictionaries were often created and used to demonise traditional values and knowledge systems – well after formal decolonization had taken place.

As a case in point, Dube gives the example of the common translation of 'unclean spirits' or 'demons' into *Badimo* in the Setswana Bible. *Badimo* in

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Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2015), 181-201; W. Kahl, 'Growing together: The benefits of intercultural Bible studies at the local level', in H. de Wit and J. Dyk (eds), *Bible and Transformation: The Promise of Intercultural Bible Reading* (Semeia Studies), (Atlanta, GA: 2015), 131-41.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. W. Kahl, *Jesus als Lebensretter: Westafrikanische Bibelinterpretationen und ihre Relevanz für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (Frankfurt, Germany: 2007).

<sup>8</sup> M.W. Dube, 'Consuming a Cultural Bomb: Translating *Badimo* into "Demons" in the Setswana Bible (Matt. 8:28-34; 15:22; 10:8)', in *JSNT*, 73 (1990), 33-59.

<sup>9</sup> John L. and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*. Vol. 1: *Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago, IL: 1991).

<sup>10</sup> Of course, numerous counter-examples could also be cited, as e.g. both the Bible translation and the dictionary of the Akan language Aquapim-Twi by Christaller, whose work shows a deep appreciation of Akan cultures – see below.

<sup>11</sup> Compare the common attitude of German missionaries among the Ewe the study of B. Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Edinburgh and London, 1999).

Setswana, however, means ‘ancestors’. But this most obvious meaning is also clouded in the dictionaries produced by the missionaries where *Badimo* are also demonized. So, e.g. in Matthew 10:8, Jesus instructs his disciples to ‘cast out – not evil spirits or demons, but – *Badimo*’. And according to this rendering, in Matthew 8:32 – the story of the demoniac of Geresene – Jesus has the *Badimo* entering the pigs and drowning in the lake. Dube correctly diagnoses that the roles of *Badimo* are reinvented in this translation:

*Badimo* are equated with demons and devils, when any Motswana reader expects them to be friends with Jesus, or with divine powers. The translation is a minefield planted in the Setswana cultural spaces, warning every Motswana Christian believer and reader of the Bible to stay away from the dangerous and deadly beliefs of Setswana. It marks boundaries and designates the Setswana cultures as a ‘dangerous, devil and death zone’, to be avoided at all costs. The translation is, therefore, a structural device of alienating natives from their cultures.<sup>12</sup>

Out of this colonial-missionary project of Bible translation and dictionary-writing arises the expression: a ‘colonizer-colonized power struggle’, as Dube observes.<sup>13</sup> She concludes:

What we are reading here is, therefore, a planted colonial cultural bomb, a cultural landmine. It is a deliberate design, aimed at exploding away the cultural validity of Setswana cultural spaces for the purposes of furthering a worldwide Christian commonwealth.<sup>14</sup>

According to Dube in Botswana, it is the Africa Inland Church’s practice of divination that makes use of the Bible, by means of which the colonially constructed divide between the Bible and traditional culture in Botswana can be overcome, and a reconciliation between the ancestors, Jesus and the people can be achieved.

Academically and theologically, Dube’s insights call for new, i.e. culturally sensitive and linguistically precise, Bible translations and dictionaries compiled by cultural insiders, in order to defuse translational explosives and to bring home the gospel.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Dube, ‘Consuming a Cultural Bomb’, 41-42.

<sup>13</sup> Dube, ‘Consuming a Cultural Bomb’, 43.

<sup>14</sup> Dube, ‘Consuming a Cultural Bomb’, 49. This observation supports Daniel Boyarin’s critique of a Pauline universalism that ‘seems to conduce to coercive politico-cultural systems that engage in more or less violent projects of the absorption of cultural specificities into the dominant one’, cf. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 228.

<sup>15</sup> As for the original translation of the Bible into Twi by J. Christaller and his Twi dictionary, things are very different from the southern African context, as elaborated by Dube. Christaller – contrary to the majority of Basel missionaries of his time – had a command of Akan languages, and he displayed a deep appreciation for Akan religio-cultures, which he considered as *preparatio evangelica*. His Bible translation is a careful attempt at rendering the original into Twi as precisely as

But there is more to it: reading the New Testament – the same applies to the Hebrew Bible – through non-European, local lenses in Africa has the potential to uncover dimensions of meaning in Greek words that have been obscured by European perspectives. This also calls for a critical revision of theological dictionaries of Hebrew and Greek. These works, too, impressive as they may appear, are artefacts that have been constructed from particular cultural viewpoints.<sup>16</sup>

### **Biblical Hermeneutics in Mother-Tongue Perspective**

In the field of the academic study of the Bible in West Africa, a new confidence in the particular potential of African contributions to the understanding of Biblical writings has emerged. It has been claimed that:

- Western perspectives on church, theology, church history and the Bible were irrelevant for the African context;
- A reading of the Bible from a particular African cultural perspective would yield results that suit needs particular to Africans;
- Such readings would serve the global church owing to alleged affinities between the ‘world of the Bible’ and African experiences and interpretations of reality.

These claims reflect the recent numerical and quantitative transformations in global Christianity. As has been projected by missiologists like Andrew Walls about a generation ago, and as has become a reality now, the majority of Christians live in the global South and no longer in the global – western – North, with sub-Saharan Africa becoming a new homeland of Christianity. This shift makes transparent that Christianity is – in the words of the late Kwame Bediako of Ghana – ‘a non-western religion’ that has to be liberated from its western captivity.<sup>17</sup>

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possible, cf. also J.G. Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language Called Tshi (Twi)*, (Basel, Switzerland: 1881, <sup>2</sup>1933); J.G. Christaller and K.R. Lange (eds), *Three Thousand Six Hundred Ghanaian Proverbs (From the Asante and Fante Language)*, (Lewiston, ID: 2000), (a revision of J.G. Christaller, *A Collection of Three Thousand Six Hundred Tshi Proverbs*), (Basel, Switzerland: 1879).

<sup>16</sup> A special case in point are the first four volumes of the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. by the anti-Semite G. Kittel (Stuttgart, Germany: 1933-1942). It should be noted that *all* volumes of the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* breathe the then uncontested spirit of at least a theological anti-Judaism that was shared by most German exegetes of the twentieth century. The entries also follow a diachronic approach to establishing the range of meaning and development of Greek words. As such, they are not informed by linguistic insights already developed at the beginning of the twentieth century that suggest a synchronic approach.

<sup>17</sup> K. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995).

This recent numerical shift has been accompanied by a transformation of the content and the expression of the Christian faith. West African Christianity has become more or less Pentecostal or Charismatic, tapping into a variety of local religio-cultural traditions. West African Christianity has become indigenous – as a result of African initiatives.

This development has not taken place in isolation. It was initiated in cooperation with western neo-Pentecostal preachers. The typical content and the expressions of a Pentecostal faith make sense to a vast majority of believers in the sub-region. This faith addresses both their spiritual and their material needs in rapidly changing societies and cultures marked by urbanization and the dynamic and creative appropriation of certain forms and values of western modernity. As such, it is able to address the actually felt needs of a population that undergoes deep running transformations, and that is in search of success strategies in times of insecurity. Its hybridity and flexibility becomes transparent when we consider the spiritual dualism that marks much of West African neo-Pentecostalism: it shares with African Traditional Religion (ATR) a belief in the existence and agency of numerous spiritual forces. The ‘discourses of universe’ in Pentecostalism and in ATR are, however, not simply identical. In ATR, lower spirits would not act against the will of the supreme spiritual power. Such a scenario, however, is presupposed by neo-Pentecostals and Charismatics who regard all spirits of ATR as ‘antagonistic’, acting against the will of God in order to harm people. The demonization or the disqualification of the totality of African cultures is, of course, a lasting heritage of a pronounced trend in western missionary activities in West Africa from its earliest beginnings in the middle of the nineteenth century. With this dualistic and demonological mindset, Pentecostals not only interpret the world but also the Bible. It is even reinforced by a number of New Testament passages, especially in the Synoptic Gospels, which describe a power struggle between Jesus and unclean spirits or demons. From this perspective, the whole Bible is being read and certainly misread in those few Old Testament passages that feature spirits of destruction, since in the Old Testament they are regularly presented as *agents of God*. A case in point is Exodus 12 where the ‘destroyer’, according to neo-Pentecostal interpretations of the Passover narrative, is usually demonized as a subject that acts independently of and contrary to the will of God. In Exodus 12, the figure of the destroyer is either identified as God or portrayed as an agent of God.<sup>18</sup>

It is within such an environment shaped by a self-confident African version of the Christian faith that a new generation of theologians has evolved whose theological formation has been informed – at least in part – by a certain stream of Pentecostalism. At the same time, many of these

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. J.W. Acheamong, ‘I Will Pass Over You: The Relevance of the Passover to the Understanding of Salvation in Contemporary Ghanaian Pentecostalism – A Critical Reflection from an Akan Perspective’ (DTheol dissertation, University of Hamburg, 2015).

theologians have gained their PhDs abroad – and if in Europe, they would have witnessed the decline in church membership, on the one hand, and a disentangled, purely academic theology with hegemonial claims, on the other. Inasmuch as western theology, including exegesis, has been perceived as a particular contextual exercise by proponents of the post-colonial discourse, its value for the African church and African theology has been increasingly questioned, and its claims to universal truth have been rejected as part of a hegemonial power play.<sup>19</sup>

A number of African theologians of a previous generation who were trained in the West developed theologies which remained largely irrelevant and meaningless to their own respective people, because these theologies were expressions of the attempt to actualise western theological thinking within an African context. Some of these works – published from the 1970s until the 1990s – were, however, well received and highly acclaimed in the West as ‘authentic’ expressions of an African theology.<sup>20</sup>

The current generation in leadership positions in the West African church and its theology is attempting to develop theologies ‘from within’, i.e. as representatives of their respective people who share the same spiritual experiences and expectations. They try to develop theologies not *for* the people but *with* the people, i.e. in tune with the spiritual universe and the aspirations of the people. In this endeavour, they turn away from theological concepts and from exegetical methods of the western world while drawing on resources of their own cultures and traditions.

Masters and PhD theses of the past two decades illustrate this reorientation. These theses typically analyse and redefine a theological subject explicitly from a particular African cultural perspective. The following research project on the practice of anointing in contemporary Ghanaian Pentecostalism and in ATR might serve as an example.<sup>21</sup> Students would typically do fieldwork consisting of participant observation and of interviews with exponents of ATR and of Pentecostalism. They would then compare the findings with biblical passages. In so doing, they might find out: 1. that anointing is an important feature in the traditional

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<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that the German exegetical discourse is undergoing transformations. Former claims to absolute truth have given way to self-critical reflection, an awareness of the cultural relativity of all exegetical endeavour, and a new openness to other readings, cf. E. Reinmuth, *Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments. Eine Einführung in die Lektüre des Neuen Testaments* (Göttingen, Germany: 2002); U. Luz, *Theologische Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. J.S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville, TN: 1979); M.A. Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. L. Asante, ‘The Phenomenon of Anointing in the Mainline and Charismatic Churches: A Case Study of the Roman Catholic Church and Some Charismatic Churches in Ghana’ (MPhil dissertation, University of Ghana, 2001).

symbolic universe of the Akan, 2. that the Pentecostal practice meets the needs of the Akan believer, and 3. that it is 'biblical'. If it is a good thesis, they might detect that the functions of the practice as mentioned in Old and New Testament passages are not simply identical. And they might arrive at a critical assessment of some of the Pentecostal claims with respect to the practice of anointing, and might suggest some adjustments to the practice in the light of biblical evidence. Drawing on the significant overlaps of traditional, biblical, and Pentecostal practices and meanings of anointing over against the absence of its practice in the western church and theology, the general significance of the practice in West Africa will be emphasized.

Establishing relationships with their own religio-cultural traditions in developing contextual theologies that are meaningful and relevant to their own respective people, contemporary West African theologians expect that their endeavours will be respected by colleagues working in other contexts and regions, like Europe, especially against the background of a long history of colonization and of western claims to interpretative authority so widespread amongst missionaries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. European criticism of African theologies and church practices would be quickly denounced as expressions of a paternalistic attitude marked by a complete ignorance of African world-knowledge systems.

### *Excursus: Homosexuality as a contested issue*

A case in point is the debate on homosexuality. I will focus here on the stance taken by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) as represented by its moderator Emmanuel Martey. He completed his PhD work on liberation theology under James Cone in the USA. Upon his return to Ghana in the 1990s, he became a prominent Pentecostalized minister of the Presbyterian Church and lecturer at Trinity Theological Seminary, with a main interest in 'spiritual warfare'.

This moderator of PCG stated in 2013: 'The Presbyterian Church of Ghana condemns homosexuality because it is unbiblical, unnatural and abnormal, un-African and it is filthy.'<sup>22</sup> By implication, Martey suggests that homosexuality is an import, i.e. from the corrupted western world. The biblical evidence, to him, unanimously condemns homosexuality. Both suggestions can be – and they have been – challenged.<sup>23</sup> What is important

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<sup>22</sup> J. Acheampong, 'Homosexuality: The Position of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in Context', in W. Kahl (ed). *Ecumenical Case Studies on Homosexuality and the Church / Ökumenische Fallstudien zu Homosexualität und Kirche* (Hamburg, Germany: 2013), 29-34.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Masiwa Ragies Gunda, *The Bible and Homosexuality in Zimbabwe: A Socio-Historical Analysis of the Political, Cultural and Christian Arguments in the Homosexual Public Debate with Special Reference to the Use of the Bible* (Bamberg, Germany: 2010); W. Kahl, 'The Gospel, the Bible, the Churches and

in the context of deliberations on the power in interpretation is the fact that the Bible is used in this debate as the ultimate authority in challenging western theological positions: the authority of the Bible vs. the authority of western theology.

When it comes to the interpretation of Scripture, different and contrasting hermeneutics are at play – here the claim of a literal reading, and there the claim of an interpretation in the light of the true meaning of ‘gospel’. The conflict involves a hermeneutical power-play with respect to Biblical interpretation. It also reflects the history of the donor–receiver imbalance in the Reformed Church family, i.e. between partner churches from the North and from the South. I quote from the communiqué published after the general assembly of the PCG in 2011:

We wish to further point out that it would be unacceptable for foreign development partners to premise or tie their economic assistance to Ghana on the country’s stance on homosexuality. Cultures and values differ, depending on the geographical location, and so it would be wrong for any foreign nation(s) to impose their unacceptable values and cultural values on other countries. Ghana should not allow the dangers of extreme permissiveness to ruin our time tested (sic!) cultural norms and traditional values. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana is further taking steps – a process which has begun with its just ended General Assembly – to sever relationship with any partner church, local and foreign, that ordained homosexuals as ministers and allowed for same-sex marriages, and wants to make it clear that we respect the decisions of our Ecumenical Partners abroad concerning gay and lesbian practice and same-sex marriages, and believe that our position would also be duly respected by them.<sup>24</sup>

This decision ‘to sever relationships’ with partner churches abroad that do allow same-sex marriages and the ordination of homosexual pastors seems to contradict the claim that cultural values of a particular people should be respected.

The debate on homosexuality is ‘hot’ and emotional, since it touches on the delicate issue of power relations between partner churches against the background of the history of hegemonial claims of the West, markedly during colonial times. But there is more involved: homosexuality is perceived not only as a clear indication that a problematic practice of western culture has arrived in West Africa. It is also considered a spiritual threat that would accelerate the disintegration of traditional – and biblical – values, as Joseph Acheampong has pointed out:

Christians in Ghana believe that homosexuality is a sin that attracts God’s wrath, and thus has to be condemned. Preaching the sermon on Sunday, 26th February 2012, Archbishop Emeritus Most Rev. Peter Kwasi Sarpong is reported to have described homosexuality as an abominable act which had the

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Homosexuality: Hermeneutical Reflections’, in Kahl, *Ecumenical Case Studies*, 6-13.

<sup>24</sup> Acheampong, ‘Homosexuality’, 35.

potential of incurring the wrath of God in Ghana, drawing parallels with Sodom and Gomorrah: ‘Just as the wrath of God came upon the people of Sodom and Gomorrah at a time their men were sleeping among themselves and women were sleeping among themselves, and women were marrying one another in rapid succession against the will of God, so will it happen in Ghana if we allow homosexuality to gain firm roots in the country.’<sup>25</sup>

Presupposed here is an *epistemic system of conceptualizing world* that is at variance – to put it mildly – with the one prevalent in contemporary Western Europe. As the theologian John Pobee,<sup>26</sup> the philosophers Kwame Gyekye<sup>27</sup> and Kwasi Wiredu,<sup>28</sup> or the sociologists Patrick Twumasi<sup>29</sup> and Max Assimeng,<sup>30</sup> to name only some of the most prominent Ghanaian academicians of the past generation, have stressed and as can also be shown socio-linguistically, the vast majority of people living in sub-Saharan Africa share a *knowledge of the world* according to which the individual *fundamentally belongs* to an extended family and ethnic group in both diachronic (lineage) and synchronic dimensions.<sup>31</sup> These communal dimensions are interwoven with the sphere of spirits – God, local gods, ancestors; evil, bush, earth and water spirits, and the like. For life to evolve in successful, i.e. life-improving, ways it is deemed necessary to act in accordance with a powerful spirit that allows for evil, i.e. life-threatening spirits to be warded off.

In such a communal and spiritual context, which is still prevailing in modern Ghana as in West Africa as a whole, conducting one’s life has the potential to affect one’s extended family or community. In addition, there is a strong expectation that married couples will procreate. In this context, homosexuality is widely held as an abomination caused by adverse spirits. As such, homosexuality might threaten the community both spiritually and materially.

In 2013 I was invited by the West African Association of Theological Institutions (WAATI) to give a paper on the topic of homosexuality from an exegetical perspective at the University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana. For some reason, I could not attend the conference in person. I sent in my paper to be read to the audience.<sup>32</sup> In that paper I tried to show that the six or seven biblical passages referring to homosexuality do not really concern homosexuality as understood in a modern context. I

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<sup>25</sup> Acheampong, ‘Homosexuality’, 33-34. His source for the quotation by Sarpong is the *Daily Graphic*, 27th February 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Pobee, *Toward an African Theology*.

<sup>27</sup> K. Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra: 1996).

<sup>28</sup> K. Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture* (Cambridge: 1980).

<sup>29</sup> P.A. Twumasi, *Medical Systems in Ghana: A Study in Medical Sociology* (Tema/Accra 1975).

<sup>30</sup> M. Assimeng, *Saints and Social Structures* (Accra: 1986).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Kahl, *Jesus als Lebensretter*, 231-38.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Kahl, ‘The Gospel, the Bible, the Churches and Homosexuality’.

could draw exegetically and theologically on the work of the Zimbabwean New Testament scholar Masiwa Ragies Gunda.<sup>33</sup> I present some of the responses that were noted down during the emotional session that followed.<sup>34</sup>

- Does it mean that homosexuality is part of western culture?
- Asking African Christian scholars to consider talking/writing/discussing about homosexuality is another form of theological colonialism.
- Is homosexuality an issue that is accepted in the Bible?
- If homosexuality is part of western culture, do all cultural acts align themselves to the Bible?
- There is an epistemic difference between western and African perceptions of homosexuality.
- African Christian scholars need to discuss the issue, not to sweep it under the carpet because, whether they accept it or not, there are homosexuals in African societies and African churches.
- What is the African position on homosexuality?
- There are more important issues to discuss – poverty, HIV & AIDS, crime, corruption, etc. Let us not waste our time discussing homosexuality.
- We need to appreciate Werner for choosing that topic.
- It is an ontological issue.
- Homosexuality is not to be tolerated biblically, culturally, economically, etc.
- Let us dialogue on this issue.
- If love is the basic ingredient in marriage, why do western governments detest/disapprove of polygamous and incestuous affairs?
- Homosexuality cannot be said to be part of western culture because many westerners are against that type of marriage.
- Werner's biblical interpretation of homosexuality is one-sided.
- The church in the West must not accept homosexuals, not approve that lifestyle, let alone ordain them. It is an abomination to God.

These reactions indicate that there is a great variety of opinion among theologians from West Africa today with respect to the theological assessment of homosexuality with an occasional openness to reconsider positions taken for granted. At the same time, they make transparent the deeper issues involved in the intercontinental controversies on homosexuality.

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<sup>33</sup> Gunda, *The Bible and Homosexuality in Zimbabwe*.

<sup>34</sup> Recorded by Thomas Oduro, August 2013.

*Interpreting the Bible in one's mother-tongue and reference system*

The systematic exploration of traditional resources and West African encyclopædias for biblical interpretation is currently underway in Ghana under the label *mother-tongue theology* or *hermeneutics*. In Ghana this approach is pursued at the Akrofi-Christaller-Memorial Centre in Akropong and at the Centre for Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics at Trinity Theological Seminary in Accra. Both institutions publish journals in the field of mother-tongue theology or hermeneutics: *Journal of African Christian Thought* and the *Journal of Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics*.<sup>35</sup> This approach calls for theological training and writing in Ghanaian mother-tongues, on the one hand, and a revision of existing vernacular Bible translations, on the other.

The New Testament scholar Ben Y. Quarshie, a former student of John Pobee, has succeeded the late Kwame Bediako as the director of the Akrofi-Christaller-Memorial Centre. In an article published in 2009, he discusses the objectives, the implications and the challenges of the project of theologizing in Ghanaian mother-tongues.<sup>36</sup> According to Quarshie, this project aims at stabilizing the identities of African populations that were in danger of losing their respective cultural heritage due to the import of western culture.

Quarshie explicitly reconnects with the 'Basel Mission policy on mother-tongue theology' in the nineteenth century, and he praises as a prime example a mother-tongue project the translation of the originally English *History of the Cold Coast and Ashanti* into Ga – the language spoken by the Ga people in and around Accra – by its author, the Ga pastor Carl Christian Reindorf, at the end of that century. The appreciation of mother-tongue academic writing was lost in the course of the twentieth century, according to Quarshie, with colonial languages being installed in West Africa, in conjunction with the impact of theologies which might have made sense to Europeans but which proved irrelevant for West Africans. Here Quarshie refers especially to Bultmann's programme of demythologizing the New Testament as a prime example of an influential western approach to the Bible that is implausible and irrelevant for an African context:

Much of Biblical Studies in the African context has so accepted foreign languages that these languages and the cultures they embody have enslaved the African biblical theologian. This has occurred to the point that it is a real challenge for mother-tongue Scriptures to be studied on their own merits and

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<sup>35</sup> Issue 1 (1) of the *Journal of Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics* appeared in 2015.

<sup>36</sup> Ben Y. Quarshie, 'Doing Biblical Studies in the African Context: The Challenge of Mother-Tongue Scriptures', in J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (ed), *Christianity, Mission and Ecumenism in Ghana: Essays in Honour of Robert Kwasi Aboagye-Mensah* (Accra: 2009), 106-34.

in terms of their own cultural contexts. The tendency is to study them, if at all, through the filter of a dominant foreign language. Bultmann's demythologization exercise, for instance, is clearly at variance with the African worldview and so cannot be helpful. It should therefore not be welcome in the African context. This has, however, not been the case. Mbiti's fictional story about a DTh-wielding African returnee who could not assist his spirit-possessed sister because Bultmann had demythologized demons, is a humorous but graphic indication of the African enslavement to Western theology. Methodological issues are involved here and these are definitely deeply rooted in Enlightenment categories. At this point, the challenge of mother-tongue Scriptures to doing Biblical Studies in the African context is how to address the methodological issues raised by the enslavement to Western theology.<sup>37</sup>

Quarshie's statement is as strong as it is clear: for biblical exegesis in Africa, historico-critical approaches of a western style as well as a hermeneutic of demythologization are foreign and meaningless. Therefore, they need to be abandoned. Even more, they are expressions of western hegemonial claims to absolute truth and power of interpretation. As such, they have enslaved African theology. Quarshie calls for theological and hermeneutical liberation.

His argument recalls a drastic 1979 statement of Kobi Appiah-Kubi – one generation earlier – that addresses the question of developing an African Christology:

How can I sing the Lord's song in a strange land (in a strange language, in a strange thought, in a strange ideology)? For more than a decade now, the cry of the psalmist has been the cry of many African Christians. We demand to serve the Lord on our own terms and without being turned into Euro-American or Semitic bastards before we do so. That the Gospel has come to remain in Africa cannot be denied, but now our theological reflections must be addressed to real contextual African situations. Our question must not be what Karl Barth, Karl Rahner or any other Karl has to say, but rather what God would have us to do in our living concrete condition. For too long African Christian theologians and scholars have been preoccupied with what missionary A or theologian B or scholar C has told us about God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The struggle of African theologians, scholars and other Christians in ventures such as this is to find a theology that speaks to our people where we are, to enable us to answer the critical question of our Lord Jesus Christ: 'Who do you (African Christians) say that I am?'<sup>38</sup>

In line with Appiah-Kubi, Quarshie emphasizes *continuities* between African religio-cultural traditions and the Bible which would allow for a unique access of Africans to biblical meaning dimensions. Due to essential overlaps of 'African culture' and Biblical worldviews, he implicitly favours

<sup>37</sup> Quarshie, 'Doing Biblical Studies in the African Context', 119.

<sup>38</sup> Kobi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres (eds), *African Theology en Route* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), viii.

here the idea of a hermeneutical advantage of African readers of the Bible over against European readers.

Tapping into their ethnic cultural traditions and encyclopædias for an interpretation that might be relevant for their respective people, West African exegetes do academically what is being done in *lectura populi* by *intuition*: reading the Bible within the conceptual frameworks of the mother-tongue, or – to put it differently – in the context of an understanding of the world informed by principles rooted in African traditions. According to these knowledge systems, the visible world is embedded in a wider net of spiritual powers. These powers might affect all spheres of life; they are experienced as an ever-present and threatening reality. For life to be successful, it is of paramount importance to prevent evil spirits from attacking.

This mode of perceiving, manipulating and forecasting reality is not irrational,<sup>39</sup> and it is also not the expression of a naïvety of allegedly primitive people, as the premature judgements of westerners – including theologians – would typically diagnose. People with such a world-knowledge-system *do* distinguish between cause and effect. Contrary to an Enlightenment position of the modern West, they are, however, prepared to reckon with causes that can be attributed to the activity of invisible spirits. The world from this perspective is much wider than conceptions of the world in the Enlightenment tradition of the West. That spirits are real is common knowledge in West Africa, and this knowledge is shared by all strata of society, including academicians. The extent of and readiness to reckon with the involvement of evil spirits in actual situations, of course, varies.

This observation challenges a judgement which is widespread in the western exegetical discourse concerning miracles in general and belief in evil spirits in antiquity in particular, i.e. that both were irrational expressions of so-called simple-minded people such as farmers or fishermen. Scholars of ancient religion like Walter Burkert,<sup>40</sup> Fritz Graf<sup>41</sup> and Jörg Rüpke<sup>42</sup> have drawn our attention to the fact that the fear of evil spirits and curses ran through the whole of Græco-Roman society. Rüpke quotes Pliny the Elder from the second half of the first century as saying that there was no one who was not afraid of being put under a magical spell or curse (Nat. Hist. 28, 19). Philosophers such as Socrates, according to

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. the classical treatment of the subject from 1967 by R. Horton, 'African Traditional Thought and Western Science', in R. Horton (ed). *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on Magic, Religion and Science* (Cambridge: 1993), 197-258.

<sup>40</sup> W. Burkert, *Kulte des Altertums: Biologische Grundlagen der Religion* (Munich, Germany: 1998).

<sup>41</sup> F. Graf, *Gottesnähe und Schadenzauber: Die Magie in der griechisch-römischen Antike* (Munich, Germany: 1996).

<sup>42</sup> J. Rüpke, *Die Religion der Römer* (Munich, Germany: 2001).

Xenophon (*Memorabilia* 1, 1, 6-8), and Plutarch (*Moralia* 171 E-F) also believed in the activity of gods and demons. They only rejected a preoccupation with spiritual powers in everyday life. It is this extreme position that Plutarch brands as superstition (*deisidaimonia*).<sup>43</sup>

West African exegetes have affirmed that the Synoptic Gospels ‘express very clearly an awareness and experience of a spiritual reality similar to those of the Ewe’.<sup>44</sup> Referring to Mark 5:1-20, the story about the demon-possessed man in Gerasa, Solomon Avotri observes: ‘Mark shows that Jesus and the demonic powers are on a collision course, but there is no doubt in Mark’s mind who the winner is in this cosmic contest. For Ewe readers, these stories affirm their beliefs in the spirit world.’<sup>45</sup>

Drawing on his own Ewe cultural universe, Avotri clearly analyses and describes the dynamics at play in the story, especially what the semiotician Algirdas Greimas has called the ‘polemic structure’ of narratives.<sup>46</sup> ‘For Legion, Jesus is a tormentor; for the man, he is a liberator.’<sup>47</sup> Even the motif of spirits entering animals – like legions of spirits entering the pigs in Mark 5 – finds a parallel in the experience of West Africans from the countryside, as Avotri points out. Drawing on my own fieldwork in Ghana in 2001, I can give evidence of this experience. During a Bible study on Mark 5 in a small, charismatic neighbourhood church, I was asked by a farmer: ‘Pastor, I have a goat that looks at me very strange. Do you think it has a demon?’ I do not recall my answer, but what became clear is that the reading of the Bible in a traditional West African context ‘gives space to the basic concerns of the Ewe about the life-destroying powers of the unseen world, but at the same time promises the possibility of deliverance, transformation, and restoration by a force more powerful’.<sup>48</sup>

With respect to Africa, classicists working in West Africa have long recognized the potential of African traditional perspectives in unlocking meaning dimensions in ancient texts. Kwame Bediako of Ghana saw Africa in this respect even as a ‘laboratory for the world’, and to support this claim, he quoted the classicist John Ferguson, who used to teach in Nigeria in the 1960s:

Our Classics department is set in one of the few parts of the world where you can still consult oracles, where there are tonal languages (as Classical Greek

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. W. Kahl, ‘Gott und göttliche Wesen’, in K. Erlemann et al (eds), *Neues Testament und Antike Kultur*. Vol. 3 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: 2005), 88-109.

<sup>44</sup> S.K. Avotri, ‘The Vernacularization of Scripture and African Beliefs: The Story of the Gerasene Demoniac among the Ewe of West Africa’, in G. West and M.W. Dube (eds), *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 2000), 311-25, 318.

<sup>45</sup> Avotri, ‘The Vernacularization of Scripture and African Beliefs’, 319.

<sup>46</sup> A.J. Greimas and J. Courtés, *Sémiotique. Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage* (Paris: 1993), 284.

<sup>47</sup> Avotri, ‘The Vernacularization of Scripture and African Beliefs’, 321.

<sup>48</sup> Avotri, ‘The Vernacularization of Scripture and African Beliefs’, 324.

was tonal), where there is a living tradition of religious dance-drama (what is Greek tragedy in origin but that?), where sacrifice is understood, where contemporary society offers many fascinating parallels to ancient Greek and Roman society. Nigerian scholars, if they will look at the classics with Nigerian and not European eyes, can interpret the classics to us in ways no European scholar can do.<sup>49</sup>

This, in my view, applies – to a certain degree – also to the study of the Bible in general and of the New Testament in particular. For example, the interpretation of certain events as miracles is widespread in West Africa. There, people are used to experiencing miracles not only in conjunction with unexpected healings that might be attributed to spirits or God but also with respect to all spheres of life. Reading the narrative literature of the New Testament from this perspective, together with African scholars or untrained readers, one can discover the presence of the miraculous at centre stage in many episodes that in western exegesis are not regarded as miracle stories. Without getting into the complex issue of the definition of ‘miracle story’, I will point out just one example of an overlooked miracle story in western exegesis. In Acts 4, the apostles Peter and John are strongly advised by the Sanhedrin not to preach about Jesus publicly any more. Peter and his group are quite disturbed and pray to God that they might receive the ability to continue their public preaching. This prayer explicitly calls for ‘signs and wonders’, and as a result of the prayer a miracle occurs in accordance with the request:

‘Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.’ And after they had prayed, the place where they were gathered was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:29-31).

In my understanding, from an ancient Mediterranean perspective there can be no doubt that this episode narrates a miraculous event, in a form that is shared by other biblical passages narrating a healing miracle:<sup>50</sup> the initially imposed speechlessness has been reversed by a hidden act of God after prayer to God, causing the Holy Spirit to enter the implorers and to reverse the initial lack of speech; they begin to speak the word of God *with boldness*.

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Interestingly, but not surprisingly, this story is generally missing in exegetical handbooks on miracle stories. This omission is due to definitions of ‘miracle’ and of ‘miracle story’ that are informed by *modern* categories that are incongruous with respect to ancient Mediterranean epistemic systems. These are typically read into the New Testament miracle

<sup>49</sup> Bediako, *Christianity in Africa*, 252.

<sup>50</sup> W. Kahl, *New Testament Miracle Stories in their Religious-Historical Setting: A Religions-geschichtliche Comparison from a Structural Perspective* (Göttingen, Germany: 1994), 153-61.

discourse. This is an exercise in *secularizing and domesticating* Scripture. A recently published compendium of early Christian miracle stories, even though it claims to be exhaustive in its coverage of the New Testament miracle narratives, introduces a certain restriction in the definition of 'miracle' that effectively *excludes* a great number of narratives from consideration.<sup>51</sup> The editor states that only those stories were considered in which a *human being* performed a miracle.<sup>52</sup> From the perspective of the New Testament discourse on miracles, this is a highly problematic, arbitrary example of prejudicial thinking that produces a distortion of the evidence and a misrepresentation of the New Testament material in line with perceptions of the world that are consistent with modernity. From an early Christian perspective,

- Human beings cannot function as active subjects of miracle performances unless they have been bestowed with miracle power by a divine or spiritual being;
- Divinities or other spiritual beings – strictly speaking – function as active subjects in miracle performances, often making use of human channels;
- In the New Testament, miracles are narrated as acts that have *really* taken place in history.

It can be noticed that academic exegesis does not always resist the temptation to uncritically override essential meaning dimensions of Biblical passages. The western miracle discourse is also an example of an interpretative power-play between a modern reader and a text that typically cannot defend itself, as Plato maintained (Phaidros 275E-276A).

With respect to the claim of a hermeneutical advantage of West African Bible readings, however, a note of caution is in place, and here I agree in particular with the South African theologian Tinyiko Maluleke, who has raised a similar concern.<sup>53</sup> There are indeed certain close affinities between African cultures and ancient Mediterranean cultures, especially when it comes to the experience of spirits and miracles and to the expectation of a materiality of 'salvation'. And these occasional encyclopædic overlaps allow for new insights into the ancient world. *But these affinities do not constitute identities.* Therefore, it would be problematic to assume a general

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<sup>51</sup> R. Zimmermann (ed), *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen*, Vol. 1: *Die Wunder Jesu* (Gütersloh, Germany: 2013).

<sup>52</sup> R. Zimmermann, 'Grundfragen zu den frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen', in Zimmermann, *Kompendium*, 7-67.

<sup>53</sup> T. Maluleke, 'Will Jesus Ever Be the Same Again: What Are the Africans Doing to Him?' in *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa*, 11,1 (1997), 13-30; Maluleke, 'Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the Twenty-First Century', in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 99 (1997), 4-23; Maluleke, 'In Search of 'the True Character of African Christian Identity': A Review of the Theology of Kwame Bediako', in *Missionalia*, 25,2 (1997), 210-19.

hermeneutical privilege of African readings of the Bible. Also, African perspectives do not prevent misinterpretations and abuses of the Bible.<sup>54</sup> The neo-Pentecostal spiritual dualism and demonology are examples of a hermeneutical framework that produces problematic readings, especially of the Old Testament. An uncritical and undue emphasis on material well-being as proof of divine blessing which might be rooted in traditional thinking also leads to misreadings of New Testament passages. An example is much of what has been termed the 'Prosperity Gospel'.<sup>55</sup>

### **Appreciating Cross-Culturally Challenging Readings of the Bible**

Abraham Akrong, in an article published in 2009, addresses the problem of a 'witchcraft mentality' so widespread in Ghana that it tends to attribute every impediment of life to the activity of demonic forces.<sup>56</sup> Akrong opts for an 'openness to various explanations of evil'.<sup>57</sup> For example, he regards the insight of the Reformers as helpful, according to which 'all human beings are capable of evil'.<sup>58</sup> It should be taken into consideration that 'on most occasions, evil is a result of evil human will, which can be explained by moral, spiritual, psychological and social factors'.<sup>59</sup> Akrong does not deny the existence and the destructive agency of evil spirits but he is interested in balancing an undue preoccupation with these spirits, since the fear of evil spirits has 'enslaved many people today'.<sup>60</sup> The victory of Christ over evil spirits at the Cross should be appropriated as an 'abiding protection at all times', paving the way for experiencing a 'fuller life'.<sup>61</sup>

In a recent book on Akan Christology, published in 2013, Charles Sarpong Aye-Addo provides 'an analysis of the christologies of John Pobee and Kwame Bediako in conversation with the theology of Karl Barth', as the sub-title states.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>54</sup> K.A. Dickson, *Uncompleted Mission: Christianity and Exclusivism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 141.

<sup>55</sup> For a critical assessment of the 'Prosperity Gospel' from an exegetical perspective, see W. Kahl, 'Prosperity-Preaching in West-Africa: An Evaluation of a Contemporary Ideology from a New Testament Perspective', in *Ghana Bulletin of Theology*, 2 (2007), 21-42; Kahl, "'Jesus Became Poor so that We Might Become Rich": A Critical Review of the Use of Biblical Reference Texts among Prosperity Preachers in Ghana', in A. Heuser (ed), *Pastures of Plenty: Tracing Religio-Scapes of Prosperity Gospel in Africa and Beyond* (Frankfurt, Germany: 2015), 101-15.

<sup>56</sup> A.A. Akrong, 'Towards a Theology of Evil Spirits and Witches', in J.K. Asamoah-Gyadu, *Christianity, Mission and Ecumenism*, 199-209.

<sup>57</sup> Akrong, 'Towards a Theology of Evil Spirits and Witches', 209.

<sup>58</sup> Akrong, 'Towards a Theology of Evil Spirits and Witches', 208.

<sup>59</sup> Akrong, 'Towards a Theology of Evil Spirits and Witches', 208.

<sup>60</sup> Akrong, 'Towards a Theology of Evil Spirits and Witches', 209.

<sup>61</sup> Akrong, 'Towards a Theology of Evil Spirits and Witches', 209.

<sup>62</sup> Ch. Sarpong Aye-Addo, *Akan Christology: An Analysis of the Christologies of John Samuel Pobee and Kwame Bediako in Conversation with the Theology of Karl*

In contrast to the infamous statement by Appiah-Kubi as quoted above, Aye-Addo arrives at an appreciation of Karl Barth and other influential western theologians, since they

accepted the demands of thought and action imposed on them by their own concrete situation. Thus, here, it may not necessarily be that we follow the questions and the thought patterns of the above mentioned theologians. Rather, what we seek to imply here is that African theology should also emerge out of deep struggle with the spiritual challenges faced by the African people.<sup>63</sup>

These theologians, according to Aye-Addo, might serve as *paradigms* that could inspire African theologians to dedicate themselves to the task of developing theologies *relevant* to their particular people. Even though an uncritical import of western theological thinking is not recommended by Aye-Addo, he also suggests that something could be learned theologically from Karl Barth for the African context, namely, with respect to the widespread practice of 'forceful prayer' that needed correction:

In the Bible, prophets do not speak on their own authority but speak in response to God's call. Within this thinking, human beings cannot by their own efforts reach out to God; it is God who reaches out to humankind in a concrete and practical way for their salvation from sin and guilt, deliverance from powers of darkness, and restoration of health and soundness.<sup>64</sup>

Ghanaian theologians such as Kwame Bediako, Abraham Akromong and Charles S. Aye-Addo display a disposition of critical openness for cross-cultural exchange on a global level – in spite of their awareness of hegemonial claims to interpretative authority, especially among theologians from the western world. In today's world, the power of interpretation is also claimed by so-called 'powerful men of God' in West African neo-Pentecostalism due to their alleged spiritual gifts. Contemporary African Christianity is, however, much more than it appears with these loud voices. Also, in Pentecostal Christianity in West Africa, there are voices not so loud and insights into reality and into the meaning of 'gospel' that deserve to be heard and appreciated in western Christianity. The readiness to resist from erasing contravening voices in the Bible and in contemporary Christianity, coupled with an openness for a critical and self-critical engagement with other readings, are requirements of an *ethics of biblical interpretation* informed by the insights of semiotics as represented, among others, by Umberto Eco.<sup>65</sup>

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Barth (Eugene, OR: 2013). The author is a pastor of the neo-Pentecostal Central Gospel Church.

<sup>63</sup> Aye-Addo, *Akan Christology*, 169.

<sup>64</sup> Aye-Addo, *Akan Christology*, 164.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. E. Reinmuth, 'In der Vielfalt der Bedeutungen. Notizen zur Interpretationsaufgabe neutestamentlicher Wissenschaft', in Reinmuth (ed), *Neues Testament, Theologie und Gesellschaft: Hermeneutische und diskurstheoretische*

The presence of Christians from West Africa living in Germany – as in other European countries – might provide an opportunity for cross-cultural exchange at the local level.<sup>66</sup> Currently, the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) is suggesting the need of an intercultural opening of the church in order to be able to represent a Protestant population that has become diverse within past and present generations.<sup>67</sup> There is an urgent need for the creation of openings for cross-cultural and inter-confessional encounters in which all involved will be partly constituted by the other.

About fifty years ago, it was Karl Barth who foresaw the need and the possibility of such a cross-cultural exchange. His almost prophetic statements were meant to challenge an all too self-confident and rationalistic, but – at that time – powerful and influential, strategy of interpreting the Bible in line with Bultmann's demythologization programme. Barth clearly saw the limitation of the common western theological approach to the understanding of the world in general, and to the New Testament miracles and the very meaning of 'gospel' in particular. He tried to counter-balance this strong position by appreciative, although not uncritical, references to the perspectives of peoples of the global South:

In this matter we have one of the not infrequent cases in which it has to be said that not all people, but some to whom a so-called magical view of the world is now ascribed, have in fact – apart from occasional hocus-pocus – seen more, seen more clearly, and come [much] closer to the reality in their thought and speech [*Sprache* 'language', W.K.], than those of us who are happy possessors of a rational and scientific view of things, for whom the resultant clear (but perhaps not wholly clear) distinction between truth and illusion has become almost unconsciously the criterion of all that is possible and real.<sup>68</sup>

Quite amazingly, Barth even envisioned a time when Christians from the global South might help Christians in the North in understanding the world, the Bible, and the gospel – about 1960, i.e. one generation before the first churches of Africans or Asians were actually founded in continental Europe:

A magical picture of the world? Might it be that our fellow Christians from the younger churches of Asia and Africa, who come with a fresher outlook in

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*Reflexionen* (Stuttgart, Germany: 2012), 13-27; Reinmuth, 'Der Kanon des Neuen Testaments und die Ethik der Interpretation', in Reinmuth, *Neues Testament*, 29-42.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Kahl, 'Growing Together'.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Kahl, 'Ecumenical Formation in Theology (EcuFiT)', in S. Bevans et al (eds), *Reflecting on and Equipping for Christian Mission* (Oxford: Regnum, 2015), 302-07.

<sup>68</sup> K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 4, 4: *The Christian Life* (Lecture Fragments), (Grand Rapids, MI: 1981), 216, ed. and trans. by G.W. Bromiley. I have slightly corrected the official English translation after consulting the German original. It should be noted that, according to the original, Barth does not have 'much' before 'closer'.

this regard, can help us here? We hope at least that they will not be too impressed by our view of the world and thus be afflicted by the eye disease from which we ourselves suffer in this matter.<sup>69</sup>

As much as especially western theologians – due to a widespread and deeply rooted attitude of superiority over against theologies from the South – need to be reminded by their colleagues from the global South that their interpretations of the Bible and their constructions of reality are culture-bound, with the Enlightenment perspective as an important, albeit reductionist, view on reality, theologians from Africa – and from other regions – are in need of being reminded that their theologies, too, are constructions informed by particular cultures. The task for the future – in a globalized world – is to develop mother-tongue theologies, on the one hand, and to bring the various mother-tongue perspectives (including the European ones!) into a meaningful and productive dialogue on the other. Much could be learned from the century-old western discourses on theology also for the African context, as Bediako, Akrong and Aye-Addo have demonstrated. Likewise, Europeans could positively draw much from other cultural and theological insights developed in Africa or in other regions of the world, as Barth suggested. Against the background of a deep-seated theological and cultural *hybris*, however, the burden of the task lies with western theologians to listen carefully – and, of course, critically but with a general attitude of an appreciation of difference – to the voices from the global South: preferably in the mother-tongues of the other!

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<sup>69</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 219.

# PART TWO

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# THE ENCOUNTER OF MISSION AND POWER IN A POST-COLONIAL MYANMAR CONTEXT: CHALLENGES AND PROPOSALS<sup>1</sup>

Samuel Ngun Ling

## Myanmar: A Historical Context

To speak about Myanmar, formerly Burma, one cannot avoid referring to three Bs – namely, Burma, Baptist, and Buddhism. Burma renamed as Myanmar today is economically still a suffering nation, politically a lamenting country, and religiously a chanting land. The dominant political system before the recent changes is known as the Burmese way to socialism, also described by Kosuke Koyama, the Japanese theologian, as the ‘Burmese way to loneliness’.<sup>2</sup> Burmese society is predominantly a Theravada Buddhist society in south-east Asia and is also a melting-pot where altogether 135 different ethnic and language groups exist together mutually interacting, with a total population of 53 million today. The Christian population is estimated to be 6% of the total population, the majority of which belongs to the Baptist denomination so that it represents one of the largest Baptist populations the world.

Historically and politically speaking, Myanmar underwent five stages of political systems: first, monarchical rule from the early eleventh to the late nineteenth century (c 1885). There were three Anglo-Burmese wars in the colonial period from 1824 until 1885, when the last Burmese King Thibaw was dethroned. The Christian Protestant mission, particularly the American Baptist mission, arrived on 13th July 1813.

Second, Myanmar experienced colonial rule under the British Indian Empire for 124 years from 1824 to 1948. The Buddhist Nationalist movement was born out of this long suffering from the colonial womb, which later gave rise to a strong anti-Christian voice. The long history of the Christian-Buddhist conflict (particularly the Karen and Burman ethnic conflicts) is considered to be rooted in the experience of colonial dominance.

Third, Myanmar tasted a short-term parliamentary democracy system for fourteen years from 1948 to 1962. This democratic system was stamped out

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is part of my lecture given at Union Theological Seminary, New York, on 2nd December 2008, at the invitation of Prof. Dr Paul Knitter. Its character as a lecture has been retained for this publication.

<sup>2</sup> See Douglas J. Elwood (ed), *What Asian Christians are thinking* (Manila: New Day Publishers, 1978), 29. Here Kosuke Koyama seems to subtly refer to the Burmese way to socialism.

by a theocratic system – and the issue of making Buddhism the state religion under the then Prime Minister U Nu prompted strong ethnic Christian resistance.

Fourth, General Ne Win introduced the policy of ‘the Burmese way to socialism’ which lasted for 26 years from 1962 to 1988 which completely failed and resulted in making the country one of the poorest countries in the world today.

Fifth, the military once again took power in 1988, and controlled the country under military capitalism for eighteen years until the 2015 democratic election. In recent times, socio-political restrictions, economic and religious oppression have become a common issue in the life of the church and Christians in Myanmar.

### The Challenges of Power in Myanmar

Myanmar today is entangled in two political struggles: the restoration of democracy and struggles for ethnic minority rights. Decades of ethnic fighting, political repression, human right violations, economic crisis and the breakdown of the health care and education systems, have caused immense suffering, most notably for minority peoples who are often Christians. These have consequently led to huge problems of internally displaced peoples within, and externally misplaced refugees/asylums outside, the country, often the victims of exploitation.

#### *The Problem of a Non-Buddhist in a Buddhist Country*

A resurgence of Buddhism and of Buddhist nationalist movements stressed very clearly that all Burmese nationalities owed loyalty to Theravada Buddhism. To a Burmese Buddhist, embracing a foreign religion like Christianity almost meant ceasing to be Burmese, because a person who is not a Buddhist is regarded as non-Burmese. Buddhism in Myanmar has taken on an ethnic identity. There is a Buddhist philosophy which states, ‘To be an authentic Burmese is to be a Buddhist.’<sup>3</sup> This philosophy still dominates majority Buddhist thinking and is also a great challenge and even a threat to the national identity of every non-Buddhist in post-colonial Myanmar.

In modern Myanmar, there are two streams of cultural encroachment: one is religious and the other is political. As a religious stream, the Buddhist government often makes an attempt to employ Buddhist religion and culture as a core element for redefining modern Myanmar nationality and its national ideology so that socio-structurally Burmese society becomes more *mono-ethnic* than *multi-ethnic*. This religion-based

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<sup>3</sup> Samuel Ngun Ling, *Christianity through our neighbour's eyes*. Yangon: MIT, 2014.

nationalism is known as 'Burmanization or Buddhistization', or in Burmese *Amyo, Batha, Tathana*. This is the Myanmar Buddhist nationalist concept of 'Burmese nationalism' summarized in Burmese language. The literal meaning of these three terms is Nationality, Religion, Mission. This Buddhist philosophy tries to build up a Buddhism-based national identity, but there is resistance from ethnic minorities such as Christians and Muslims who try to de-Burmanize themselves so that they protect themselves from invasion by the predominantly Buddhist religion and culture. In the process of Burmese nationalization, Buddhism is considered as most 'favoured religion'. The previous military government leaders claimed official freedom of worship and equality for all on religious grounds but, at the same time, they reserved a clause giving 'favouritism' or 'special distinctiveness' to Buddhism over other religions. Article 361 of the 2008 Constitution of Myanmar continues to claim that 'The Union recognizes the special position of Buddhism as the faith professed by the great majority of the citizens of the Union'.<sup>4</sup>

### *Being a Minority Christian*

Despite its more than two hundred years of existence in the country, Christianity is still considered to be alien to Burmese society. Christian missions continue to be perceived as part of what was known as the western imperialists' three Ms: Merchant, Missions and Military. Christians are often viewed as pro-western, pro-British, pro-American as advocates of western cultural influence whose presence could turn out to be a threat to Buddhist nationalism and the solidarity of the nation. This historical stigma is damaging interfaith relations, thereby weakening interfaith co-operation at national level. In such circumstances of prejudice, both the minorities of Christians and non-Christians alike are facing serious identity crises in their struggles for preserving, sustaining and promoting both their Christian and their ethnic identities. In fact, as long as there is freedom of expression and the right to worship for all religions, there is an opportunity for building a community of interfaith relations. As long as there is political suspicion and suppression, there will be tension and conflict between religious communities.

The ethnic minorities are doubly marginalized, as ethnic minorities and as Christians, and face a serious religious identity crisis. The principle of Buddhist nationalism tries to redefine who is a minority and who is a Christian, consequently leading to the social exclusion, marginalization and religious discrimination of ethnic minorities. Marginalization further pushes the poor, the powerless and the illiterate to the outer rims of society.

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<sup>4</sup> 'The Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar', published in 2008 by the Myanmar government (Ministry of Information, Printing & Publishing Enterprise, 2008), 151.

### *Being a Post-modern Minority*

According to post-modernism, the post-modern situation identifies itself as post-Enlightenment, post-colonial, post-patriarchal and post-Christian. In the *post-colonial* period, minority peoples rose to free themselves from the grip of external and internal imperialistic powers. In this situation, colonized nations are reclaiming and re-establishing their national identities as agents and subjects in the whole of the historical process. In the *post-patriarchal* situation, feminist critiques of modernity have exposed the way in which rational and social structures were used to suppress and oppress women. In fact, Christian feminist theologians have revised their theological categories to ensure that they boldly witness to those women who are over half of world's population. These paradigmatic shifts have brought many levels of change in society, among which, globalization has brought tremendous change.

Globalization is the process of the transnational integration of global economic systems to capitalism. On one hand, it promotes organised and relative comforts and new social values, and redefines: (i) the meaning of life, (ii) human morality and thinking, (iii) human happiness, and (iv) the relationship between humans and nature. And, on the other hand, globalization also produces a powerful centre of wealth and power in the hands of a dominant few. As a result, the gap between the rich and the poor has become wider and deeper, leaving many poor countries vulnerable to unpredictable breakdowns in democratic structures, economic life and human relationships.<sup>5</sup> Globalization seeks to stimulate economic growth internationally but it often has negative consequences, especially for impoverished nations and their environment.<sup>6</sup> In any society where an unfettered free-market ethos dominates, those most affected by the impact of globalization are often the poor and vulnerable. While the global economy promises prosperity to all citizens of the world, in many instances, it benefits only the rich and powerful in those countries. While globalization aided by the explosion of technology has also improved life for many, especially in the nations of the global South, the benefits have not sufficiently spread to the poor and weak of the countries of the South. There are negative effects, particularly environmental issues. The issue of global justice remains a concern in the era of globalization.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Wolfgang R. Schmidt, 'Globalization – Universality – Utopia', in *Theology and Cultures*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Tainan, Taiwan: Chung Jung Christian University and Tainan Theological College and Seminary, 2004), 11.

<sup>6</sup> Schmidt, 'Globalization – Universality – Utopia'.

<sup>7</sup> See Samuel Ngun Ling, 'Communicating Christ in Myanmar: Issues, Interactions, and Perspectives', a paper presented and published by the Association for Theological Education in Myanmar (ATEM), 2005.

### *Minority and Religious Pluralism*

Religious pluralism is a reality of our time, as Stanley J. Samartha remarked, ‘To reject exclusivism and to accept plurality, to be committed to one’s faith and to be open to the faith communities of our neighbours, to choose to live in a global community of communities, sharing the ambiguities of history and the mystery of life – these are the imperatives of our age.’<sup>8</sup> Given a multicultural and religious situation, religious pluralism does not necessarily create a loss of one’s own faith tradition, culture or identity but rather it helps to enrich common life, community relationship and global ministry. Actually, it comes as a critique of the present globalization that is built on capitalism – the capitalist value of privatizing one’s own space and property, and zealously guarding it. But religious or cultural pluralism comes as a demand of ‘the other’ to come into our private space, where we jealously guard our God and our religion. This therefore requires an altogether new orientation. Religious pluralism provides us with an opportunity to speak out and be heard, with an assertion that every view deserves to be given a hearing, including those views which are decidedly religious.

Generally speaking, a Christian living in the post-modern era is constantly engaged in a process of creative negotiation between one’s faith commitments and the various other pluralisms that exist, regardless of whether they are religious or political or economic or social.<sup>9</sup> Here, creative negotiation would require not only discernment but also the ability to work for the common good of humanity and not just for one’s own religious, ethnic, cultural or national group. The pronouncement of the theologian Hans Küng continues to reverberate with wisdom: ‘No survival without a world ethic. No world peace without peace between religions. No peace between the religions without dialogue between the religions.’<sup>10</sup>

### *Religion and Ethnic Conflict*

The horror and the consequences of 9/11 still weigh upon the world although the years have passed. The world today continues to be full of tragedies, hatred, fears, killing, destruction and war. The current situation calls for an even more fervent determination to rebuild communities across divisions and boundaries. Destructive forces masquerading as religious loyalty destroy the fabric of civil society in many countries. Ethnic conflict

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<sup>8</sup> S.J. Samartha, “Globalization and its Cultural Consequences”, in *Ethical Issues in the Struggle for Justice* (eds) M.P. Joseph and Daniel D. Chetti (Tiruvalla, India: CSS/BTTBPSA, 1998), 193.

<sup>9</sup> John McGowan, *Postmodernism and Its Critics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 215.

<sup>10</sup> Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Continuum, 1993), xv.

rages in many parts of Africa and Asia. For that, we need not only a theoretical acknowledgement of religious pluralism but also a pedagogy of encounter: the various ways of people living together despite the tragedies that divide us and make us into strangers and enemies. Religion can be a potential source of either peace or of conflict. It can liberate or torture, it can heal or harm, humanity. The ideal goal of most world religions is working for the good of humanity. In their ideal vision, religions aspire to transform peoples and cultures for the better. Many world religions do have as their basic teaching the cultivation of compassion. Religions try to turn their adherents' inward piety towards the outward practice of compassion. In a general reading of religions, it could be said that the one who has love and compassion with a pure heart experiences peace within. When there is anger and hatred within, one becomes miserable, irrespective of whether one is a Christian or a Hindu or a Muslim. It is therefore important for all religious adherents to focus on the inner aspects of religion and avoid conflicts over its outer shell, which are the various rites, rituals, confessions and dogmas.

Unfortunately, religion causes conflicts and violence when it is hijacked by forces that are political, economic or even geopolitical. In fact, it would be a great mistake to link terrorism simply with a particular religion. For some analyses, terrorism is actually born out of discontent and frustration produced by extreme marginalization and poverty. The increasing gap between the poor and the rich will continue to be a breeding ground for conflicts, and religion will be hijacked by the forces that fight for their survival. No amounts of arms and ammunition will root out terrorism if oppressive policies remain unchallenged. Global justice is the only path to reducing conflicts and terrorism. From another aspect, terrorism has opened our eyes to look afresh at the social and political dynamics of religious pluralism.

### *Religion, Power and Identity*

For many, religion provides, on the one hand, a powerful source of identity for people, and on the other, a force for violent activities. Identity such as ethnic or religious identity is a given social status while being a religious minority is often a status of human origin,<sup>11</sup> because of the abuse of religions by political power. Religion plays an important role in preserving and promoting people's identity. There is an awakening of marginal identities in many parts of Asia – ethnics, tribal, Dalits and others. These

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<sup>11</sup> Samuel Ngun Ling, 'Ethnicity, Religion and Theology in Asia: An Exploration from the Myanmar Context', a paper presented at a Consultation on Ethnic Minorities in the Mekong Region on 23rd-25th November 2007 at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Hong Kong, in Hans Hoerschelmann (ed), *Ethnicity, Religion and Theology: A Consultation on Ethnic Minorities in the Mekong Region* (Hong Kong: LTS, Mekong Mission Forum Publication, 2007), 6-7.

marginal identities naturally clash with a revival of dominant nationalist ideologies that often bear the stamp of religion. Felix Wilfred, an Indian theologian, observes: ‘The challenge posed by identities is cushioned by attempting to integrate them within a national framework or common project. In the process, the weaker power positions in which identities find themselves finally result in their being effectively discriminated against. In sum, the ideology of bourgeois liberal nationalism followed by post-colonial states proves to be quite detrimental to the cause of identities.’<sup>12</sup> In sum, any situation of religious and cultural pluralism, social and cultural identities of different religions should be maintained and preserved, without making any religion or culture superior to others in the name of identity.

Religion can become an abuse of power of a predominant group when it is not used as a source of relationships. Power that is embedded especially in relationships between religious communities is seldom reflected upon by many of us. Sometimes, discussion of religious pluralism seems to be too abstract and theoretical that it does not take into consideration the ground realities or root causes of conflict. Religious conflicts are usually not about doctrines and beliefs, but are somehow triggered by social, economic and political factors. The control of resources, political power and the fear of losing one group’s influence – all these contribute a great deal to religious conflicts. Our theology of religions should emerge from lived situations or experience and should not emerge from detached study. We need to pose the question of interfaith relations not only as a theological question but as a question relating to power, justice and community. It is in this area of human relationships that some of the sharpest questions of theology and faith should be raised.

### *Towards a New Global Spirituality*

Some major religions like Christianity have today become strongly institutionalized in terms of their centuries-old establishment. The problem is that they have been too preoccupied with their own institutional problems and have, therefore, lost touch with practical issues facing local communities. Religion becomes a *status quo* when its institutional leaders adhere strongly to the traditions of the religion alone. Institutional religions therefore fail to address various socio-political-ethical issues or to raise prophetic voices against social evils that have profoundly affected human society today. The focus of religious pluralism is not to construct a new religion, but to seek a new world – a world in which people matter more than systems and traditions – and a world where there is equality and justice.

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<sup>12</sup> Felix Wilfred, ‘Identity: Suppressed, Alienated, Lost’, in *Concilium*, 2000/2, 31-38.

The kind of spirituality that every religion seeks must be dynamic, liberative and life-affirming. Spirituality is the power of daring to live, to act, to serve and to share. The capitalist concept of economic power has to do only with selfish possession, consummation and domination. The promises of economic globalization come to us in rivalry with the promises of our religions. It is therefore considered to act as 'the religion of market', to borrow the words of M.P. Joseph, an Indian theologian.<sup>13</sup> This 'religion of market' is losing its human face, creating a gap between rich and poor, between powerful and oppressed, between the social classes, and between neighbours within the same locality. The rich neighbour may no longer see his or her poor neighbour who lives nearby, but will rather talk with a friend who lives far away. While globalization brings us closer to each other in terms of information technology, it can also make those of us who live nearby to appear to be further and further away, leaving an unbridgeable gap between friends and neighbours. In contrast with the emerging trends of 'religion of market', the spiritualities of all religious traditions envision a different view of power for life – the power to dare living, giving and sharing with others. This is the real power that the Christian and non-Christian traditions must continue to develop. Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet is the great symbol of a dynamic religious power. Gotama the Buddha taught that even the morsel in the beggar's bowl should be shared. Sharing, not the accumulation of possessions, is the criterion for a liberated life. The inner power of any religion should be our common ground for our new global spirituality.

In our approach to a new global spirituality, religion must play the role of a peace-maker or pacifier. The problem of religious conflicts over centuries is never the Bible or the Torah or the Quran. Indeed, the problem is never the faith – it is the adherents, and how the adherents of religions behave towards each other. We must, once again, teach our peoples the ways of peace and the ways of tolerance.

We Christians are taught in the book of Acts how a new global spiritual community came into existence. On the day of Pentecost, with the coming of the universal Spirit of God, people of diverse languages understood each other. A new language was born with the birth of a new global community – a common language of love. Love remains our common global language for all religions today. Mutual understanding was further expressed as mutual responsibility. The community of Pentecost became a caring community – the community of love. In this age of communication, our religion must be able to bring about a community of mutual respect, love and tolerance. We need a spirituality that can bring an antidote and thus heal fragile and broken human relationships.

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<sup>13</sup> M.P. Joseph (ed), *Theologies and Cultures* (Tainan, Taiwan: Chang Jung Christian University & Tainan Theological College and Seminary, 2004), 3.

*The Mission for Solidarity against Power and Poverty*

If we accept a pluralistic framework in our relationships with other faiths, our mission practice ought to undergo a change. A conviction that is growing in many circles of Asian theologians is that we need to move away from a triumphalistic model of mission to a solidarity model. In a situation where God's gift of life is continuously threatened, vitiated and destroyed by conflicts, war, religious fanaticism, economic exploitation and other forces of death, we need to reflect on God's mission of giving life. Biblically speaking, God is a God of life and to believe in God is to participate in the life-giving activity of God. Mission is the endeavour of the Christian community in celebrating and enhancing God's gift of life. The essential character of life, which a community shares with other human beings and nature, is inter-relatedness. In responsibility to one another and to nature, life is preserved and God's purpose for it is fulfilled. To believe in the God of life is to affirm the supremacy of life over death. This also means 'any assault on life – hunger, destitution, squalor, oppression or injustice – is an attack on God and God's will for the life of humankind. A denial of life is therefore a rejection of the God of life.'<sup>14</sup>

Second, the God of the Bible is a liberator God, and faith in the liberator God calls for struggle against all forces of oppression. Liberation is not the invention of Latin America or of Marxists. It is a central affirmation of the Bible. The living God of the Bible is a liberator God. Only in solidarity with the victims of the system and with broken people can we testify to the liberating power of God in Christ. The cross is the sign of the solidarity of all humanity. The worship of Christ without participating in his life, his suffering and his death would mean denying him and his mission.

Third, the God of the Bible is also a God of justice. Justice in the Bible is not about balancing rights, duties and rewards. It is not even about absolute equality. It is about 'just relationships'. Exclusion and marginalization are two forms of injustice that in turn distort our relationships. Life cannot be lived to the full without justice – not without the inclusion of the powerless. 'Power that is not shared or transformed into love is pure domination and oppression.'<sup>15</sup> Life is what we share with others. Life in all its fullness is given to us in Jesus Christ. It is life for others. We witness to that life, enhanced by love, liberation and justice.

In the context of modern Myanmar, with a dominant Buddhist religiosity claiming and imposing a monocultural worldview, whereby minorities are suppressed from the free expression of religion and ethnicity, it is apt to recall a significant quote from the Emperor Ashoka of India, who embraced Buddhism, who in one of his Rock Edicts said,

One should not honour only one's own religion and condemn other religions. Instead, one should honour other religions for various reasons. By so doing,

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in *Araya, God of the Poor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987).

<sup>15</sup> Dorothee Sölle, *Choosing Life* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1981), 96.

one helps one's own religion to grow and also renders service to the religions of others. In acting otherwise, one digs the grave of one's own religion and harms other religions as well. Someone who honours his own religion and condemns other religions may do so out of devotion to his religion, thinking, 'I will glorify my religion'; but his actions injure his own religion more gravely. Concord is good. Let all listen and be willing to listen to the doctrines professed by others (Rock Edict 12).

Emperor Ashoka represents a glorious tradition of tolerant religious co-existence and peaceful synthesis. That tradition should live on among religious believers today. 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God,' said Jesus (Matt. 5:9).

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# CHRISTIAN MISSION, POWER AND NATIVE PARTICIPATION

Atola Longkumer

‘The truth about the past can never be recovered in its entirety, but that is no argument for not pursuing it with all the industry and accuracy that can be mustered.’<sup>1</sup>

‘Words... make up only a small proportion of the expressive actions and interactions that fill the space of social existence.’<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

The history of Christian mission continues to evoke interest of diverse nature and provide productive pursuits of intellectual queries for many disciplines.<sup>3</sup> That the study of the history of Christian mission requires multiple lenses and perspectives is common knowledge and it therefore cannot be understood as a homogeneous event. The history of Christian mission is more complex with diverse factors contributing to the task of evangelizing the ‘heathen’.<sup>4</sup> What was binding the diversity of operation was the common zeal shared by the missionaries, in sharing the good news of the gospel, inevitably accompanied by the desire to spread western civilization, perceived to be superior to the rest of the ‘dark’ world. The history of Christian mission also occasioned a complicated manifestation and expression of power, so inherent in human nature.<sup>5</sup> To be part of

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Leicester, UK: Apollos, 1990), 13.

<sup>2</sup> John L. and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, Vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 37.

<sup>3</sup> For a persuasive argument that Christian mission as an important area that continues to be engaging and resourceful, despite some claims of being passé, see Brian Stanley, ‘Mission Studies and Historical Research: Past Trends and Future Trajectories’, in *Swedish Missiological Themes*, 99. 4 (2011), 376-94.

<sup>4</sup> The term ‘heathen’ is used advisedly here, to retain the historical connotation of the missionary period. In the same vein, the terms ‘natives’, ‘savage’, ‘uncivilised’, ‘dark’ are employed to represent the attitude of the historical period, but without adhering to the connotations it carried for the agents of the West in the heyday of mission and imperialism.

<sup>5</sup> Christian mission complicity in the dynamics of power is illustrated in the Canadian Residential Schools, which provided the case study for the Edinburgh 2010 theme of Mission and Power. In the Canadian Residential Schools for the First

human society is to be located in a power spectrum of different layers of social relationships.<sup>6</sup> Humanity exists within the complex web of a power matrix – class, caste, age, gender, race, countries and clans. And the history of Christian mission and the encounters and interactions it afforded between the missionary from the West and the ‘heathen’ (as perceived and categorized at that time) of the many lands and cultures (usually) is not different from the human condition of a power matrix.

Power was underpinned and manifested in the project of Christian mission in complicated dynamics. While there was motivational power in the conviction to share the good news of the Christian religion to lands far away,<sup>7</sup> Christian mission also unfolded within the complex milieu of socio-political power dynamics of western imperialism which, according to Brian Stanley, is one of the most controversial themes in modern Christian history.<sup>8</sup> The Christianization of ‘heathen’ lands and ‘civilizing the dark continents’ were inseparable processes. In working out these perceived purposes, the dynamics of power were deployed in more than a single mode; rather, the means of education, ridicule, caricature, authority, imposition of cultural manners, economic realignment were all forms of power dynamics in the encounter between the agents of the West and the ‘natives’ of the lands conquered and/or Christianized. The relationship of power and Christian mission is more complex. On the one hand, there is a reading of Christian mission as a manipulative project of existing socio-political power dynamics in which the cultures and peoples it encountered

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Nation, the indigenous peoples of Canada were mission projects to educate and ‘civilize’ the children in European manners and style. The study identified the history of mission to the indigenous peoples of Canada and narrated the profound impact of the mission residential schools beginning in the seventeenth century. The narration and analyses of these mission projects of residential schools among the people of the First Nation, Inuit, and Meitis, revealed the painful experience and victimization of the indigenous peoples through the abuse of power by missionaries. See Daryl Balia, Kirsteen Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing to Christ Today*, Vol. II (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 86-115.

<sup>6</sup> Max Weber’s sociology of social structure and authority remains foundational for theoretical framework for power and authority and their function in human societies. See H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills (eds), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948). Sociologists continue to discuss the issue of agency and power within social structures and there is no consensus on the role, causal factors and ability for conscious action in the formation of agency of an individual, for a helpful theoretical discussion on the subject, See Dave Elder-Vass, *The Causal Power of Social Structures: Emergence, Structures and Agency* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Johannes van den Berg, *Constrained by Jesus’ Love: An Inquiry into the motives of the missionary awakening in Great Britain in the period between 1698 and 1816* (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok, 1956).

<sup>8</sup> Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, 13.

were subjugated and shorn of their rich culture.<sup>9</sup> Conversely, Christian mission also exemplified the true vulnerability of God expressed in the incarnational nature of Christian mission, with identification with the local cultures giving the other reading.<sup>10</sup> The first position interprets Christian mission as rendering the ‘natives’ as passive, acquiescent, amenable recipients of the gospel, given the power dynamics of the circumstances of being Christianized and civilized. Such a reading is found to be limited and untenable under scrutiny against archival records which unveil rich resources as more researches are undertaken into micro-contexts. To be sure, the archival repository and its production and control are not without their own power dynamics.<sup>11</sup>

The encounters and interactions between Christian mission and the ‘natives’ certainly took place within an imbalance of power, which came to bear on these encounters. The relationship and power shown was probably more complex than any neat categorization into a dominating power and mute recipient communities. There are instances that reveal more complicated power dynamics, in which the ‘natives’ are not depicted as passive objects but apparently participated and shaped their community by making the choices they perceived to be good for them.<sup>12</sup> Such

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<sup>9</sup> Many theologians and historians from the global South have developed this reading of the encounter between local cultures and Christian missions, e.g. John Mbiti, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, C.S. Song, M.M. Thomas, K.C. Abraham and Wati Longchar among others. For a relatively comprehensive collection of multi-contextual theological responses to the alleged Christian mission exploits of local cultures in the context of Asia, see Douglas J. Alwood (ed), *Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Themes* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1980); C.S. Song, *Tell us our names: Story Theology from an Asian Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984).

<sup>10</sup> See Andrew F. Walls, ‘The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture’, ‘Culture and Coherence in Christian History’, ‘The Translation Principles in Christian History’, in Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Edinburgh, UK: T. & T. Clark, 1996); Kwame Bediako, a student of Walls, has developed these concepts and interpretation in the context of Africa: see his *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> The role of archives in the mode of knowledge production is discussed from different perspectives and disciplines: See Brian Keith Axel (ed), *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and its Futures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002). A counter discourse on the reification and categorisation of native knowledge, not without bias, is vigorously presented by Linda Smith Tuhiwai in the context of Maori culture. See her *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Dunedin, NZ: University of Otago Press; New York: Zed Books, 1999, fifth impression 2002).

<sup>12</sup> A word of clarification is necessary at this point on the categorization of ‘natives’: a benefit of post-modern perspective is an awareness of the multiple experiences and conditions as opposed to the monolithic and homogeneous

participation, albeit inadvertent, is reflected in the persistent residue of cultural symbols and practices, demonstrated vehemently in socio-cultural hierarchies, particularly in gender relationships. The notion of the outsider, 'the other', is another vivid aspect that the 'natives' have maintained, demonstrating their active participation in making meaning in the new context as being converts to a new religion and the worldview it entailed. Despite the espousal of a new religion and the cultural transformation it initiated, some marked cultural traits persisted which in turn contribute to the identity of the community.

Drawing primarily from the socio-cultural contexts of the Naga<sup>13</sup> people of north-east India, another example is added to the argument that the discourse of Christian mission and power is more complex than is often presumed, in which the 'native' roles and participation challenge neat binary categories of power. In clarification, as noted earlier, it needs to be said that a theoretical discussion on the notion and expression of power at different levels of human society is not the main focus of this paper; rather, it is presumed that the dynamics of power are inherent in any human encounter and hence the following discussion will attempt to portray the significance of power employed by the 'natives' in their encounter with Christian mission.<sup>14</sup> Basic aspects that are significant in which the active participation of 'natives' is apparent are evident in instances of embracing modern education, the status of women, the notion of 'the other', and marked cultural identity.

### Christian Mission and Native Agency and Participation

Writing on British imperialism and Christian missions, Brian Stanley states: 'British Christians believed that the missionary was called to propagate the imagined benefits of western civilization alongside the

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conditions of any category. Hence, the usage of 'natives' carries with it the possibility of diversities and layers of meanings and conditions.

<sup>13</sup> Many ethnographical texts describe individual Naga tribes, particularly, from administrative officers such as J.P. Mills, J.H. Hutton, and W.C. Smith. Recent publications on the Nagas gleaned from these and portray a synthesized collective Naga history and culture, which has a value for reference, despite the limitations such an approach might incur: see Julian Jacobs, *The Nagas: Hill Peoples of Northeast India* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999); Verrier Elwin (ed), *The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1969).

<sup>14</sup> Further clarification is in order, as it is neither the intention nor the persuasion of the writer to argue that the natives were powerful and authoritative in the encounter. In a generalised perspective, 'natives' were indisputably powerless in the face of the powers of European imperialism and zealous evangelisation. Historical examples abound. The point, however, is to highlight the fact, in different contexts, varying degrees of 'native' participation can be noted, albeit, inadvertent. But it does not erase or condone the episodes, policies and practices that were blatantly dominant and which rendered the 'natives' powerless: see footnote 4 of this essay.

Christian message. It was assumed that the poor, benighted, 'heathen' were in a condition of massive cultural deprivation, which the gospel alone could remedy.<sup>15</sup> Christian mission was more than preaching the good news and making converts to the church; mission was also about civilizing the 'natives' which entailed transforming them into Europeans in manners and thoughts. Such a 'civilizing' project was fed by the underlying assumption that European ways of life were superior in every aspect of society – economy, culture, politics – and the 'natives' way of life embodied moral depravity and barbarism.<sup>16</sup> While there were assumptions and imbalance of power in the encounter between the agents of the West in the form of missionaries and colonial officials, and the objective of transforming the 'natives' into modern, Christian 'Europeans' in manners and thoughts, the transformation was not akin to a sculptor's work of making replicas. The encounter initiated changes, transformations that were unintended, unexpected and, most significantly, mutually transforming. The evaluation of this encounter is best described in the following words by the anthropologists John and Jean Comaroff:

... colonial encounters everywhere consisted in a complex dialectic: a dialectic mediated by social differences and cultural distinctions, that transformed everyone and everything caught up in it, if not in the same way; a dialectic that yielded new identities, new frontiers, new signs, and styles – and reproduced some older ones as well; a dialectic animated less often by coercive acts of conquest, even if violence was always immanent in it, than by attempts to alter existing modes of production and reproduction, to recast the taken-for-granted surfaces of everyday life, to remake consciousness; a dialectic, therefore, founded on an intricate mix of visible and invisible agency, of word and gesture, of subtle persuasion and brute force on the part of all concerned.<sup>17</sup>

Coercion, brute force, subtle persuasion were all part of the encounter; however, the remaking of consciousness, an existing mode of life and the perceived transformation also formed a firm basis for the project of imperial and religious conversion projects. In such encounters of the agents of the West and the 'natives', characterized by imbalance of power, the natives were presumed best to be a voiceless, inactive, passive, malleable people submitted to the power of gun, government and God as employed by the agents of the West. Yet the consequences of such encounters demonstrate a more complex interaction, in which there were no fixed templates that fit presumptions and predictions. The encounter was dialectic and helped produce new identities and ideas. It can be said that the

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<sup>15</sup> Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, 159.

<sup>16</sup> Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, 160-62; see also Norman Etherington (ed), *Missions and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> John L. and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 28.

'natives' were active participants in the complex dialectic of multi-layers of differences.<sup>18</sup>

### Native Participation in Gender Locations

That the 'natives' – the recipient of the western civilizing and Christianization process – were not as passive and malleable is illustrated from the pages of the Naga people's encounter with Christian mission in the late nineteenth century. The Naga are an indigenous people of the Indo-Myanmar region, a majority of them living in the north-east Indian states of Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal and Assam. Orality in transmitting community knowledge, proximity to nature, with an age- and gender-derived social hierarchy, warriors, land-centred, patriarchal, and a shamanic religion all serve to mark the indigenous identity of the Naga. Being colonized by the British and Christianized by Baptist missionaries from America at the beginning of the nineteenth century also forms the historical experience of the Naga people.

Christianization invariably introduced modern education to the Naga people. The archival records tell of a Naga chief imploring missionaries to come to his village and teach his children to read the written word. It is also important to note that women were initiated early into the modern education system. In fact, there are records that the first learning classes were conducted for young mothers who stayed at home taking care of their young ones while the elder members of the village were away for the day's work in the rice fields.<sup>19</sup> Narola Imchen surmises: 'Within a few months she [Mary Mead Clark] had started a school for girls. This was the first formal school for children of either gender in Nagaland.'<sup>20</sup> Female converts to the new religion went to the neighbouring villages as Bible women. Both men and women began receiving modern education at the same time. When education was introduced, there was neither discrimination nor resistance against women attending the schools; hence both men and women began to participate in modern society with their respective skills and professions. It

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<sup>18</sup> As influences of the study and approach of John and Jean Comaroff, there is a growing number of excellent resources that demonstrate the persistence of the local and native ways of life. See, for instance, Hyaewol Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009); Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar and Connie Shemo (eds), *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Narola Imchen, *Women in Church and Society: The Story of Ao Women* (Jorhat, India: Eastern Theological College, 2001); Aphuno Chase Roy, *Women in Transition: Angami Naga Women from 1878 to the Present*; Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Christianity in India*, 438.

<sup>20</sup> Narola Imchen, *Women in Church and Society*, 49.

remains the same today among the Naga that there is no discrimination in acquiring education and pursuing modern professions.

It is important to note this aspect of the Naga people's conversion to Christianity, and the subsequent development of new identities for the modern society they were being initiated into. Acquiring modern education and professionalism afforded new identities and roles for the Naga people.<sup>21</sup> While education was available to every member of the community, including the women who also acquired new roles as a result of education, they remained, however, excluded from the social governing councils consisting of male members of the clans. Christianization transformed Naga villages into Christian communities, in which the church acquired significant social status and a rigid institutionalization. However, the participation of women remained limited, as the traditional governing hierarchy consisting of male clan members, where women could not be members, was maintained. Therefore, the paradox continues in contemporary Naga society: a woman may be a state official by virtue of education and professionalism, and the male members of community governing councils may consult with a woman state bureaucrat, but the same woman cannot attend a male-only clan meeting in the village. The patriarchal social hierarchy is rigidly maintained in which male members reserve to themselves the power and authority for decisions and community direction. The transformation ushered in by Christianization and the colonial administration did not extend to the gender boundary set by the patriarchal practices of the indigenous tradition. The native converts still participated by employing the assumed power bestowed by the culture in defining gender roles in the community. Whereas female converts were powerless, the men continued to possess the power of patriarchy in the encounter with the West through colonial officers and Christian missionaries. The complex levels of power hierarchy continued to operate to legitimize the exclusion of women from the community's governing authority, notwithstanding the collective experience of embracing a new religion and a modern liberal state mechanism.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Frederick S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God: A Brief History of the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India* (Guwahati, India: Christian Literature Service, 1971); Julian Jacobs, *The Nagas*.

<sup>22</sup> Women and their status and identity often serve as a base for assertion of power and authority by both the agents of the West and the 'natives'; an incisive analysis is presented of the context of the Nadars in Tamil country in the nineteenth century, in which the domesticity of women contributed to the process of reformulating identities marked by acquired lifestyles, behaviour and habits that gave converts their desired social ambitions. See Eliza F. Kent, *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 7, 73.

### Native Participation and Native Symbols

The famous Indian convert Pandita Ramabai provides another illustration of active agency and participation of the ‘native’ in the mission project. A whole book presents the different cognates of Ramabai’s agency and active participation in the process of embracing the new religion on her own terms.<sup>23</sup> Stating the argument that Ramabai’s active negotiation of the received normative of the new faith form the impulses of indigenization of Christianity according to her cultural backdrop, Paul Joshua quotes at length from a letter of Ramabai to Sister Geraldine:

I cannot fully understand Sister Eleanor’s letter. The two things which I can make out are there, that the colour is approved by Father Goreh and that she wishes us (that is, for the Sisters of the Indian Community) a Cross like yours with Latin words on it and not Sanskrit...Whatever may be in other’s opinion all the good things are very, very dear to me, and if I do not find anything in them that is contrary to our blessed Religion, I will not and must not part with them. I do not want to take from other what is not wanted, and also what is not good for my country... Well now, for a moment I put aside my opinion and take Sister Eleanor’s. Suppose we are going to have a Cross – as she wishes us to do, then why should it not be inscribed with Sanskrit words, instead of Latin? Here again I am obliged to be a conservative. Do you think that the Latin language has something better in it than our old Sanskrit or have you the same feeling for the Latin as the Brahmins have for Sanskrit (i.e. to think it to be the Sacred Language and spoken by God and the Angels)? I stick fast to Sanskrit, not because I think it to be sacred or the language of the gods, but because I think it is the most beautiful and the oldest language of my dear native land. And, therefore, if I must have a Cross, I should like to see Sanskrit words written upon it instead of the Latin words. Moreover, I do not understand the Latin, neither (do) my countrywomen (with some exception). And even also Latin is not the mother tongue of Marathi [people], so our Indian Sister will not find a single word in it that they know or is like to some word that is known to them.<sup>24</sup>

While the representation of Sanskrit with India has been critiqued as limited at best and oppression at worst,<sup>25</sup> for the obvious reason that India and its peoples are not homogeneous, but rather diverse, and that a plurality of cultures exist in India, taken in its own context, Ramabai’s argument for the use of Sanskrit represents an assertion of agency from her linguistic

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<sup>23</sup> Roger E. Hedlund, Sebastian Kim and Rajkumar Boaz Johnson (eds), *Indian and Christian: The Life and Legacy of Pandita Ramabai* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Paul Joshua Bhakiaraj, ‘Forging an Identity Fit for God and Country: Pandita Ramabai as a Pioneer of Indigenous Christianity’, in Roger E. Hedlund, Sebastian Kim and Rajkumar Boaz Johnson (eds), *Indian and Christian*, 297-98.

<sup>25</sup> Dalit Theology and Tribal Theology emerged to counter the representation of India with Brahminical and Sanskrit texts and history and perspective. A.P. Nirmal (ed), *A Reader in Dalit Theology* (Chennai, India: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, 1992); James Massey, *Down Trodden: The Struggle of India’s Dalits for Identity, Solidarity and Liberation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997).

identity. It is not the ‘blessed Religion’ Ramabai had qualms about, but certain symbols of the religion, particularly the use of Latin. Ramabai clearly states that she prefers the use of Sanskrit over Latin to inscribe the words on the cross, not because Sanskrit is the language spoken by the gods as presumed by the Brahmins, but because it is ‘native’ to the land (as presumed then) and familiar to the people. The message of the Cross, argued Ramabai, needs to be expressed in language accessible to the local people. Language is one of the clearest markers of cultural identity and to claim its right to be heard, learned and used signify the powerful assertion of native agency and identity. Lamin Sanneh in his famous book, *Translating the Message*, has demonstrated with ample and excellent illustrations from the history of mission on the empowering effect of putting the gospel into the vernacular.<sup>26</sup>

The irony of the work of the translation in Christian mission lies in the inevitable development of elite natives. Elite natives were formed and produced in the educational institutions of the Christian missions. In the chapter, entitled without ambiguities, *Missions and the Nationalist Revolutions, 1895-1960*, Brian Stanley discusses with ample historical records the direct impact which modern education provided by Christian mission had on the emergence of nationalist movements in the nations under the British Empire.<sup>27</sup> Stanley concludes:

Many of the products of mission secondary schools or Christian institutions of higher education did indeed achieve prominence in church or political leadership; but they frequently became the articulates of nationalist protest in a way that some of their missionary mentors had failed to anticipate.<sup>28</sup>

While Christian mission had planned the evangelization of the ‘heathen’ and civilizing them in the manners of Europe, they had not anticipated the production of articulate natives who would assert and demand their rights for freedom as nation-states and even for a theology free of western influence – as evidenced by the rise of many contextual theologies such as Dalit, Tribal, Minjung and Black Theologies. To be directed and shaped by the mechanics and structure of mission and imperialism posed more complex questions once education had set the wheels of enlightenment and empowerment in motion. The efforts of Sister Geraldine charged by the Mother Superior to influence and convince Ramabai failed, as Robert E. Frykenberg writes: ‘Passionately nationalistic, Ramabai never ceased to see herself as Hindu, by which she meant Indian, in her cultural and national loyalty.’<sup>29</sup> The tenacity of Ramabai in her resolve not to conform to the expectations of others and her refusal to be controlled by the community

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<sup>26</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989, 1997, eighth edition).

<sup>27</sup> Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, 133-55.

<sup>28</sup> Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag*, 134.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Eric Frykenberg, ‘Ramabai and World Christianity’, 156.

was observed by the Oxford Indologist Max Müller, who remarked that she was ‘a heroic Hindu lady, in appearance small, delicate, and timid, in reality strong and bold as a lioness’.<sup>30</sup>

The expectations and often stipulations by mission and colonial agents from the ‘natives’ and the converts were challenged, even if inadvertently, and the outcome of encounters and interactions was markedly ‘refashioned’, as noted by the Comaroffs in their observation of the Southern Tswana’s appropriation of the values, patterns of consumption and behaviour introduced to them by the European colonials and mission agents.<sup>31</sup>

‘Refashioned’ roles, identities and practices are also described by Judith Becker in the observation of Christmas among the Christians of West Papua. A pre-Christian ritual known as *Seni*, a festival of friendship between communities, is adapted into the Christmas celebrations. The ritual of *Seni* involves pig-roasting on an earthen oven, after which the pig is then feasted upon by the community together, including the neighbouring villages. Becker states that Christians in West Papua celebrates a *Seni*-Christmas, quite different from the way the missionaries observed with their own families.<sup>32</sup> *Seni*-Christmas therefore presents a ‘refashioned’ ritual in the new religion – Christianity – espoused by the West Papuan. The celebrations of Christmas in many of indigenous communities which have embraced Christianity provide parallel illustrations to the West Papua *Seni*-Christmas. Many Naga villages, which are predominantly Christian, have marches round the village on Christmas morning, exemplifying their cultural backdrop of performing chantings and jubilant celebrations of triumph in warfare. Celebrations were communal. And Christmas celebrations vividly manifest this residue in community meals and marches.

These refashioned forms of Christianity observable in communities that espoused the new religion as introduced by missionaries from the West, form what Frykenberg describe ‘a Christian World that was not Western’<sup>33</sup> and a completely new genre of indigenous Christianity as missiologists and historians describe as having emerged at the beginning of the late twentieth century.<sup>34</sup> Paul Joshua Bhakiaraj presents this new genre in the context of

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<sup>30</sup> Quoted by Robert Eric Frykenberg from *The Life and Letters of the Right Honourable Friedrich Max Müller* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1902), 2, in his ‘Ramabai and World Christianity’, 149.

<sup>31</sup> John L. and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 59.

<sup>32</sup> Judith Becker (ed), *European Missions in Contact Zones: Transformation Through Interaction in a (post) colonial World* (Gottingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Robert Eric Frykenberg, ‘Ramabai and World Christianity’, 156.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Joshua Bhakiaraj, ‘Forms of Asian Indigenous Christianities’ in Felix Wilfred (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 171-81. Daniel H. Bays (ed), *Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press,

Asia in a chapter on 'Forms of Asian Indigenous Christianities'.<sup>35</sup> Bhakiaraj writes: 'Everywhere it went, Christianity influenced and was influenced by its engagement with local host cultures and peoples. In its numerical, geographical, cultural and political dimensions, to mention just a few, Christianity has been transformed noticeably over its two millennia of existence.'<sup>36</sup>

The Mukyokai (non-church) movement led by Kanzo Uchimura (1861-1930) serves as a 'fountainhead of indigenous Christianity' in Japan. Uchimura's Mukyokai movement adapted a devotional approach to Christ without adhering to 'traditional Western forms of institutional Christianity'. Other examples of indigenous Christianity in Asia are: The Legacy of the Prayer Mountain (Korea), The True Jesus Church (China), The Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) (Philippines) – while numerous examples from India are identified by Bhakiaraj.<sup>37</sup>

Reception and engagement with Christian missions in 'heathen' lands and cultures exhibit a complex level of negotiation, varying between intentional and unwitting participation by the natives. Narrating the response to Christianity in south-east Asia, Julian Bautista surmised that conversion to Christianity was often more an ambiguous process, in which submission to the faith was balanced between the pragmatic and the spiritual. Political benefits and even colonial patronage were part of the negotiations in the conversion. Bautista also notes that conversion to Christianity did not necessarily result in the complete abandonment of traditional religious beliefs, but rather that Christianity was often expressed in the idiom of local practices.<sup>38</sup>

Related to the socio-cultural dimensions of gender, native-defining symbols, there is also the persistence of social boundaries in many contexts, in which the so-called 'other' continues to be held as 'the other'

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1999), 307. Mark R. Mullins, *Christianity made in Japan: A Study in Indigenous Movements* (Honolulu, HI: Hawaii University Press, 1998); M.L. Daneel, *Quest for Belonging: Introduction to a Study of African Independent Churches* (Gwero, Zimbabwe: Mambo, 1987); Atola Longkumer, *Shamans, Tanula Akuter (Holy Spirit People) and Christianity: A Study of religio-cultural transition of the Naga People* – doctoral dissertation submitted to the Senate of Serampore (University), 2007. See also the establishment of first Orthodox Christian communities in Africa, arguably an initiative of the 'natives' quoted in Pantelis Kalaitzidis, 'New Wine into Old Wineskins?: Orthodox Theology of Mission Facing the challenges of a Global World', in Atola Longkumer, Uta Andree and Po Ho Huang (eds), *Theological Education and Theology of Life: Transformative Christian Leadership in the 21st Century. A Festschrift for Dietrich Werner* (Oxford: Regnum: 2016).

<sup>35</sup> Bhakiaraj, 'Forms of Asian Indigenous Christianities', 171-81.

<sup>36</sup> Bhakiaraj, 'Forms of Asian Indigenous Christianities', 171.

<sup>37</sup> Bhakiaraj, 'Forms of Asian Indigenous Christianities', 175-79.

<sup>38</sup> Julian Bautista, 'Christianity in Southeast Asia: Colonialism, Nationalism and the Caveats to Conversion', in Felix Wilfred (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 215-30.

despite the many levels of change ushered into communities by the encounter with Christian mission. In other words, the differentiation and ensuing exclusion of those members regarded as 'others', by whatever parameters, was actively maintained in the converted state. The 'others' can be marked by such identifiers as clan, tribe and caste. Suffice it here to give two illustrations: inter-tribal relationships in north-east India and caste identity among many Christians. First, the latter is most vividly expressed in the matrimonial sections of church magazines – where families opting for the traditionally arranged marriage practice in India announce their search for appropriate grooms or brides for their children – states clearly the caste that is sought for the ideal match. Writing on the persistence of distinctions among the marginalized community, Sathianathan Clarke laments, 'Even so, all these theologies appear to have moved in one particular direction: linking God preferentially with one marginalized community without any consideration for links with other communities for whom God would have the same preferential option.'<sup>39</sup>

Secondly, 'the other' is maintained with rigour in the tribal socio-cultural boundary among Christians in north-east India. Such inter-tribal rivalry persists, in recent years sometimes manifested in inter-tribal clashes and ethnic violence. To be sure, such identity politics do not occur without reference to the larger political situation and state machination.<sup>40</sup>

### Conclusion

The events and pages from the history of Christian mission illustrate the complex place of power in human encounters of which there are multiple perspectives and experiences. Such examples shed light on the role of power that can be manipulated and/or enhanced by all the agents involved. The concept of power and its manifestations in disparate forms in human relationships and encounters continue to challenge the vision of a just and reconciled world. The socio-cultural expression of power persists in oppressive economic, gender, geo-political and caste forms. The celebration of the World Mission Conference centenary in Edinburgh 2010 prophetically noted the asymmetries of power in the following words: 'Within the global church, collectively and individually, we are called to be disturbed by the asymmetries that divide and trouble us. We are called to repent, diligently, constantly, and actively seeking practical ways to live into the reality that we are members of One Body. They will know that we

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<sup>39</sup> Sathianathan Clarke, 'Subalterns, identity politics and Christian Theology in India', in Sebastian C.H. Kim (ed), *Christian Theology in Asia* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 271-90.

<sup>40</sup> John Parratt, 'Christianity, Ethnicity, and Structural Violence: The Northeast India Case', in Ogbu U. Kalu (ed), *Interpreting Contemporary Christianity: Global Processes and Local Identities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 319-40.

are his disciples by our love.<sup>41</sup> The church and its mission for God's kingdom of a reconciled people sharing a just world have often found itself wanting in relation to the power dynamics in many contexts. Power and its practice, influence, authority, status and manipulations negate the vulnerability of the Cross. When power is understood as a means for self-centredness, Christian mission has often resulted in being 'more concerned with being in the centres of power, eating with the rich and lobbying for money to maintain ecclesial bureaucracy'.<sup>42</sup> The perils of such an allure to power are real, and perhaps the reminder from Edinburgh 2010 aptly directs us to the mission of the church that is grounded in the power of the Holy Spirit: 'Knowing the Holy Spirit who blows over the world at will, reconnecting creation and bringing authentic life, we are called to become communities of compassion and healing, where young people are actively participating in mission, and women and men share power and responsibilities fairly, where there is a new zeal for justice, peace and the protection of the environment, and a renewed liturgy reflecting the beauties of the Creator and creation.'<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Edinburgh 2010 Common Call: [www.edinburgh2010.org](http://www.edinburgh2010.org)

<sup>42</sup> Jooseop Keum (ed), *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 18.

<sup>43</sup> Edinburgh 2010 Common Call: [www.edinburgh2010.org](http://www.edinburgh2010.org)

# MISSION THROUGH THE LENS OF SUFFERING: DEFENDING JAPANESE AMERICANS DURING WORLD WAR TWO

Hiromi Chiba

## Introduction

The Pearl Harbor attack by the Japanese military on 7th December 1941 soon inflamed anti-Japanese sentiment in the US, especially on the West Coast, where the Japanese population, including US citizens, was concentrated. The rumours of Japanese fifth column activity at Pearl Harbor spread throughout the Coast areas, although 'there were no acts of sabotage in city and county of Honolulu' by Japanese residents on or subsequent to 7th December.<sup>1</sup> In fact, anti-Oriental discrimination had long been a feature of the racial situation there. After some weeks of confusion following the outbreak of war as to policy towards all enemy aliens and Japanese Americans, there was organized agitation for the total removal of Japanese from the Coast areas, which was promoted by elements long eager to rid the West Coast of the Japanese and by opportunist politicians.<sup>2</sup>

Then, amidst the mass anti-Japanese hysteria, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 on 19th February 1942, which gave the military the authority to create military areas and to exclude people from them. This action eventually resulted in the incarceration of approximately 113,000 persons of Japanese ancestry (hereby called Nikkei) living on the West Coast, two thirds of whom were US-born citizens. John L. DeWitt, the commanding general of the Western Defense Command carried out this forced total migration of people solely on the basis of race without evidence of misconduct or due process of law.<sup>3</sup>

The total movement of the Nikkei to assembly centres was completed by June 1942, followed by their removal to ten relocation centres in inland states, which was accomplished by November that year.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile no such measures were taken against citizens of German or Italian ancestry in the US. The government's denials of Japanese sabotage in Hawaii were not

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<sup>1</sup> Galen M. Fisher, 'Our Japanese Refugees', in *Christian Century*, 1st April 1942, 424. Honolulu Chief of Police reported this fact of no acts of sabotage by Japanese to the Tolan Congressional Defense Migration Committee in March 1942.

<sup>2</sup> Galen M. Fisher, 'Our Two Japanese-American Policies', in *Christian Century*, 25th August 1943, 961.

<sup>3</sup> Stephanie Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest* (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2008), 22-23.

<sup>4</sup> Toru Matsumoto, *Beyond Prejudice* (New York: Friendship Press, 1946), xi-xii.

given wide publicity, and indeed the government authorities ‘did not make a great effort from the outset to calm public hysteria’.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the majority of the Hawaiian Nikkei was not incarcerated, which contradicts the ‘military necessity’ reasoning for the total incarceration on the mainland US.<sup>6</sup>

Historians almost unanimously agree that the Roosevelt administration’s mass removal of the Nikkei was morally wrong, and the policy ‘both developed from and fanned anti-Japanese racism’ in the country. Indeed, after a vigorous ‘redress’ campaign in the 1970s and 1980s, President Ronald Reagan, in signing the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, offered the nation’s apology for its wartime actions that constituted ‘a grave injustice’ to Japanese Americans. President George H.W. Bush followed up with a letter of apology that accompanied the redress check of \$20,000 for each surviving victim.<sup>7</sup>

The present study will explore how Protestant churches in the US reacted to this abuse of power against the Nikkei by the government and the public during World War II. After surveying interdenominational actions, this study will investigate the case of the Methodist Church, one of the largest Protestant denominations in the US with approximately eight million members at that time, which was also the largest single Protestant group among the incarcerated Nikkei.<sup>8</sup>

Conventional scholarship has largely assumed that few Americans opposed this mass removal or sought to protect the rights of the Nikkei. However, as Stephanie Bangarth argued in *Voices Raised in Protest* (2008), the opposition began to be voiced publicly in the US by various concerned groups including liberals, leftists and academics in early 1942. The present study will add another dimension to the study of such protest, by demonstrating that Protestant churches played a major role in defending the rights of the Nikkei during the war. In fact, to date, ‘the reaction of religious bodies to the removal policy, and the involvement of various religious organizations in this regard, have received only a modicum of scholarly attention’.<sup>9</sup> Spotlighting this veiled aspect of the Japanese

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<sup>5</sup> Gordon K. Chapman, ‘The Church and Japanese Evacuation’, 1, Missionary Files Roll No. 600, ‘Japanese Americans, 1941-1944’, Methodist Library, Drew University, Madison, NJ. (All the archival materials of Methodist Library cited in this study are located at Drew University.)

<sup>6</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 20.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Shaffer, ‘Crack in the Consensus’, in *Radical History Review* 72 (1998), 84; Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 196.

<sup>8</sup> Clarence W. Hall, ‘Little Nisei... What Now?’ in *Christian Advocate*, 5th November 1942, 1421; ‘Comparative Statistics for a Century of Methodism’, in *Christian Advocate*, 8th November 1945, 1308.

<sup>9</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 6, 71. Among the limited scholarship that discussed this aspect, besides Bangarth’s work, are: Robert Shaffer, ‘Opposition to Internment: Defending Japanese American Rights during World War II’, in *Historian*, 61:3 (Spring 1999), 597-619; Nancy N. Conner, ‘From Internment to

American experiences, I will examine how Protestant missions interacted with the government and with the public in the face of war hysteria and injustice. I will further discuss some of the limitations and shortcomings of the churches' actions, as well as the disparity of opinions among the ministerial and the lay members of the churches.

By focusing on the roles of churches in supporting the Nikkei during World War II, I by no means intend to underestimate the racism and the hardships experienced by the Nikkei. Highlighting this aspect of the incarceration, as Bangarth noted, should rather serve to 'underscore the failure of democracy' in the US and 'of its political leadership and supporting populace'.<sup>10</sup> While the oppression and struggles of Japanese Americans requires the utmost academic attention, the stand taken by churches in fighting against prejudice and protecting their rights at that time should not go unnoticed. Furthermore, the examination of this aspect has important implications for the present-day world, where we witness ongoing ethnic prejudices, especially with frequent outbreaks of terrorism.

### Interdenominational Actions

Many church leaders raised their voices to protect the Nikkei, while no elected member of a political party condemned Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 and the American media was almost unanimous in its support for the mass removal. For example, as early as two days after the Pearl Harbor attack, the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, and the Home Missions Council of North America issued a joint press release urging Americans 'to maintain a Christian composure and charity in their dealings with the Japanese' in America, many of whom were 'loyal, patriotic American citizens'.<sup>11</sup> In fact, various American churches had been sending missionaries to Japan for several decades, 'resulting in a cadre of active and returned missionaries of many denominations', who worked with the multi-denominational home missions establishment during World War II.<sup>12</sup>

Among them was Frank Herron Smith, Superintendent of the Pacific Japanese Provisional Conference of the Methodist Church. During the period of confusion following the Pearl Harbor attack, Caucasian church representatives of the denominations having work among the Japanese on

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Indiana', in *Indiana Magazine of History*, 102 (June 2006), 89-116. Nakano focused on the efforts of the Indianapolis-based Disciples of Christ to resettle Japanese Americans in Indiana. Bangarth contrasted the wartime policies and post-war developments in the US and Canada.

<sup>10</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 73; Matsumoto, *Beyond Prejudice*, 10.

<sup>12</sup> Conner, 'From Internment to Indiana', 93. The first group of Protestant missionaries to Japan arrived in 1859. The first Methodist missionaries to Japan were sent in 1873 (by Methodist Episcopal Church).

the West Coast were 'in constant touch with each other',<sup>13</sup> and Smith took the initiative in co-ordinating their efforts to help the Nikkei. Meanwhile, in February 1942, in response to Executive Order 9066, Mark A. Dawber, Executive Secretary of the Home Missions Council, hurried to the West Coast, where he organized the various denominational representatives called by Smith, to establish the Protestant Church Commission for Japanese Service (PCCJS), with the Rev. Gordon K. Chapman, formerly a Presbyterian missionary in Japan, as its executive secretary, and Smith as its chairman. The personnel of the Commission, headquartered first in Berkeley, and then in San Francisco, included the authorized national representatives of various interested Christian organizations, the majority of whom had served as missionaries in Japan for considerable amounts of time.<sup>14</sup> Many, including Smith, wrote to General Dewitt, 'urging selective evacuation [in contrast to wholesale removal] and offering the services of eighty returned missionaries and reliable Japanese as interpreters' to hold hearings for individual Japanese.<sup>15</sup>

On 27th February 1942, Smith and Chapman, together with Galen M. Fisher, a former YMCA secretary in Japan, W.C. James, a local Quaker, and C.A. Richardson, a secretary of the Methodist board in New York, called on DeWitt to make a plea to avoid wholesale evacuation. DeWitt, however, refused to meet with the group in person, and sent a provost marshal as his substitute.<sup>16</sup> Further, during the height of the manufactured hysteria, those representatives of the PCCJS 'went up and down the Coast preaching fair play and recommending Christian attitudes toward the whole muddled question'.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, when Congress sent John G. Tolan, chairman of the House Defense Migration Investigating Committee, to the West Coast for the purpose of conducting hearings on the proposed total 'evacuation', church people were among the most prominent in testifying against the policy. Outnumbered four-to-one by people standing in favour of mass incarceration, however, their efforts did not avail. On 2nd March 1942, DeWitt issued his 'Proclamation No. 1', ordering a mass evacuation.<sup>18</sup> On

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<sup>13</sup> Matsumoto, *Beyond Prejudice*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> As of late 1942 the Commission was composed of fifteen members who represented various mission Boards. See *Composite Annual Report*, by Section of Home Missions, Division of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church (hereafter noted as *Composite Annual Report*), 2nd-5th December 1942, 98, Methodist Library.

<sup>15</sup> Matsumoto, *Beyond Prejudice*, 13-14; Connor, 'From Internment to Indiana', 93-94.

<sup>16</sup> Matsumoto, *Beyond Prejudice*, 14; Conner, 'From Internment to Indiana', 94.

<sup>17</sup> Clarence W. Hall, 'Talking Back to Tokyo', in *Christian Advocate*, 22nd October 1942, 1374.

<sup>18</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 22; Matsumoto, *Beyond Prejudice*, 15; Conner, 'From Internment to Indiana', 94.

18th March, Roosevelt created the War Relocation Authority (WRA) as the civilian agency jointly responsible with the War Department, to plan and carry out the relocation programme.<sup>19</sup> As one Methodist missionary recorded, ‘the actual moving began when on 3rd April the first arrivals from Los Angeles County, under military guard filed into the Santa Anita racecourse grounds, and took up their residence in the stables ‘sketchily cleaned and hosed and furnished only with bare army cots and one electric light’. Other Nikkei occupied the rows of new and hastily built barrack sheds that then ‘represented the accepted pattern of housing in both temporary and permanent camps’.<sup>20</sup>

Unable to avoid the total incarceration of the Nikkei, the missionary community then focused its attention on assisting them in making their relocation as bearable as possible. During the painful weeks of their removal, local Caucasian churches and federations helped Nikkei with such pressing tasks as packing, the disposal of business of all kinds, the storage of personal possessions, offering of legal and other advice, tendering of transportation, the holding in trust or renting and leasing of real property, the care of children, pets, automobiles and furniture, and providing hot meals on the last days.<sup>21</sup> The PCCJS, which was recognized as the authorized channel for all services delivered by Protestant agencies to the incarcerated by both the army and the WRA, also endeavoured ‘to insure the utmost co-operation between the churches in all relations with the federal authorities’, and held frequent conferences with the authorities, ‘especially at the times when policies were being formulated’.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the co-operation between the religious organizations and the WRA was central to the day-to-day workings of the relocation camps.<sup>23</sup> In those camps, Federated Community Churches were organized by all Protestant groups, which co-operated with the PCCJS.<sup>24</sup>

These efforts by church groups were recognized by many Japanese Americans, as an editorial in the *Pacific Citizen*, the official newspaper of the Japanese American Citizens League, noted in January 1943: ‘We have watched the church play a seven-day-a-week role in the war relocation

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<sup>19</sup> Matsumoto, *Beyond Prejudice*, xi.

<sup>20</sup> ‘Reconciliation Ministries among Japanese Americans’, 2, Missionary Files, microfilm roll no. 600, Methodist Library.

<sup>21</sup> Chapman, ‘The Church and Japanese Evacuation’, 3. See also Matsumoto, *Beyond Prejudice*, 16-22; *Composite Annual Report*, 2nd-5th December 1942, 98; ‘Recommendations Regarding the Japanese-American Evacuation Growing out of a visit to the West Coast by Velma Mayor and Charles Iglehart’, 1, Missionary Files, microfilm roll no. 600, Methodist Library.

<sup>22</sup> Chapman, ‘The Church and Japanese Evacuation’, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 87.

<sup>24</sup> *Composite Annual Report*, 7th-11th December 1943, 94.

centres. We know now they are making an active, aggressive and forward fight for justice for the evacuee.<sup>25</sup>

Soon after the relocation was executed, the WRA came to officially adopt the policy of dispersing Japanese Americans, namely, relocating them from the incarceration camps to other regions of the country. This policy of dispersal was based on the agency's belief that a small number of Nikkei could be resettled in new areas with less hostility than large numbers. The Nikkei, once resettled, 'were asked not to associate with each other but rather to try to blend in with the local population'.<sup>26</sup>

In embarking on the dispersal policy, the WRA turned to the national church missionary community, as well as to some interested citizen committees, which was willing to support the policy.<sup>27</sup> The government thus sought to develop public-private partnerships, and the government officials relied heavily on the churches to carry out the resettlement. In addition, church agencies also co-operated with the American Civil Liberties Union on matters relating to resettlement.<sup>28</sup>

From the viewpoint of today's multicultural principle, the assimilation scheme of the dispersal policy would not seem legitimate. However, liberals of the day, including the church leaders, believed that non-white minorities, particularly Japanese Americans at that time, could and should assimilate and that resettlement would be an essential remedy to West Coast racism. By contrast, contemporary racists believed that non-whites could never assimilate.<sup>29</sup>

The PCCJS and the Committee on Resettlement of Japanese Americans (CRJA), which was formed by several church representatives in October 1942, were 'only two of the largest groups attempting to further the Nikkei resettlement'.<sup>30</sup> Among such larger groups were the state and national conferences of the YMCA and YWCA.<sup>31</sup> Among other leaders of the

<sup>25</sup> Larry Tajiri, 'Churches and Relocation', in *Pacific Citizen* 16:2 (14th January 1943), 4; See also Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 78; 'After a Year of Evacuation – Present Trends', 6, Missionary Files, microfilm roll no. 600, Methodist Library.

<sup>26</sup> Conner, 'From Internment to Indiana', 95-96.

<sup>27</sup> Conner, 'From Internment to Indiana', 97.

<sup>28</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 87.

<sup>29</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 77.

<sup>30</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 78. The CRJA was sponsored jointly by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America and the Home Missions Council of North America in co-operation with the Foreign Missions Conference of North America. See Matsumoto, *Beyond Prejudice*, 142.

<sup>31</sup> The Committee on National Security and Fair Play was headed by former Assistant Secretary of State Henry F. Grady, General David P. Barrows and prominent representatives of education, labour, religion, industry and law, and made vigorous appeals for the 'selective evacuation', at least for Japanese citizens, in response to Executive Order 9066. See Fisher, 'Our Japanese Refugees', in *Christian Century*, 1st April 1942, 425.

Committee on National Security and Fair Play were Robert G. Sproul, President of the University of California, Robert A. Milikan, President of the California Institute of Technology, Bishop W. Bertrand Stevens of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Bishop James C. Baker of the Methodist Church, and Chester Rowell, a former editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.<sup>32</sup> Fisher and his committee co-operated with the government in promoting the Nikkei resettlement, while continuing to challenge the removal policy in principle. These organizations collaborated to assist Japanese Americans in finding temporary housing, including the hostel type, securing jobs, and producing a positive environment in the receiving communities.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, in the spring of 1942, efforts to immediately transfer many Nisei college students to institutions outside the restricted areas on the West Coast were led by the YMCA-YWCA, the Pacific College Association, and college presidents such as University of California's Sproul, and University of Washington's Lee Paul Sieg. In addition, Eleanor Roosevelt contributed to this initiative by discussing the matter with Clarence Pickett, a close Quaker friend, who then contacted John McCoy, Assistant Secretary of War, and Milton Eisenhower, the first national director of the WRA. Consequently, the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council (NJASRC) was formed on 29th May 1942, with a twofold purpose, namely, 'to return the students to schools and, through their successful integration within college communities, to pave the way for families to successfully leave the camps'. The American Friends Service Committee played a central role in the NJASRC, whose members included college presidents and deans, college association officers, representatives of leading Protestant churches, Jews, Catholics, Quakers, the student YMCA-YWCA, and the national president of the Japanese American Citizens League.<sup>34</sup> According to a NJASRC report on its closing operation, 4,084 Nisei (the first generation of the Japan-born immigrants) students had left the incarceration camps and been enrolled in colleges, universities, and trade schools by 1st July 1946.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Editorial, 'This Is Real Leadership', in *Christian Advocate*, 8th July 1943, 836-37.

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<sup>33</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 94-95; Galen M. Fisher, 'What Race-Baiting Costs America', in *Christian Century*, 8th September 1943, 1010; 'Clearing in the West', in *Christian Advocate*, 30th November 1943, 1476; 'Americanism Down to Earth', 1300.

<sup>34</sup> Nisei Student Relocation Commemorative Fund, Inc., 'Our Origins: The National Japanese American Student Relocation Council (NJASRC)': [www.nsrcfund.org/our-history-our-stories/our-origins](http://www.nsrcfund.org/our-history-our-stories/our-origins) (accessed 30th May 2015). Formally, NJASRC was organized at the request of the WRA and with approval of the War Department.

<sup>35</sup> 'Final Audit of National Japanese American Student Relocation Council, 1946', 3. Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH, Madison, NJ.

As to the church life of Japanese Americans, in early 1944, ‘in Denver, Colorado, more than sixty Protestant leaders, mission officials, and Japanese pastors held a two-day conference’ in which they stressed the importance of ‘the willingness of American people to integrate resettled evacuees into normal church life’. This conference was held under the auspices of the Home Missions Council Committee on Administration of Japanese Work and the PCCJS.<sup>36</sup>

After the government allowed the Nikkei to return to the West Coast on 2nd January 1945, church organizations and citizens’ committees, in co-operation with government agencies, were actively engaged in paving the way for the return by endeavouring to create a reasonable atmosphere and less hostile public opinion in the area. By the fall of 1944, about 32,000 Japanese Americans had been resettled in the US Middle West and East,<sup>37</sup> and at 30th June 1945, 49,125 Nikkei – including aliens and citizens – had left the incarceration camps, leaving 45,249 to be relocated, excluding 17,454 at Tule Lake Relocation Center, where those who preferred to identify with Japan were segregated.<sup>38</sup>

While co-operating with government officials, various church leaders continued to challenge the mass incarceration by publishing numerous articles. For example, Fisher, one of the most prominent spokespersons in defence of the Nikkei, contributed a series of articles to the *Christian Century*, a liberal Protestant weekly, which ‘provided the widest and most influential coverage of anti-removal viewpoints with impressive regularity in 1942 and throughout the war’.<sup>39</sup> Fisher, in response to DeWitt’s proclamation of the removal policy, argued that the mass removal of the Nikkei was against the Constitution whose fifth and fourteenth amendments provided that neither the nation nor the states shall ‘deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law’. He further contended that ‘the army had no right in law to order the compulsory evacuation of 60,000 American citizens, *on the basis of their racial character*, without any pretense of judicial hearings’ [emphasis in the original].<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, in a series of his four comprehensive articles from August to September 1943, Fisher criticized President Roosevelt for failing to make ‘a stern appeal to refrain from lawlessness and to honor the Bill of Rights’, and to ‘check the hysterical popular pressure for indiscriminate and

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<sup>36</sup> Thomas F. Chilcote, Jr. (ed), ‘Brotherhood or Chaos’, in *Christian Advocate*, 17th February 1944, 210.

<sup>37</sup> Galen M. Fisher, ‘Unsnarling the Nisei Tangle’, in *Christian Century*, 8th November 1944, 1285.

<sup>38</sup> Matsumoto, *Beyond Prejudice*, 120-24.

<sup>39</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 99.

<sup>40</sup> Fisher, ‘Our Japanese Refugees’, 424-26.

precipitate evacuation of the Japanese'. As Fisher argued, this failure was 'a lamentable oversight'.<sup>41</sup>

Denial on the unconstitutional grounds of race of the rights which citizenship in the United States confers establishes a precedent for further denials on this and other irrelevant grounds. The fact that this denial was brought about through the pressure tactics of race-baiting newspapers, organizations and politicians that call themselves 'patriotic' but depend upon incitement to race hatred and the threat of mob violence to realize their ends, shows how gravely menaced and how precariously held are the rights of all citizens.<sup>42</sup>

Despite these efforts by the church community there were certainly limitations and shortcomings in their defence of the Nikkei. The responses of some of those who opposed the incarceration were inadequate and reflected a compromised position.<sup>43</sup> First, as to the assistance offered at the time of their removal, some Nikkei people felt that the churches' efforts were 'too little and too late', although the majority of them were grateful.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, too many Christians 'kept silence when the anti-Japanese forces were most vociferous', though 'there were a number of leading church workers who did yeoman service in keeping the real issues before those concerned with policy making'.<sup>45</sup>

Secondly, opposition to the government's removal policy embraced compromises and contradictions. As Shaffer demonstrated, there was 'the great reluctance of some supporters of Japanese American rights to take on Roosevelt directly over this issue', and the 'hesitancy derived both from the overall alliance of most liberals and leftists with the New Deal administration, and the difficulty of criticizing the chief executive during a war that almost all Americans, including the critics of removal and internment, supported'. Hence there was 'a strategic decision' by many who opposed the removal policy 'to work within the realm of the politically possible to help Japanese Americans once removal had taken place'. Indeed, the leaders of church groups, like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) liberals, faced difficult moral dilemmas as they publicly expressed their sentiments on removal. For example, Fisher, while denouncing the removal policy and describing the accommodation at the relocation centres as 'primitive', noted in August 1943 that 'the evacuation was executed without harshness', and that the WRA policy in the centres were 'democratic and humane'.<sup>46</sup> In a sense, church leaders like Fisher were realistic: if they could not halt current government and WRA policies,

<sup>41</sup> Fisher, 'Our Two Japanese-American Policies', 961. See also Fisher, 'Are the Evacuees Being Coddled?', in *Christian Century*, 1st September 1943, 986.

<sup>42</sup> Fisher, 'What Race-Baiting Costs America', 1009.

<sup>43</sup> Shaffer, 'Crack in the Consensus', 86.

<sup>44</sup> Matsumoto, *Beyond Prejudice*, 22.

<sup>45</sup> Chapman, 'The Church and Japanese Evacuation', 3.

<sup>46</sup> Fisher, 'Our Two Japanese-American Policies', 961.

they could direct their attempts towards achieving more humane ones in the future.<sup>47</sup>

In addition, in promoting gradual resettlement, church groups, along with the WRA, pushed Japanese Americans to assimilate, even calling them to abandon the security of intra-group friendships and other ties, which rankled with many Nisei.<sup>48</sup>

Another limitation of the churches' efforts to support the Nikkei was their main focus on civil liberties, namely on the defence of Nisei only, or those who were US citizens. The ACLU agreed that the Issei as enemy aliens could be indiscriminately removed.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, church leaders generally held the civil liberties orientation, while the concept of universal human rights had yet to be advocated during the war.

While many church representatives hesitated to object outright to the wartime policies of Roosevelt, some religious organizations issued strong cautionary public statements in response to Executive Order 9066.<sup>50</sup> The following chapter will focus on the responses of one such group, namely, the Methodist Church.

### The Methodist Case

#### *The Work by the Divisions of Foreign Missions Home Missions, and the Woman's Division*

The Methodist Church's support for the Nikkei in the US originated in the days before the Pearl Harbor attack. As the tension between Japan and the US increased in late 1940, Bishop Baker and Ralph E. Diffendorfer, the Executive Secretary of the Division of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Church, visited Japan and Korea in January 1941. On their return, the Executive Committee of the Division voted to order the withdrawal of all missionaries from Japan on 19th February 1941, exactly a year before the announcement of Executive Order 9066. On the same day, the Executive Committee approved the general policy of using withdrawn missionaries for Japanese in the US, which was 'a unique departure from traditional forms of foreign mission service'. The plan, called 'Reconciliation Ministry' or 'Reconciliation Work', grew out of conferences held by Baker and Diffendorfer with Home Missions leaders in Hawaii and on the Pacific

<sup>47</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 95.

<sup>48</sup> Charlotte Brooks, 'In the Twilight Zone between Black and White: Japanese American Resettlement and Community in Chicago, 1942-1945', *The Journal of American History* 86: 4 (March 2000), 1679.

<sup>49</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 189.

<sup>50</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 73-74. These groups included the Disciples of Christ, the Synod of California of the Presbyterian Church and the Methodist Church. See Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 73-74, 224, note 21.

Coast.<sup>51</sup> At a conference between Secretaries of the Divisions of Home and Foreign Missions and the Woman's Division, a memorandum was adopted which stated:

It is believed that the foreign missionaries, out of their experience, with the knowledge of the languages involved, and their understanding of the backgrounds and life of the various peoples, can do much to help to avoid social and economic injustice and to prevent possible race hatreds.<sup>52</sup>

When Methodist missionaries returned from Japan in the spring of 1941, the growing tension between the two nations was already being reflected in attitudes towards the Nikkei and there was a 'calling for a task of interpretation, of pastoral guidance and of practical good deeds' which could be rendered most acceptably by those returned missionaries. Therefore, the Division of Foreign Missions 'immediately placed nine [Japan missionary] families' among the Nikkei, though it was done 'without publicity'.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, at 1st February 1942, before the announcement of Executive Order 9066, nine of the 53 female Methodist missionaries withdrawn from Japan were already at work among the Nikkei. The *Methodist Woman* then stressed the significance of this ministry as follows:

The reconciliation work among the Japanese in America is a project which we feel is of tremendous implications for three reasons: first, it is a friendly hand to people who are very lonely and a bit afraid of the future; second, it is a fine piece of Americanization; third, it wins friends for the cause of Christ in America and furthermore will be of great importance in our chance to get back into Japan when the war is over.<sup>54</sup>

Shortly after Executive Order 9066 was issued, Charles W. Iglehart, a returned missionary and key figure who promoted reconciliation work, writing for the *Methodist Woman*, further emphasized the need for mediating tasks. He noted that the detention of alien Japanese had 'called for all the resources of neighborliness and kindly service available', and

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<sup>51</sup> *Report of the Executive Secretary of the Division of Foreign Missions to the Second Annual Meeting*, 1-4 December 1941 [hereafter noted as *Report of the Executive Secretary*, December 1941], pp. 45-53, Board of Missions and Church Extension of The Methodist Church, Methodist Library. See also Bishop James C. Baker and Ralph E. Diffendorfer, *Church and Mission in Japan in January 1941*, (New York: Board of Missions and Church Extension The Methodist Church), both in Methodist Library.

<sup>52</sup> *Report of the Executive Secretary*, December 1941, 51. See also 'Reconciliation Work Among Japanese in Tension Areas in the United States', in *Second Annual Report of the Woman's Division of Christian Service of the Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church 1941*, 264-65, Methodist Library.

<sup>53</sup> 'Reconciliation Ministries among Japanese-Americans', in *Report of the Executive Secretary of the Division of Foreign Missions of the Division of Foreign Missions to the Third Annual Meeting*, 2nd-6th December 1942 [hereafter noted as *Report of the Executive Secretary*, December 1942], 21, Methodist Library.

<sup>54</sup> Velma H. Maynor, 'The Ongoing Mission in Wartime – and Beyond', in *Methodist Woman*, March 1942, 197.

that the missionaries were ‘rendering immediate help, as well as to American citizens of Japanese parentage’.<sup>55</sup> Iglehart criticized ‘the forced removal’ and ‘the hasty herding of them in temporary shed shelters behind barbed wire’, while the authorities of fifteen contiguous states unanimously denied them ‘the privilege of normal resettlement anywhere within their borders’.<sup>56</sup>

Iglehart and Velma Maynor, a representative of the Woman’s Division, visited the West Coast in April 1942, and made a report to the Board of Missions and Church Extension on 7th May 1942. This report recommended that ‘the process [of removal] be carried out as a necessary change in residence only and not as the military internment of unaccused persons in concentration camps’, and that ‘every legitimate measure’ be taken to enable Japanese Americans to avoid wholesale evacuation. The report highlighted the ‘acknowledged usefulness’ and ‘outstanding leadership’ of many returned Japan missionaries of various denominations, and recommended that ‘this challenge to present service be considered by all the Boards as having a place in their programs as a legitimate missionary undertaking with urgent priority for the duration of this emergency’.<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile, the returned missionaries engaged in the Reconciliation Ministry ‘found themselves taxed beyond their strength in meeting calls for help in all directions, both official and unofficial’.<sup>58</sup> One missionary who spoke at a hearing of the Tolan Commission concluded his statement:

We are ready to respond to the call of the government. We will gladly go ahead of the [Japanese] groups to do what we can to prepare the way and places for them: and we are ready to go with them to share in their fate, their lives, their fortunes, and for their spiritual guidance and comfort, in order that the soul of Christian America may speak to the soul of our Japanese brethren now in deep distress.<sup>59</sup>

Bishop Baker also remarked, ‘This seems to be one of the most significant pieces of missionary work that has ever been done in our

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<sup>55</sup> Charles Iglehart, ‘Christian Movement in the Japanese Empire – Areas of Danger and Opportunity’, in *Methodist Woman*, April 1942, 236.

<sup>56</sup> Charles Iglehart, ‘Lights and Shadows on the Japanese Evacuation’, 1, Missionary Files, microfilm roll no. 600, Methodist Library.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Recommendations Regarding the Japanese-American Evacuation Growing out of a visit to the West Coast by Velma Maynor and Charles Iglehart’, 4, Missionary Files, microfilm roll no. 600.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Reconciliation Ministries among Japanese Americans’, 1, Missionary Files, microfilm roll no. 600.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Reconciliation Ministries among Japanese-Americans’, in *Report of the Executive Secretary*, December 1942, 23.

history.<sup>60</sup> Diffendorfer stated, 'If we had five times our present staff we could place them to advantage.'<sup>61</sup>

In response to the report by Iglehart and Mayor in May 1942, the Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church, voted to adopt a recommendation concerning their support for the Nikkei at its annual meeting held in late 1942. This resolution deplored the sufferings of the Nikkei, referred to their great financial losses, and reiterated the church's confidence in the loyalty of Japanese Americans, acknowledging the service of hundreds of them in the US Army. It also expressed the church's support for the WRA's dispersal policy, hoped 'for the repeal of the Oriental Exclusion Act, for the full protection of civil rights and the natural return to free American life of all persons now affected by emergency war measures'. It further affirmed the need 'for the removal of all traces of racial discrimination'. Moreover, noting the assignment of Japan missionaries to the Reconciliation Ministry as having proven to be a 'far-sighted strategy', the Board voted to approve the continuance of the policy.<sup>62</sup>

At the same time, voices calling for the help of returned missionaries came from the Japanese churches on the West Coast. When missionaries were repatriated from Japan in July 1942, the Japanese Church Federation of Northern California addressed a note of thanks for their 'noble work'. The Federation's statement, signed by eighteen Japanese pastors, including seven Methodists, then internees in America, also said, 'We need your love and your help which you have once shared with those people in the Orient... The future presents us with the greatest task for you and for us to work hand-in-hand for after-war rehabilitation.'<sup>63</sup>

Many returned missionaries found new responsibilities in serving among the incarcerated Nikkei. For example, Bertha Starkey, who had served Japanese in Japan, Korea and Manchuria from 1910 to 1941, and had been assisting Japanese residents since her return to the US in 1941, took up a new position as a government employee in the relocation camps in the fall of 1942. In a lengthy letter addressed to her supporters in October 1942, Starkey wrote, 'I felt quite overwhelmed at the thought of the opportunity and the responsibility which this offers. In all humility, I pray that God may

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<sup>60</sup> 'Reconciliation Ministries among Japanese Americans', 6, Missionary Files, microfilm roll no. 600.

<sup>61</sup> 'Reconciliation Ministries among Japanese-Americans', in *Report of the Executive Secretary*, December 1942, 27.

<sup>62</sup> *Journal of the Third Annual Meeting of the Board of Missions and Church Extension*, 29th November-6th December 1942, 195-96, Methodist Library.

<sup>63</sup> W.W. Reid, 'Japanese Pastors Praise Missionaries who Faced Hardships in Japan', in *Christian Advocate*, 8th October 1942, 1299.

clearly open the way to the place where He sees I am needed most and where He knows I can make my best contribution.<sup>64</sup>

It should be added that the Methodist Church's work among Japanese in New York as enemy aliens began the morning after Pearl Harbor. In fact, almost 500 Japanese were detained at Ellis Island following the outbreak of war.<sup>65</sup>

While the missionaries of the Foreign Missions Division played an important role in supporting the Nikkei, the major responsibility for this service was in the Division of Home Missions, particularly in the Pacific Japanese Provisional Conference, led by Superintendent F.H. Smith introduced above.<sup>66</sup> According to Smith, this conference, on 8th June 1941, six months before the Pearl Harbor attack, had 56 salaried workers on the appointments list: 29 Japanese, ten Japanese Americans, four white assistants, six withdrawn male missionaries loaned by the Foreign Missions Division, four withdrawn female missionaries loaned by the Woman's Division, two lay male workers, and Smith himself.<sup>67</sup>

Additionally, there were returned missionaries who were employed by the government, not by the church missions, to serve the incarcerated Nikkei. *The Annual Report of the Woman's Division of the Methodist Church* of 1942-1943, noted that twenty of the returned missionary women had 'found a very challenging demand' for their services in the distress of the Nikkei. Fifteen of them were in services related to the work of the Home Department, but the other five were employed by the government.<sup>68</sup> In his report of 1943, Smith named seven women missionaries who were in government service for the Nikkei, and they were able to render much service, in evenings and over weekends, to the work of the missions.<sup>69</sup>

According to a survey conducted in 1944 by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, out of 287 missionaries of various denominations who had returned from Japan (114 males and 173 females), forty (ten males and thirty females) were engaged in the work for the

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<sup>64</sup> A letter from Bertha Starkey, 17th October 1942, 5, 'Japan Conference and Miscellaneous P-Z', Missionary Files, roll no. 601, Methodist Library.

<sup>65</sup> *Report of the Executive Secretary*, December 1942, 25.

<sup>66</sup> 'The Pacific Japanese Mission' was constituted as 'The Pacific Japanese Provisional Annual Conference' in June 1940. See 'Pacific Japanese Work', in *Composite Annual Report*, 22nd-29th November 1940, 86.

<sup>67</sup> 'Pacific Japanese Provisional Conference', in *Composite Annual Report*, 2nd-5th December 1942, 96. See also Edward L. Mills, 'Japanese Methodists on the Pacific Coast', in *Christian Advocate*, 8th January 1942, 40.

<sup>68</sup> 'Missionaries in Service to Japanese in America', in *The Annual Report of the Woman's Division of Christian Service of the Board of Missions and Church Extension, The Methodist Church*, 1942-1943, 92, Methodist Library.

<sup>69</sup> 'Pacific Japanese Provisional Conference', in *Composite Annual Report*, 7th-11th December 1943, 95.

incarcerated Japanese.<sup>70</sup> However, judging from the Methodist case described above (which suggests that nearly thirty Methodist missionaries, including over twenty women and at least several men, served the incarcerated Nikkei), it is likely that a total of far more than forty returned missionaries of different denominations, many as church staff but some as government employees, were engaged in work for the Nikkei.

Smith, when he arrived in California in 1926, soon after the passing of the Oriental Exclusion Act of 1924, to serve as Superintendent of the work among Japanese on the US Pacific Coast, wrote in the *Pacific Christian Advocate*, as below. The discriminatory immigration law being one of the important factors for the US-Japan conflict, his statement was rather prophetic:

We believe that it is here that the question will be decided of whether or not we shall have within the next twenty years another great war, this time between the West and the Orient. If the United States pursues her present policy unwaveringly, we are threatened with the greatest catastrophe in the history of the world. The United States holds the keys to the future just now and it is clearly her move.<sup>71</sup>

Thus, Smith had long understood the significant implications of his task among the Nikkei. After visiting Camp Shelby, Mississippi, where 9,000 Japanese American soldiers were being trained, he wrote in 1943:

At the beginning of the exodus, we had promised our Japanese that we, superintendent and pastors, would go with them anywhere, except to hell or back to the Orient... My motto for many years in the 'Nisei' work has been 'Love them to death, and chase them to death.' Our service during the war must be to follow our people with our love, our constant written and spoken messages, and our ministry. We must help to reunite the broken families of internees, strengthen and comfort thousands in the various Camps and Projects, help the re-settlers to find jobs, housing and new church homes, get openings for students, care for the 34 churches, chapels and 41 parsonages left vacant, and assist in cultivating a public opinion which will allow the four freedoms to our citizens and the aliens legally resident here, though they may be of German, Italian and Japanese blood.<sup>72</sup>

Meanwhile, in December 1943, the Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church 'adopted a resolution opposing any

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<sup>70</sup> Fellowship of Christian Missionaries, 'Notes about Former Japan Missionaries', 'An Occasional Newsletter for Returned Missionaries from Japan', March 1944, ABC 85.5 American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) Papers, cited in Noriko Ishii, 'Taiheiyo-Senso-to-Rainichi-Amerika Senkyoshi [The Pacific War and the Japan Missionaries from America]', in *Otsuma Hikaku Kenkyu*, 10 (March 2009), 10.

<sup>71</sup> 'Superintendent Smith Eyes His New Task', in *Pacific Christian Advocate*, 11th November 1926, 6, Mission Biographical Reference Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH.

<sup>72</sup> 'Pacific Japanese Provisional Conference', in *Composite Annual Report*, 7th-11th December 1943, 94-95.

legislation that would deny Japanese Americans citizenship rights', and 'endorsed the policy of resettlement' of the Nikkei into 'normal community life throughout the US'. The Board also commended 'Roosevelt's statement on the right of evacuees to return to evacuated areas when possible'.<sup>73</sup>

Methodist women also endeavoured to defend the rights of the Nikkei. A report by the 'Department of Christian Social Relations and Local Church Activities' of the Woman's Division in May 1944 warned: 'In this year of "political opportunism", Methodist women need to be more alert than ever to subtle moves of politicians at this point of race tension.' According to the report, 'at a recent meeting of the New York City Federation of Woman's Clubs', which 'represented 265,000 women' in the vicinity of the city, 'an emergency resolution was passed without dissent opposing the resettlement of 2,000 Japanese Americans and Japanese aliens in Brooklyn'. The report emphasized: 'Church women must be equally alert all over the country in exerting their influence against such undemocratic and unchristian attitudes and practices.'<sup>74</sup>

In accordance with these positions promoted by the Home and Foreign Missions, and the Woman's Division, local churches were advised to co-operate for their cause. For instance, a booklet entitled, *Some Wartime Services of Methodist Churches: A Manual for Pastors and Other Leaders in Local Churches* had a chapter on 'Japanese Resettlement'. This document stressed the churches' 'responsibility for the promotion of the resettlement program'. It also suggested that church leaders should contact the CRJA, assist the Nikkei in finding employment and housing, 'designate a committee or a group of individuals for helping them to find friends and social contacts', 'co-operate with social agencies, YMCA, YWCA, and other interested community groups in setting up a local committee' which would co-operate with the WRA and the CRJA, and 'challenge the widespread assumption that all persons of Japanese ancestry' were 'potential saboteurs'.<sup>75</sup>

In December 1944, when the government announced that loyal Japanese and Japanese Americans would, from 2nd January 1945, be allowed to

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<sup>73</sup> Thomas F. Chilcote, Jr. (ed), 'Brotherhood or Chaos', in *Christian Advocate*, 17th February 1944, 210.

<sup>74</sup> 'Report of Department of Christian Social Relations and Local Church Activities', in *Journal of the Executive Committee, Woman's Division of Christian Service of the Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church*, 30th May 1944, 32, in folder 'Japanese American Internment During World War II', Rowe Files, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH.

<sup>75</sup> A Committee Appointed by the Council of Bishops of the Methodist Church, *Some Wartime Services of Methodist Churches: A Manual for Pastors and Other Leaders in Local Churches* (Methodist Publishing House, 1943), 34-35, Administrative Records of General Board of Discipleship, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH.

return to the Pacific Coast areas – and at the same time declared that all relocation centres would be closed by the end of 1945 except the one at Tule Lake – churches faced the challenge of adopting a new policy in their work for the Nikkei. As John B. Cobb, a former missionary in Japan who was named Acting Superintendent to relieve Smith in May 1945, wrote, the Superintendent ‘after some investigation had to decide to which places the Japanese were likely to return in considerable numbers’, and had ‘adopted the policy of sending back to such places the Japanese pastor’ in early 1945, to ‘prepare the way for his people’, and ‘to serve them in every way possible upon their return’.<sup>76</sup>

While in some places the ‘returnees’ met violent opposition, even shooting into their homes and arson, the difficult problem in most places was finding housing for them. Hence, the chief form of service was through the establishment and management of ‘hostels’, usually in parsonage and church buildings, where the returnees could stay temporarily until it became possible for them to return to their old homes or find new quarters. The Methodist Church was responsible for sixteen of the hostels along the Coast, in addition to at least five other places not officially called ‘hostels’. Financial support was often inadequate, though ‘encouraging help’ came from ‘individuals and groups in local churches’. Indeed, thousands were helped by these hostels.<sup>77</sup>

There were, however, some notable limitations in the Methodist Church’s engagement in the programme. Indicative of the problems is a report made by H.D. Bollinger, a Board of Education member of the work, who commented in early 1946 near the closing date of the programme:

With the enormous resources of Methodism, I have always regretted that we did not do more... For example, in the commitments for operating the Council [NJASRC<sup>78</sup>] in 1945 Methodism is listed ‘no commitment’. Alongside this, the Baptists gave \$150 per month, the Congregational \$100, the Evangelical and Reformed \$200, and the Presbyterians \$150... When it comes to the students aided, although we did excellent work, the Baptists and Episcopal churches did almost as well as we did and the Presbyterian did better. When it comes to the money available for students... the Presbyterians gave more than twice as much... It is small wonder that the other churches grow tired of our boasted 8,000,000 membership when figures like this show up.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> ‘Japanese Work’, in *Annual Report, Division of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church*, December 1945, 40-41, Methodist Library.

<sup>77</sup> ‘Japanese Work’, 40-41.

<sup>78</sup> National Japanese American Student Relocation Council

<sup>79</sup> H.D. Bollinger, ‘Meeting of National Japanese American Student Relocation Council’, 26th February 1946, 2, Minutes of Meeting of National Japanese American Student Relocation Council. See also ‘Commitments for Operating Expenses of NJASRC to Jan. 1946’, in folder ‘Mrs E.B. Emlen: National Japanese

Moreover, the responsibility of the Methodist Church, in principle, was, first, to locate Methodist students in Methodist institutions, secondly, to locate Methodist students in other institutions, and finally, upon availability of the funds, to assist non-Christian, preferably Buddhist, students.<sup>80</sup> (Non-Methodist Christians were expected to be helped by their own denominations.) Thus, the church's assistance to non-Methodists was highly limited.<sup>81</sup>

### **Other Voices Raised by the Opinion Leaders of the Methodist Church**

The opinion leaders of the Methodist Church, including the Council of Bishops and the editors of journal *Christian Advocate*, which boasted the largest circulation of any Protestant denominational newspaper,<sup>82</sup> consistently objected to the mass incarceration policy, and stressed the Christian obligation for helping the innocent Nikkei regain their rights. Indeed, among the 52 or 53 yearly issues of this weekly journal, this author located nineteen articles on this subject published in 1942, seven in 1943, nineteen in 1944, albeit only four in 1945, when the relocation was in its closing phase. Many of these articles, including numerous editorials as well as contributions from other writers, were highly comprehensive in discussing various aspects of the injustice done to the Nikkei. For instance, the *Christian Advocate* of 1st January 1942, soon after Pearl Harbor, carried an article by the Council of Bishops which asserted, 'We will seek to safeguard the liberties guaranteed to our citizens of whatever race, creed, color or national origin. We especially ask that those living among us whose national origin stems from an enemy country be treated with Christian consideration.'<sup>83</sup>

An editorial in the same issue, referring to the 'hysterical pursuit and persecution of persons of German ancestry' as 'one of the most shameful records written by the American people during World War I', warned

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American Student Relocation Council I', both in the Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH.

<sup>80</sup> 'Joint Committee of the Methodist Church on Japanese-American Student Relocation, 30th November 1942', 1, Minutes of Meeting of National Japanese American Student Relocation Council, Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH.

<sup>81</sup> Letter from John O. Gross to E.B. Emlen, 26th May 1943, in folder 'Mrs E.B. Emlen: National Japanese American Student Relocation Council II', Records of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, United Methodist Church Archives, GCAH.

<sup>82</sup> The *Christian Advocate* had about 280,000 subscribers in early 1944. See *Christian Advocate*, 27th April 1944, 498.

<sup>83</sup> The Council of Bishops, 'A History-Making Message from a Historic Spot: The Church in Crisis', in *Christian Advocate*, 1st January 1942, 7.

against ‘the excited animosity of the American public’ against those of Japanese ancestry. The editorial entitled, ‘It Must Not Happen Again’, cited the case of ‘an American-born Japanese youth of excellent character’ having been ‘stabbed in the chest on a street car’ in California, and concluded, ‘Now, as never before, the democratic way of life is to be tested.’<sup>84</sup>

In the subsequent years of World War II, the *Christian Advocate* continued to publicize the churches’ crucial role in eliminating racial prejudice and supporting the Nikkei, especially for their resettlement outside the camps. The journal also often referred to the heroic contribution of the Japanese American soldiers fighting in Europe: the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, consisting of Japanese Americans, became the most decorated unit in US military history for its size and length of service, earning eight Presidential unit citations, over twenty Medals of Honor and over 9,000 Purple Hearts.<sup>85</sup>

At the same time, the journal maintained its position of co-operating with the WRA, in line with the policy of the interdenominational agencies. Indeed, the WRA relied heavily on the churches to accomplish its mission, as Elmer L. Shirrell, Supervisor of the Chicago Area WRA, stated writing for the *Christian Advocate* in August 1943:

Neither the WRA nor any other Government agency can accomplish this tremendous task [of resettlement] without the wholehearted support of those who are interested in human values – those, if you will, who practice the principle of loving neighbors as themselves. The Church must lead in building the kind of public opinion that will make relocation possible.<sup>86</sup>

Thus, the state-church partnership was an indispensable part of the resettlement programme.

Finally, the position of the Methodist General Conference, its highest-profile gathering held every four years, needs to be mentioned. In May 1944, it adopted a resolution which urged, first, ‘the active participation’ of Methodist churches in the resettlement of the Nikkei, ‘especially in the preparation of communities to welcome and assimilate these persons into American life’, and secondly, to restore ‘at the earliest possible moment consistent with the public interest’, to ‘loyal American citizens of Japanese ancestry... their full rights as citizens, especially the right to return to their former residences and occupations’. By this time, Roosevelt had admitted

<sup>84</sup> ‘It Must not Happen Again’, in *Christian Advocate*, 1st January 1942, 4-5; For a comprehensive coverage of this topic in January 1942, see also Edward Laird Mills, ‘Japanese Methodists on the Pacific Coast’, in *Christian Advocate*, 8th January 1942, 40-41; Mark A. Dawber, ‘Orientals in America: A Word of Appreciation’, in *Christian Advocate*, 8th January 1942, 41-42.

<sup>85</sup> For example, see Editorial, ‘Americanism to the Test’, in *Christian Advocate*, 3rd August 1944, 942.

<sup>86</sup> Elmer L. Shirrell, ‘Check and Double Check’, in *Christian Advocate*, 5th August 1943, 967.

that the great majority of the incarcerated were loyal, and that it was 'important to maintain a high standard of fair, considerate and equal treatment for the people of this, as for all other minorities'.<sup>87</sup>

### **The Positions of the Regional Conferences on the Pacific Coast: The Disparity of Opinions between Ministerial and Lay Members**

This section will focus on the positions taken by the two Pacific Coast regional conferences of the Methodist Church which faced most imminently the issues surrounding the Nikkei: the California Conference and the Southern California-Arizona Conference, which were constituted basically of Caucasian churches.

It is monumental that both conferences, located in the areas where anti-Japanese hysteria was the most intense, stood firm from the outset of the war in expressing their objections to the mass relocation. For instance, the California Conference in June 1942 declared, 'The fact that only Japanese were moved, involves the basic principles of racial discrimination', and criticized the removal as 'the method of totalitarian nations', since 'the democratic way even in a war crisis does not discriminate between people of differing racial or national origins'. The conference also made 'proposals for immediate action' urging their churches to oppose any legislation which might deprive Japanese Americans of citizenship, to aid the WRA in resettling them in Eastern communities, 'giving particular attention to (a) stimulating an attitude of friendly acceptance in those communities, and (b) aiding their economic establishment', recommending interdenominational co-operation, urging their churches to 'begin now in preparing their communities for the return of our Japanese brethren', and reaffirming their 'belief in the Christian principles of the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God'.<sup>88</sup>

In the following week, the Southern California-Arizona Annual Conference followed suit by urging its church people 'to join in a positive movement to protect' the Nikkei 'from threats of permanent loss of civil and economic rights'.<sup>89</sup>

Furthermore, in 1944 the Japanese Relations Committee, constituted at the previous session of the California Annual Conference, presented a comprehensive report, renewing its commitment to help Japanese

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<sup>87</sup> *Journal of the 1944 General Conference of the Methodist Church*, 418-19, Methodist Library.

<sup>88</sup> 'Report of the Committee on Christian Citizenship and the State of Society', in *Journal of the Fourth Annual Session of the California Conference of the Methodist Church*, 17th-21st June 1942, 352-53, Methodist Library.

<sup>89</sup> 'Social Problems', in *Journal of the Southern California-Arizona Annual Conference, The Methodist Church*, 25th June-1st July 1942, 161-62, Methodist Library.

Americans regain their full civil rights.<sup>90</sup> In the next week, the Southern California-Arizona Conference concurred ‘in the recent action of the California Conference’, declaring that ‘democratic justice will be best served by granting freedom of movement to loyal Japanese, anywhere in the United States, on the same basis as other Americans and aliens of other countries’. This conference also authorized the Social Problems Committee to send its report to the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Interior, the Attorney General of the US, the Director of WRA, Congressmen from Arizona, Nevada and California, and the members of the California legislative ad interim committees.<sup>91</sup>

On the other hand, a close look at an opinion poll conducted by the Southern California-Arizona Conference reveals a marked disparity of opinion between the ministerial and the lay members of the conference. In June 1944, its 256 members, including about 90 lay members and about 165 ministerial members, were asked to indicate their opinion on various social issues by choosing from the five options: a) strongly believe; b) believe; c) uncertain; d) do not believe; and e) strongly disbelieve. The result, as to their belief about the support for Roosevelt’s insistence on the maintenance of ‘a high standard of fair, considerate and equal treatment for the people of this minority as of all minorities’, and his solemn promise to ‘restore to loyal evacuees the right to return to the evacuated areas as soon as the military situation will make such a restoration feasible’, was as follows:

Laymen	a) 34, b) 42, c) 7, d) 3, e) 1
Ministers	a) 137, b) 25, c) 0, d) 1, e) 0. <sup>92</sup>

Another statement for the questionnaire was: ‘I believe that the evacuation of the Japanese Americans ‘bears melancholy resemblance to the treatment accorded the Jewish race in Germany and other parts of Europe... Distinctions based on color and ancestry are utterly inconsistent with our traditions and ideals. To say that any group cannot be assimilated is to admit that the great American experiment has failed’ (Justice Murphy in a US Supreme Court opinion). The result then was:

Laymen	a) 26, b) 21, c) 12, d) 22, e) 9.
Ministers	a) 117, b) 19, c) 12, d) 10, e) 3. <sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> ‘Japanese Relations Report’, in *Journal of the Sixth Annual Session of the California Conference of the Methodist Church*, 7th-11th June 1944, 66-68.

<sup>91</sup> ‘Japanese Evacuees’, in *Journal of the Southern California-Arizona Annual Conference, The Methodist Church*, 22nd-27th June 1944, 50-51. Myers was appointed by President Roosevelt to take over the WRA on 17th June 1942, from Milton Eisenhower.

<sup>92</sup> ‘Social Problems Report’, in *Journal of the Southern California-Arizona Annual Conference, The Methodist Church*, 22nd-27th June 1944, 165. See also page 50 of the same journal.

<sup>93</sup> ‘Social Problems Report’, in *Journal of the Southern California-Arizona Annual Conference, The Methodist Church*, 22nd-27th June 1944, 163-65.

Thus, while the opinions of the lay members were considerably divided, the ministerial opinions were definitely more liberal.

By late 1944, the fervent efforts by many opinion leaders had contributed to the reviewing of the policy towards the Nikkei. On 7th October 1944, the Attorney Generals of California, Oregon and Washington, the three states on the Pacific Coast, in a joint statement, petitioned the US Supreme Court 'to remove all restrictions from persons of Japanese ancestry as soon as the military authorities should decide that national security would permit'. Then, on 18th December 1944, the US Supreme Court declared that the confinement of 'loyal' citizens was unconstitutional, and on 2nd January 1945, with the approval of the US Army, loyal Nikkei were free to return to the Pacific Coast areas.<sup>94</sup> Thus, the collaborative work by churches and civil organizations achieved a certain success in 'producing a judicial public opinion and making hysteria unpopular'.<sup>95</sup>

By mid-1945, while about 35,000 Japanese Americans had settled in the East and Middle West, 60,000 others had still to find homes and jobs before the closing of the relocation centres at the end of that year. It was estimated that nearly half of them would return to West Coast communities, and 'the whole process of re-entry into the common stream of American life' was never easy for them. There were also many attempts aimed at discouraging their return, such as shooting incidents and the arson of returnees' homes or farm properties.<sup>96</sup> Under these circumstances, the Southern California-Arizona Conference adopted in June 1945 a report by its 'Social Problems' Committee, which affirmed the church's special duty to assist the returnees 'in experiencing a congenial homecoming, in finding houses and employment, in the effective expression of all civil rights and, as a means to all these, in integration into the life of our churches'.<sup>97</sup> Likewise, the 'Japanese Relations Report', adopted by the California Conference in 1945, recommended that 'ministers and people of Methodist Churches in the California Conference commit themselves to an open policy of friendship' to the returnees.

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<sup>94</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 28; 'Japanese Relations Report', in *Journal of the Seventh Annual Session of the California Conference of the Methodist Church*, 27th June-1st July 1945, 238.

<sup>95</sup> 'Clearing in the West', in *Christian Advocate*, 30th November 1944, 1476. According to Bangarth, even as early as mid-1944, officials in the War and Justice Departments were communicating their misgivings about the constitutionality of excluding citizens from the West Coast when military necessity no longer existed. See Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 28.

<sup>96</sup> 'Japanese Relations Report', in *Journal of the Seventh Annual Session of the California Conference of the Methodist Church*, 27th June-1st July 1945, 238-39.

<sup>97</sup> 'II. The Moral Order and Race Relations', in *Journal of the Southern California-Arizona Annual Conference, The Methodist Church*, 21st-25th June 1945, 171-72.

However, here again, the lay members were much less willing to promote the 'open' policy. Although a bare majority of the Japanese Relations Committee, composed of fifteen members (eight ministerial and seven lay), voted for this report, opinion was bitterly divided among the lay members: while six of the eight ministerial members voted for the report and two avoided voting, only two of the seven lay members voted for it, one voted against the report in its entirety, one being in essential agreement with the report but believed that it should not be submitted, while three did not vote.<sup>98</sup>

This situation may serve as an epitome of the considerable difficulties in putting words into practice, and the acute need for educating the general public. The following remark in the report of the 1945 Southern California-Arizona Conference reflected the ongoing struggles: 'The Church must arouse the conscience of the community to provide both short-term and long-range programs of housing for all the people... A heavy burden of church and community education in this matter falls upon the Christian leader.'<sup>99</sup>

### Conclusion

The evidence presented above confirms the fact that missions played a crucial role in defending the rights of the Nikkei against the overwhelming tide of anti-Japanese hysteria and prejudice among the general public, and against the state power. A Methodist observer later noted: 'The response of the churches on the West Coast has been criticized as a feeble and ineffective protest to the relocation of the Japanese.'<sup>100</sup> However, the identification of many mission leaders, ministers and some congregations with the hardships of the incarcerated deserves recognition. In other words, many members of the mission community, despite the considerable disparity of opinion between ministerial and lay leaders, made earnest efforts to act through the lens of the suffering Nikkei, based on the Christian principle of good neighbourliness and democracy.

Though missions were incapable of stopping the mass incarceration and their partnership with the WRA led to tensions, compromises and contradictions, their actions on the whole contributed to an amelioration of the Nikkei's living conditions and to a challenge to racial prejudice. As Shaffer noted, 'These activists chose to continue to combat racism under

<sup>98</sup> 'Japanese Relations Report', in *Journal of the Seventh Annual Session of the California Conference of the Methodist Church*, 27th June-1st July 1945, 238-40.

<sup>99</sup> 'II. The Moral Order and Race Relations', in *Journal of the Southern California-Arizona Annual Conference, The Methodist Church*, 21st-25th June 1945, 171.

<sup>100</sup> Walter G. Muelder, *Methodism and Society, Vol. II: Methodism and Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), 337. The writer describes the churches' response as 'a glorious chapter', and as 'playing a credible role within the limits laid down by wartime regulations'.

the constricted options available.<sup>101</sup> While the dispersal and resettlement policy for the Nikkei, which they supported, meant the dismantling of the pre-war Japanese community and the coercion of assimilation, many mission leaders also pressed for the right of the Nikkei to return to the West Coast. By late 1944, there were signs of a change in the public sentiment as exemplified by the 7th October petition by the Attorney Generals of California, Oregon and Washington to the US Supreme Court to remove all restrictions from the Nikkei, which was soon granted and led to the decision by the military authorities to release into unrestricted areas all 'evacuees' in the incarceration centres. As Fisher noted, 'The change in the wind' was 'showing in the press'.<sup>102</sup>

Moreover, the prominence of returned missionaries in this movement for helping the Nikkei supports the idea that many missionaries then rejected the notion of western superiority. Many had 'developed through their work abroad a concern for human equality which led them to return to the US with a penetrating critique of racism, and they acted on that critique'.<sup>103</sup> For example, in mid-1942, Iglehart denounced 'a tradition of racial superiority' and 'the myth of Western innate privilege and power'. He further warned:

Our privileges have made us arrogant and proud; our power has corroded our best life, our wealth has softened our character, and our assumption of western racial superiority has been poison in our bloodstream. These have kept us from making our best contribution.<sup>104</sup>

Additionally, I hypothesize that the church-state partnership developed through the wartime resettlement of the Nikkei set an important precedent for similar co-operation in the US refugee resettlement programmes in the post-war era, which have expanded to date.<sup>105</sup>

In concluding her book, Bangarth stressed the 'lasting efforts' of those who raised voices in protest against the injustices done to the Nikkei, and to 'the growing rejection of racism in the intellectual and left/liberal communities in the 1940s'. The role of the American Nikkei legal cases also 'deserves greater attention from those who study the history of civil rights in the US'. Thus, 'the Japanese American campaign for justice, including the work of its advocates, extends beyond its conventional wartime parameters'.<sup>106</sup> The present study accords with Bangarth's contention, and should be placed in a long-range historical perspective

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<sup>101</sup> Shaffer, 'Crack in the Consensus', 109.

<sup>102</sup> Galen M. Fisher, 'Unsnarling the Nisei Tangle', in *Christian Century*, 8th November 1944, 86-87.

<sup>103</sup> Shaffer, 'Crack in the Consensus', 108.

<sup>104</sup> Charles W. Iglehart, 'Through World Conflict to World Community', in *Christian Advocate*, 23rd July 1942, 935-36.

<sup>105</sup> See Hiromi Chiba, 'The Role of the Protestant Church in the US Refugee Resettlement Program during the Early Cold War Era: The Methodist Case', in *Exchange* 43 (2014), 9-28.

<sup>106</sup> Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest*, 187.

concerning civil rights activism. The struggle for the equal rights of all peoples continues to be an imminent issue today – in the US as well as worldwide.

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# SERVANT LEADERSHIP: POWER, VULNERABILITY AND RECONCILIATION

Knud Jørgensen

## Introduction

The concept of power is related to leadership because power is part of the process of influence. People have power when they have the ability to affect others' beliefs, attitudes and courses of action.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes this leads to the abuse of power, and we run into stereotypes of leaders as wielders of power, individuals who dominate others, and those who use power as a tool to achieve their own ends. And what holds true for society is also evidenced in Scripture and in the church. It is true that power is an ambiguous category of society, theology and mission.

In my view, power is not meant to be an entity that leaders use over others; instead, power should be found in relationships. It is to be used by leaders and followers to promote common goals.

One of the dimensions in churches and Christian organizations/institutions that need to reflect critically on power and its influence is that of *leadership*. In what follows, I shall attempt to view leadership and power within a larger framework, a framework where we listen both to secular leadership theories and explore legitimate sources of power in Scripture. The entry point is leadership as service/*diakonia*. With this as a background, I shall describe faces of power and pursue connections between power, vulnerability and reconciliation.

## Servant Leadership

It was the American Robert Greenleaf who, in the early 1970s, in two books about general leadership in society, first coined the term 'servant leadership'.<sup>2</sup> At that time, it was considered a somewhat paradoxical approach, but since then the approach has gained popularity with other leadership writers.<sup>3</sup> Servant leadership emphasizes that leaders should be

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<sup>1</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2011), 7.

<sup>2</sup> R.K. Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader* (Newton Centre, MA: Robert K. Greenleaf Center, 1970); *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> M.L. Farling, A.G. Stone and B.E. Winston, 'Servant Leadership: Setting the Stage for Empirical Research', in *Journal of Leadership Studies* (1999: 6), 49-71; S. Sendjaya and J.C. Sarros, 'Servant Leadership: Its origin, Development, and

attentive to the concerns of their followers and should empathise with them; they should take care of them and nurture them. Leadership is bestowed on a person who, by nature, is a servant. *The way a person emerges as a leader is by becoming a servant.* Greenleaf listed the following characteristics of servant leadership as valid for all types of leadership, be it in church or in society:

- To be preoccupied with the growth of my co-workers.
- To be a good listener.
- To accept others, feel empathy.
- To have strong antennae.
- To use persuasion and not force or manipulation.
- To strive for wholeness and healing.
- To walk in front to show the way.
- To point the direction and anticipate what may not be anticipated.
- To dream dreams and see visions.
- To know the art of withdrawal in the midst of the job.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to serving, the servant leader has a social responsibility to be concerned with the have-nots. Where inequalities and social injustices exist, a servant leader tries to remove them. He/she uses less institutional power and less control.

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in the study of servant leadership. A common theme in the servant leadership perspective is that the leader-follower relationship is central to ethical leadership. It is critically important for leaders to pay close attention to the unique needs of their followers. Following Greenleaf, the term 'servant leadership' also appeared in Christian books on leadership, but not overnight; for a long time the focus remained on 'effective' leadership (setting goals, implementing objectives, delegating, team leadership, etc.). As leaders from the global South have entered the discourse on Christian leadership, more focus has been given to spiritual gifts, empowerment and asking for a biblical agenda on leadership.<sup>5</sup> This has helped many realize that the

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application in Organizations', in *Journal of Leadership and Organization Studies* (2002: 9), 57-64.

<sup>4</sup> Northouse suggests that Greenleaf was inspired by Hermann Hesse's novel, 'The Journey to the East' (1956) about a group of travellers accompanied by a servant who does menial chores but also sustains the travellers with his spirits and song. When the servant becomes lost and disappears, the travellers fall into disarray. Without the servant, they are unable to carry on. He emerged as a leader by caring for them (Northouse, *Leadership. Theory and Practice*, 385).

<sup>5</sup> See Gottfried Osei-Mensah, *Wanted: Servant Leaders. Theological Perspectives in Africa* (Achimota, Ghana: Africa Christian Press, 1990), and Chua Wee Hian, *The Making of a Leader. A Guidebook for Present & Future Leaders* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1987).

primary biblical perspective on leadership is service/*diakonia*. The New Testament uses four words for servant:<sup>6</sup>

**Diakonos:** The word means ‘servant’ or ‘waiter’; Luke 10:40 about Martha who waits on Jesus; Luke 22:27 about Jesus himself. The focus is on the servant in relation to a task, as for example distributing food to the Greek-speaking widows in the Jerusalem congregation (Acts 6). The emphasis is on function and practice: we are to serve one another.

**Doulos:** The word means ‘slave’. The focus is on being a servant in relation to a master. Jesus uses this word about himself and identifies with the suffering servant of the Lord in Isaiah 40-55. In Philippians 2:7 the same word is used: ‘Jesus... taking the form of a slave’. And he commands his disciples to do the same: ‘Whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave’ (Matt. 20:27). The model he leaves with the disciples is primarily the cross from where the suffering servant rules. What this means in practice, he demonstrates by washing their feet (John 13). This is the understanding Paul has when he uses *doulos* to describe his own position: Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus (Rom. 1:1). It implies obedience to a Lord and accountability.

**Huperetes:** The word means ‘under-rower’ – a slave who, chained to his bench, had to row the ship over the sea. It focuses on the servant in relation to superiors and to an authority one must respect. In 1 Corinthians 4:1 Paul uses the word to stress that leaders are not superstars, but servants under authority: ‘We should think of ourselves as Christ’s “under-rowers”’.

**Leitourgos:** This word describes a servant in relation to an organization in which he/she is employed. Within one’s organizational context a leader is called to be a servant in such a way that structures and relations function for the best of everybody. In the church context, the word has to do with serving in worship (*leitourgia*). *Leitourgia* has to do with serving God. In an Orthodox context, what follows the liturgy, namely mission, is therefore called ‘the liturgy after the liturgy’.

*The servant concept is the key to Christian leadership.* The normal Greek word for leader (*hodegos*) is used when Jesus refers to guides and worldly leaders (Matt. 23:1-34 where he talks about ‘blind guides’). This word has to do with ruling and dominating – a leadership style which Jesus opposes. The New Testament leadership model stands in stark contrast to the Hellenistic – and the western – model. By emphasizing leadership as service/*diakonia*, Jesus turns our models of leadership upside down. Here

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<sup>6</sup> Knud Jørgensen, *Equipping for Service: Christian Leadership in Church and Society* (Oxford: Regnum, 2012), 23-24.

are some of the differences between the Hellenistic/western ruler model and the biblical servant model.<sup>7</sup>

### **Ruler Model**

Based on power  
Gives orders  
Unwilling to fail  
Drives like a cowboy  
Needs strength to subject  
Authoritarian  
Seeks personal advancement  
Expects to be served

### **Servant Model**

Based on love/obedience  
Under orders  
Willing to be changed  
Leads like a shepherd  
Finds strength in submission  
Steward of authority  
Seeks to please master  
Expects to serve

The words with the *diak-* root are found 98 times in the New Testament, and *diakonia* and *diakonos* are in most cases related to what we would call leadership and management. In this way, Paul calls himself a *diakonos* of the gospel (Eph. 3:7).

Tormod Kleiven enumerates some key marks in the light of servant perspectives:

- Take care of one another in our vulnerability. This implies recognizing our own vulnerability (wounds, blind spots, etc.) and being open to taking care of the other (like the good shepherd), even when it means losing status or prestige for the sake of the other.
- Leading by serving. This calls for understanding my own power. I have power and am challenged to use this power for the benefit of others. The power of servant leadership finds expression in being close to people and in listening to those we lead, and particularly those who are most vulnerable.
- To be willing to listen to reason, to be corrected, to ask for feedback from followers about my leadership.
- Consistency between life and teaching: when Jesus attacked the Pharisees so severely, his attack was less on what they taught than on the fact that they did not do what they demanded of others.<sup>8</sup>

The primary task of the servant leader is to equip others for service. This is the core of Ephesians 4:11-16 where Paul describes the service/*diakonia* of all God's people. There are different services = leadership functions: apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers – a fivefold leadership. And we may add the deacon, based on other biblical texts where *diakonos* appears together with other leaders. The pastor is one among several

<sup>7</sup> George Mallone, *Furnace of Renewal* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1981), 86.

<sup>8</sup> Tormod Kleiven, 'Åndelig lederskap og maktforståelse' (unpublished paper, 2011).

functions. The New Testament knows nothing of a one-man ministry. There was always a plurality of leadership. The function of leadership is to prepare God's people for works of service. All God's people are called and gifted for ministry. This is what is meant by the Protestant teaching about the priesthood of all believers: not only do all Christians have direct access to God without the mediation of a priest, but they also share together the responsibility for ministry. The primary function of the leader is to equip them for this ministry. Where this dynamic understanding of service is lacking, God's people will become immature people who easily fall prey to the cunning and craftiness of evil men.

### Faces of Power<sup>9</sup>

Leadership aims at influencing others. Power is the capacity or potential to influence – the resource that enables a leader to gain compliance and commitment from others. People have power when they have the ability to affect others' beliefs, attitudes and courses of action. In some contexts and cultures people avoid the subject; power is something 'dangerous' and it is therefore best to pretend that it is not there. Also, in Christian circles, we may experience that the concept has an odious flavour. It is therefore essential to remind ourselves that power is a real-world issue. Leaders who understand and know how to use power are better leaders than those who do not or will not use power.<sup>10</sup>

Power comes from the Latin *posse*, to be able, and therefore has to do with potency or potentiality – the power to influence others, to alter the behaviour, attitudes, values and feelings of another person. In this sense power is a resource; it is a leader's influence potential.

Power has various bases, and it is helpful to be aware of these:

- *Referent power*, based on followers' identification with and liking for the leader. This power will determine confidence and the ability to encourage.
- *Expert power*, based on followers' perceptions of the leader's competence within a given field.
- *Legitimate power*, associated with having status or a formal job authority. A judge who administers sentences in the courtroom exhibits legitimate power.

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<sup>9</sup> For this section, see Knud Jørgensen, 'Power in a Vulnerable World: Sharing in Partnership', in Knut Edvard Larsen and Knud Jørgensen (eds), *Power and Partnership* (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 141-42.

<sup>10</sup> See Paul Hersey, Kenneth H. Blanchard and Dewey E. Johnson, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 229; Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2010), 7-8.

- *Reward power*, derived from the capacity to provide rewards to others (salary, good working conditions).
- *Coercive power*, having the capacity to penalize or punish others, like a coach who leaves players on the bench for being late for practice.<sup>11</sup>

In most organizations there are two major kinds of power: *position power* and *personal power*. *Position power* is the power a person derives from a particular office or rank in the organizational structure. Position power usually flows down in an organization; it is the extent to which leaders higher up in the organization are willing to delegate authority and responsibility. Position power includes legitimate, reward and coercive power.

*Personal power* is the capacity to influence that a leader derives from being seen by followers as likable and knowledgeable. It is 'the extent to which followers respect, feel good about, and are committed to their leader and to which they see their own goals as being satisfied by the goals of their leader. In other words, personal power is the extent to which people are willing to follow a leader'.<sup>12</sup> When leaders act in ways that are important to followers, it gives leaders power. Some leaders have power because their subordinates consider them good role models. Others have power because their subordinates view them as highly competent or considerate. So personal power comes from below, from the followers, and flows up in an organization. I may as a leader influence the amount of personal power I have – by the way I treat those subordinate to me – but personal power is volatile; it can be taken away by followers. This means that personal power is a day-to-day phenomenon; it can be earned and it can be taken away. Personal power includes referent and expert power.

During my years of service in Ethiopia, I learned about two models of leadership – one based on 'control, respect and fear', and another model based on 'control, respect and trust'. In his sixteenth-century treatise *The Prince*, Machiavelli raised the question: is it better to have a relationship based on love (personal power) or fear (position power)?<sup>13</sup> His conclusion was that it is best to be both loved and feared. If, however, one cannot have both, he suggested that a relationship based on love alone tends to be volatile, short-lived and easily terminated when there is no fear of retaliation. On the other hand, a relationship based on fear tends to be longer-lasting, because the individual must be ready to incur the sanction or pay the price before terminating the relationship. I think Machiavelli was wrong. Not only may fear lead to hatred, as Machiavelli himself warned,

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<sup>11</sup> Northouse, *Leadership*, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Hershey, Blanchard and Johnson, *Management of Organizational Behavior*, 231-32.

<sup>13</sup> Hershey, Blanchard and Johnson, *Management of Organizational Behavior*, 232.

but fear will also ruin motivation, confidence and active participation. True, there will be a need in any leader-follower relationship for discipline but, when the base for such intervention is fear, the result will be destructive and end up undermining all respect. This is also related to the use of coercion. Coercion involves the use of force to effect change. 'Coerce' means influencing others to do something against their will and may easily include manipulative penalties and rewards. There is a difference between power and force. Forcing people often involves the use of threats, overt or hidden. It is therefore important to distinguish between coercion/use of force and leadership. Coercive people are not models of good leadership. Good leadership is about influencing a group of individuals towards a common goal. Leaders, who force others in any way, are interested only in their own goals.

Research on leadership and power shows that coercive power and fear are consistently linked with dissatisfaction.<sup>14</sup> Expert and referent power are significantly and positively linked with satisfaction and high motivation among followers. Followers are more responsive to a leader whose influence is not based entirely on position-based power. Reward power (such as a higher salary) does not seem to result in satisfaction on its own.

The central power of leadership lies in *empowering others*. This begins with building trusting relationships. Trust exists when we make ourselves vulnerable to others whose behaviour we cannot control. By trusting another person, we become dependent on one another. Trust and mistrust are like two different sets of eyes or worldviews. It may be dangerous to trust people, but it is more dangerous *not* to trust. Studies indicate that someone who trusts colleagues is cheated once in a while, while the person with no trust is cheated more often because of his mistrust of trustworthy persons. As you sow, so you will reap.

Empowering others to act has to do with strengthening and affirming others – sharing power and information (*empowering*). A key factor in building a team is to give people the power they need to experience their contribution as something meaningful. So strengthening people is a question of giving them power. And power is an expandable pie: rather than looking at power as something I have, I must look at power as something to be shared. And the more I share it, the more it grows. We usually say that power corrupts, but the opposite is equally true: powerlessness corrupts; people without power become like small kings and popes. Structures where power is not spread are filled with people who cover up, blame others and promote gossip. If I want to be a stronger leader, I must give strength to my co-workers. By doing this, I transform followers into leaders.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Hershey, Blanchard and Johnson, *Management of Organizational Behavior*, 241.

<sup>15</sup> See Jørgensen, *Equipping for Service*, 141-42.

In the Lutheran World Federation's study document *Diakonia in Context*, empowerment has become a core aspect of diaconal theory and practice: 'As a theological concept, empowerment refers to the biblical understanding of creation that every human being is created in the image of God, with capacities and abilities, independent of their apparent social situation.'<sup>16</sup>

But let us at the same time not forget that there are what the Edinburgh 2010 *Common Call* refers to as: '... the asymmetries and imbalances of power that divide and trouble us in church and world', so that there is a need for 'critical reflection on systems of power, and the accountable use of power structures'.<sup>17</sup>

### Power to Serve<sup>18</sup>

Jesus demonstrates power or authority (*exousia*) when he reveals the Kingdom in word and deed. The way he demonstrated this power was by healing the sick, inviting the excluded to his table, and admitting women and children to his fellowship. The perspective is always 'whoever is great among you must be your servant'. The model of service shown by Jesus should not primarily be interpreted as self-humiliation and servility. Rather, it is a conscious mission with divine authority and with the mandate to be a go-between in contexts of conflict and suffering.<sup>19</sup>

This is how his authority differs, not only from that of the scribes, but also from 'the rulers of this age'. Their authority envisages submission, distance and silence. The authority of Jesus is recognized by the opposite: it lifts up, it includes and it empowers. This is done through his service, his messianic coming, his human figure, his word and deed, his solidarity with the most marginalized experience, his suffering and death. Several indications in the New Testament present his mission as messianic service (e.g. John 13:1-17).<sup>20</sup>

This type of power became a threat to the religious and political rulers. The Easter events tell the story of the dramatic climax in the conflict between two opposing visions of authority: the power of the status quo is revealed as the logic of death, while the power of transformation is the logic of life.

The authority of Jesus brings together both power and powerlessness. Thus Colossians 2:14-15 describes how the principalities and powers are

<sup>16</sup> LWF, *Diakonia in Context. Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment* (Geneva: LWF, 2009), 45.

<sup>17</sup> Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson, *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011), 1.

<sup>18</sup> For this section, see Jørgensen, *Equipping for Service*, 29-30.

<sup>19</sup> John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>20</sup> Kjell Nordstokke, *Liberating Diakonia* (Oslo: Tapir akademisk forlag, 2009), 83.

disarmed, but at the same time makes it clear that this happened on the cross, the place of defeat and powerlessness. So power is often hidden under its contradiction. There is power in powerlessness. It is this understanding of power that forms the basis for servant leadership and for *diakonia*.

Leadership as *diakonia* in the New Testament and in the church today must express continuity with the *diakonia* of Jesus. It has to do with the identity and the values of the church. This implies transformation rather than conformity to the standards of this world – transformation as Paul describes it in Romans 12:1-2. In this way *diakonia* represents a way of being that gives space to the marginalized.

The diaconate would then be the ministry with a specific task of seeing that this really happens. Thus it would have to be a ministry of advocacy and prophecy, of speaking in favour of the poor and the silenced, just as the prophets did in biblical times. It would also be a ministry of transformation, in the sense that the deacon would be a church leader especially engaged in empowering and animating those on the periphery to active participation in a life of faith, hope and love.<sup>21</sup>

Such a diaconal servant leadership is a challenge to a church dominated by conformity, conservatism and institutionalism. Could servant leadership be the instrument for changing this situation? Could inspiration and impulses from the global South, from poor and powerless churches, help rich and powerful churches in the North to respond to the challenges?

Important impulses for servant leadership have come from Latin American and African liberation theology. Here the locus of the church is found to be among the poor, among those on the periphery and not in the inner circles of power. The church is called to serve, says the theology of liberation. How can the church become a church of the poor? And how can the community of believers be serious about injustice and oppression? Is the institutional church with its hierarchy able to take upon itself the form of the servant and exercise political *diakonia* in defence of the weak and oppressed?

### Power and Vulnerability<sup>22</sup>

Power which is given by God to bring order and harmony to the world may be distorted and used to dominate and manipulate. Behind such corruption of power, the Bible speaks of evil forces at work – ‘principalities and powers’. They seem to exercise their power against the purposes of God. The impact of their activities may be seen in society, in the political realm,

<sup>21</sup> Nordstokke, *Liberating Diakonia*, 84.

<sup>22</sup> For this section, see Jørgensen ‘Power in a Vulnerable World. Sharing in Partnership’, 149-50.

in intellectual life and even in religious observance (Col 2:20-23).<sup>23</sup> An example is found in the Indian caste system.<sup>24</sup> Seen from this perspective, one may view the caste system as a web of lies created by destructive powers. Power may thus be exercised within a network of structures which are themselves perverted.

In the Christ-event we meet power, but a power that is turned upside down. In the Bible's image of a reconciling God we meet his vulnerability, and in Christ God makes God-self vulnerable, to the extent that Jesus is God's 'wound in the world' (Kosuke Koyama<sup>25</sup>). The vulnerable God calls us to be vulnerable if we want to be 'wounded healers'<sup>26</sup> and suitable envoys in his service. At the same time, there is power in powerlessness. It opens up for a new understanding of how God's power is hidden under its contradiction (*sub contrarie specie*, as Martin Luther said). The tone resonates with what Berhanu Ofga talks about, how the division within the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus was healed by leaders who had become 'wounded healers'.<sup>27</sup> The reason why they became vehicles for reconciliation was that they were wounded themselves. The strong and aggressive Ethiopian church leaders realized their vulnerability when the Spirit of the Lord took them aside and showed them that they were the reason for the split in the church.

We may hear the same in the stark stories of today about 'the power of the powerless'. It is true that the Christian faith does create a spirit of optimism and confidence, but such confidence can easily become a hindrance for grasping the vulnerability of mission – 'vulnerable mission' in the midst of a worldview of fear. This refers both to mission in contexts of poverty and to mission by the powerless. It may be argued that vulnerability contains the potential, the capacity and the power so much needed for a renewal of mission and church. In this way we may view vulnerability as an enabling condition for mission, in contrast to the view of mission many of us grew up with, from the West to the rest.

Vulnerable mission begins from below. Samuel Escobar calls it the heartbeat and thrust of mission today: 'There is an element of mystery

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<sup>23</sup> See Knud Jørgensen, 'Spiritual conflict in a socio-political context', in A. Scott Moreau, Tokunboh Adeyemo, David Burnett, Bryant L. Myers and Hwa Yung, *Deliver Us from Evil: An Uneasy Frontier in Christian Mission* (Monrovia, CA: Marc, 2002), 213-30.

<sup>24</sup> See Michael Amaladoss, SJ, 'Power and Partnership in Hinduism', in Knut Edvard Larsen and Knud Jørgensen (eds), *Power and Partnership* (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 94ff.

<sup>25</sup> Kosuke Koyama, *No Handle on the Cross* (London: SCM, 1977), 28-43. It is also here that Koyama distinguishes between the crusading and the crucified mind.

<sup>26</sup> Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1990).

<sup>27</sup> Berhanu Ofga, 'The Experience of Reconciliation in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus', in Robert Schreiter and Knud Jørgensen (eds), *Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation* (Oxford: Regnum, 2013), 175ff.

when the dynamism of mission does not come from the people of position of power and privilege... but from below, from the little ones, those who have few material financial or technical resources.<sup>28</sup> Do we here find an essential reason for the growth of the Christian faith among the poor and the persecuted? ‘Mission from above’ is outdated in a broken world. Times have changed; churches in the West have lost prestige and influence or have become trapped in the cobweb of civil religion.<sup>29</sup>

In all this there is an echo of how Second Isaiah depicts the suffering servant. Bosch says that he

... paints the picture of an Israel which has already been the recipient of God’s judgement and wrath, and which now, precisely in its weakness and lowliness, becomes a witness to God’s victory. Just at the moment of Israel’s deepest humiliation and dependency we see the nations approach Israel and confess: ‘The Lord... is faithful, the Holy One of Israel... has chosen you’ (Is. 49:7).<sup>30</sup>

In his book on *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, Bryant Myers talks about ‘the Christ of the periphery’ – the Christ of the powerless and despised geographical and social margins of Israel. Much of Jesus’ ministry took place in Galilee, on the edge of Israel, at the margins. His work was done among the common people – publicans and sinners, the unclean, the outcast. The political and economic power of Jerusalem became afraid of this vulnerable power and eventually put him to death. In the light of this, we may do well to ask where we actually believe the centre is – the centre that can transform the poor, the place where the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength (1 Cor. 1:25). Perhaps the periphery is not God-forsaken at all. Myers adds:

This poses some interesting questions for the development practitioner, especially when involved in advocacy work. Where is the periphery today, and what does it mean to say that Jesus can make it the center? What is the proper location for advocacy work? What result is likely if we go to the centers of power on behalf of the periphery? Are we willing to pay the price? Where are the real transformational frontiers? The ones that make foolishness into wisdom and weakness into power? Where are the places where the false wisdom of the world is unmasked and declared a lie?<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Samuel Escobar, *A Time for Mission* (Leicester, UK: IVP, 1995), 17.

<sup>29</sup> See also Jørgen Skov Sørensen, ‘“Jo, alt har sin tid, intet er evigt...” – om autenticitet i den missionerende folkekirke’, in Mogens Mogensen (ed), *Menighedsformer og mission: Den mangfoldige kirke.2* (Copenhagen: Unitas, 2014), 75. Sørensen here highlights those elements of mission characterised by authenticity, marginality and humility.

<sup>30</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 18.

<sup>31</sup> Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 33ff.

### Power in Reconciliation

In connection with making disciples, the Edinburgh 2010 *Common Call* talks about ‘offering reconciliation, showing love, demonstrating grace and speaking out truth’.<sup>32</sup> And the report on ‘Mission and Power’ emphasizes that the abuse of power must be challenged in the power of the Spirit. This power is manifested in grace, love, compassion and reconciliation.<sup>33</sup>

Some decades ago I had a friend, Festo Kivengere<sup>34</sup> from Uganda, who was a genuine child of the East African Revival.<sup>35</sup> The central focus of his life and evangelistic preaching was reconciliation; he became a bishop and one of the leaders of African Evangelistic Enterprise. One of his illustrations was to compare Christian leaders with balloons filled to the brim with hot air. When such balloons come into contact with one another, they bounce – and keep bouncing. ‘There is no way of reconciling people filled with hot air,’ Kivengere said. Someone must prick a hole in them with a needle. In the same manner, the Lord needs to prick a hole in those of us who are filled with hot air before reconciliation can take place. The cross can prick such a hole.

Kivengere taught me many lessons on leadership and reconciliation. This takes place in a context of brokenness – the broken relationship between God and humanity, brokenness in the area of human relationships, and often brokenness within today’s church. ‘Therefore,’ Kivengere said to colleagues and friends, ‘you must be “broken bread and poured out wine” if you want the Lord to use you in his service as envoys for his reconciling power.’

The ministry of reconciliation will take many forms, but it will always encompass the function of being a ‘go-between’ (cf. how John V. Taylor

<sup>32</sup> Kim and Anderson, *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow*, 1-2.

<sup>33</sup> Kim and Anderson, *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow*, 146.

<sup>34</sup> Bishop Festo Kivengere (1919-1988) was a Ugandan Anglican Christian leader referred to by many as ‘the Billy Graham of Africa’. He played a key role in a Christian revival in south-west Uganda, but in 1973 was urged to flee to neighbouring Kenya in fear for his life after speaking out against President Idi Amin’s tyrannical behaviour, after his colleague, Archbishop Janani Luwum, had been murdered, allegedly on the orders of Amin. Kivengere later wrote the book *I Love Idi Amin* to emphasize the qualities of forgiveness for those who have wronged you and love for those who persecute you. Kivengere stated, ‘On the cross, Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, because they know not what they do.” As evil as Idi Amin is, how can I do less toward him?’ See Anne Coomes, *Festo Kivengere: A Biography* (Eastbourne, UK: Monarch, 1990).

<sup>35</sup> The East Africa Revival was an important renewal movement within Evangelical churches in East Africa during the late 1920s and 1930s. The revival began at a Church Missionary Society mission station in the Belgian territory of Ruanda-Urundi in 1929, and spread to Uganda, Tanganyika and Kenya during the 1930s and 1940s. The revival contributed to the significant growth of the church in East Africa in the 1940s through to the 1970s, and even till now. It also had a visible influence on western missionaries who have been observer-participants of the movement.

described the Holy Spirit as ‘the Go-Between-God’<sup>36</sup>) and a ministry embedded in a community where people may find space for joys and pains, for being vulnerable and for overcoming fear.

2 Cor. 5:14-21 touches the very nerve of reconciliation. It may be expressed by affirming that it is through the cross of Christ that the new relationship between God and humanity is established (the vertical dimension of reconciliation). Paul uses the two words ‘in Christ’ to explain: ‘in Christ’ literally means that what once took place ‘in Christ’ is applicable to those who find themselves in him. The expression is found in a number of Pauline texts which speak of being crucified, dead, buried and raised with Christ, even of having been made to sit with him in heaven and of appearing with him in glory. As I read these texts, ‘being in Christ’ has to do with my historical, concrete life – with baptism, with Holy Communion. The manner Paul talks about baptism in Rom. 6:1-11 describes it as being included in the historical death and resurrection of Christ himself. Therefore, and only therefore, am I a new creation. The background is the Adam-Christ parallel (1 Cor. 15:22) and an understanding of Christ as a ‘corporate personality’. But the heart of the matter is something deeply existential: What happened to Christ has also happened to me. In baptism I have died to or for sin, and I have ‘put on Christ’ (1 Cor. 12:13). In theological terms: the redemptive historical events of the cross and Easter morning are appropriated sacramentally by all believers. The new life I now live is Christ’s since I have a share in the life that was raised from the grave on Easter morning.<sup>37</sup> Paul understands this quite literally.

Why is this so important? Because it is the story of how God in Christ reconciled us, and is therefore the story he sends with us as his ambassadors to share with others: ‘Be reconciled with God!’ This is what reconciliation means: how the love of God in Jesus Christ turns enemies into friends, thereby creating peace. The brothers and sisters in the East African Revival have kept repeating this: it is impossible to remain faithful to the New Testament and not recognize the centrality of Jesus’ giving himself up on the cross – the ‘shedding of his blood’, the call to have my clothes washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. Here is the very centre of servant leadership.

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## Conclusion

Christian mission lives with the tension and ambiguity of power, powerlessness and vulnerability. Too often Christian mission has sided

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<sup>36</sup> John V. Taylor, *The Go-between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (London: SCM, 1972).

<sup>37</sup> See, in this regard, Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 58ff.

with those in power; but Christian mission has also found its place among the marginalized and those who suffer. It is critically important to be aware of the risks of being in the centres of power, and it is biblically essential to locate ourselves among the marginalized. Leadership on the periphery is servant leadership – the deacon leaders telling the authorities in the centre what is happening at the margins and borders.

The source of power in Christian leadership lies in identifying with and imitating the suffering servant (*ʿebed Yahweh*). It is here we find genuine enabling power. God increases his power and authority by sharing with us his power/powerlessness on the cross and Easter morning so that we are empowered to joining in with the Spirit in his mission to the world.

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## MISSION AND POWER: A VIEW FROM THE UNDERSIDE OF SOCIETY

Arun W. Jones

I start with a scene from contemporary India as described by Kerry San Chirico, a scholar of Indian religions. In the holy city of Varanasi in North India, on the second Saturday of every month, a group consisting of thousands of low-caste and indigent Hindus, 85% of them women, gather at a Roman Catholic *ashram*. These are *Khrist Bhaktas* or Christ devotees, and they have come together to worship the god Jesus, who is portrayed on a twelve-foot billboard in the centre of the ashram wearing a gold-and-white tunic, standing with outstretched arms. Under his portrait are written in Hindi the words of Matthew 11:28: 'Come unto me, all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.' Beneath the billboard stands the abbot of the *ashram*, an Indian Roman Catholic priest with long hair and thick beard, uncannily resembling the deity poised above him. For an hour the Swami (religious teacher in Hinduism) offers instruction to the *bhaktas*, peppering his talk with accounts of healing from the lives of the people before him, with an occasional 'Hallelujah'. Then follows a time of testimonies about healing, where one by one devotees give witness to occasions of trial and deliverance. Normally timid village women flock to the microphone to thank the Lord for deliverance from cancer, spousal abuse and lack of money, and for peace of mind. Five hours into this religious festival another holy man or *sadhu*, appropriately bearded and saffron-clad, marches into the centre of the crowd holding a large monstrance in the shape of a wooden cross. He, too, is a Roman Catholic priest. The *sadhu* reaches the dais, holds up and moves the cross in a semi-circular manner so that the crowd can take *darshan*, receiving the spiritual power emanating from it. The cross is put in place; the *bhaktas* begin to sing vernacular hymns known as *bhajjans* in adoration of their god. After six hours in which worship, prayer, testimony, instruction and veneration have taken place, the *bhaktas* receive a final blessing.

The Roman Catholic priest who serves as abbot of the *ashram* is from Kerala, the southernmost state of India, and is a member of the indigenous Indian Missionary Society, to which the *ashram* belongs. The *sadhu* in his saffron garb is a priest of the Roman Catholic diocese of Varanasi. Moreover, as the 'Hallelujahs' above indicate, the Indian Missionary Society has been deeply influenced by the Catholic charismatic movement.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kerry P.C. San Chirico, 'Between Christian and Hindu: *Khrist Bhaktas*, Catholics, and the Negotiation of Devotion in the Banaras Region' (PhD thesis, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2012), in Chad Bauman and Richard Fox Young (eds),

This episode in Varanasi indicates some of the seismic changes that have occurred in Christian missions in India since the middle of the twentieth century, when the British were forced to leave the sub-continent, and most foreign missionaries followed suit in the next four decades. To begin with, the vast majority of Christian missionaries in India today are Indians, not Europeans, and a significant number of Christian missionaries in North India come from the southern states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Secondly, the Pentecostal movement has had a profound influence on the way in which contemporary Christian mission is undertaken. Evangelicalism itself has been ‘Pentecostalized’, according to Chad M. Bauman, and in the Roman Catholic Church the charismatic movement is frequently the engine driving Christian mission.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, and this follows from the second point above, Christian healing is often characterized, not by modern dispensaries and hospitals as in the past, but by exorcisms and other spiritual activities.

If one turns, however, from focusing on those who are engaged in Christian mission to those who eagerly seek it out, the continuities with Christian missions in India during the period of the British Empire are immediately apparent. The very low castes and social classes from which the *Khrist Bhaktas* come – known in Uttar Pradesh as Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) – mirror the social status of most of those who were drawn to Christianity in North India during the British colonial era. Certainly, there were Christian converts from the middle and upper classes and castes to Christianity. Yet these were in the minority. The bulk of Christian converts, at least for evangelical churches in North India, consisted of the poorest and of the religiously most despised segments of Indian society. This population was not what the European missionaries had hoped for in their grand scheme to Christianize India. Missionaries had hoped that Christianization would take place in India as it had in tribal Europe from about 500 to 1500 CE: from the top of society with its kings, queens and nobles, down to the bottom of society with its peasants in the countryside. But on the whole, the middling and upper strata of North Indian society were quite satisfied with their religion, and most of the interest in the new religion in North India came from groups who were severely oppressed by life’s economic, social and religious burdens.

Why was it the poor and ritually polluted who took interest in Christian missions? From my own studies of North American evangelical missions in nineteenth-century North India, the answer seems to me to be rather straightforward. Christian missions offered them sources of power which they could use to ameliorate their lot, to lighten their burdens, and to gain dignity, self-respect and some social status in a world which, on the whole, withheld these from them. For the purposes of discovery, we can identify

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*Constructing Indian Christianities: Culture, Conversion, and Caste* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2014), 23-24, 35-37.

<sup>2</sup> Chad M. Bauman, *Pentecostals, Proselytization, and Anti-Christian Violence in Contemporary India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

three ways in which power was made available by evangelical Christian missions in the colonial era. Missions provided power to gain materially; to improve socially; and to access the divine spiritually.

First of all, missions possessed the power to provide material goods; at times, these were the most basic materials needed for life, such as food and shelter. 'Native Christians generally are poor and ignorant,' remarked the Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Golaknath, in a missionary conference in 1863, 'and they do not pretend to conceal the fact that, when they cast in their lot with the people of God, they had some hope – many of them, at least – of securing some of those worldly advantages which the gospel invariably brings to Christian nations.'<sup>3</sup> Some of the most astute and dedicated Christian mission workers employed the mission's power to provide material goods in their work.

Gopi Nath Nundy was one of the pioneers of the Presbyterian Mission in North India. Born in 1807, he originally hailed from a *Kayasth* (a name of a caste) family in Calcutta.<sup>4</sup> In 1830, Nundy enrolled in the school of Scottish missionary Alexander Duff, where he converted to Christianity and was baptized by Duff in December 1832. The following year, the Scotsman sent Nundy to Fatehpur in the North-West Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh), in response to requests of Christians there who were looking for a teacher to take charge of a school they had opened. One of the strongest leaders among the Fatehpur Christians was Dr Charles Madden, a British evangelical civil surgeon in the employ of the East India Company. During 1837-38, a terrible famine hit North India. 'For miles the road on both sides was lined by famished people, who had crawled from their homes to beg of the passing traveller a mouthful of bread. Their emaciated forms and death-struck appearance presented a tale of suffering which rendered language and supplication unnecessary.' Nundy, we are told, 'visited the villages and roads for the purpose of relieving the sufferings of the people, and collecting the children either abandoned by their parents or left orphans'.<sup>5</sup> Madden opened up an orphanage for the children that he and Nundy had collected, and employed the latter to take charge of the institution. Upon the death of his wife, Madden transferred the orphanage with its fifty wards and material and money worth Rs 1000 to the Presbyterians, who had been persuaded to set up a mission station in Fatehgarh in 1838. Gopi Nath

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<sup>3</sup> Goloknath, 'Sympathy and Confidence', in *Report of the Punjab Missionary Conference Held at Lahore in December and January, 1862-63* (Ludhiana, India: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1863), 168.

<sup>4</sup> For Nundy's life, see John C.B. Webster, *The Christian Community and Change in Nineteenth Century North India* (Delhi: Macmillan India, 1976), 51-52; James Alter, *In the Doab and Rohilkhand* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1986), 102-04; Rajaiah D. Paul, *They Kept the Faith: Biographies of Gopenath Nundi, Pyari Mohan Rudra and Lal Behari Day* (Lucknow, India: Lucknow Publishing House, 1968), 1-45.

<sup>5</sup> J. Johnston Walsh, *A Memorial of the Futtehghurh Mission and her Martyred Missionaries* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858), 38-39.

Nundy moved with the orphans from Fatehpur to Fatehgarh, where the Presbyterians employed him as a teacher and evangelist. The orphans from Fatehpur were then joined by twenty orphans from a certain Captain Wheeler in Fatehgarh. In 1839, additions to the orphanage brought to 109 the number of orphans. This group of orphans became part of the founding nucleus of the Presbyterian community in North India outside the Punjab.<sup>6</sup>

Post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha, judging by his treatment of Anand Masih in the essay 'Signs Taken for Wonders', may dismiss Gopi Nath Nundy as a dupe of the British imperial mission, in which the American Presbyterians were hopelessly enmeshed.<sup>7</sup> Such a stance, however, dismisses the perspective not only of Gopi Nath Nundy but also of the orphans, some of whom, at least, for reasons that are probably complex and certainly not available to us, chose to join the Presbyterian community. My point is not to deny that Christian missionary and imperial power were working together in the horrendous famine of 1837-38. Rather, it is to take as seriously the perspective of famine orphans as we would the perspective of *Khrist Bhaktas* today, and to realize that for the most impoverished and oppressed of society, the alleviation of physical and material needs is crucial to their apprehension and experience of religious power. Inasmuch as Christian mission has offered and continues to offer various means to deal with the materiality of life, it is seen as a source of important power to those in the lowest strata of society.

In fact, in the nineteenth century, European missionaries were extremely wary of Indians converting to Christianity for material gain. The problem was not simply that the poor of India saw in Christian missions the opportunity for worldly goods. The problem was in fact created by the missionaries themselves who, on the one hand, linked the greatness of western civilization with the Christian faith, yet who, on the other, wanted Indians to convert to Christianity without any thought of the benefits provided by western civilization.

Methodist T.J. Scott recounts how, when passing through a village, he and his party stopped for a while at a sugar factory. The technology employed was local: pressing out juice and boiling it down to a solid mass of sugar. Scott told the workmen about the industrial technology employed to manufacture sugar in the United States, which purportedly amazed the Indians. 'I then insisted that, when they become Christians and cast off their thoughts and works of darkness, they too will make sugar and other things on such a scale. Some smiled at such a result of accepting the new

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<sup>6</sup> James P. Alter, *In the Doab and Rohilkhand*, 103; Helen H. Holcomb, 'Sketch of the Furrukhabad Mission', in *Historical Sketches of the India Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Allahabad, India: Allahabad Mission Press, 1884), 110.

<sup>7</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, 'Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817', in *Critical Inquiry* (12:1), 144-65.

faith.<sup>8</sup> By linking faith with civilization and technology, missionaries unwittingly opened wide the door to what they most deprecated in motivations for conversion – material benefit. If Christian faith was inexorably linked with western technology and power, why should people not ask for the goods of western civilization in exchange for converting to Christianity? So when Scott, a few days after the sugar mill encounter, preached to a group of villagers, ‘an honest, rustic-looking old fellow, in all apparent sincerity, proposed becoming a Christian if [Scott] would give him a village!’ While Scott ‘smiled at his naïveté, and urged that he must accept the Kingdom of Heaven from higher motives’, Scott’s own preaching actually suggested that Christian faith and western power were a package deal. Thus the connection between Christian missions and power in the realm of materiality has a long and complicated history in India. On the other hand, such connections between religion and material benefit are certainly not absent in other Indian religious traditions.

A second form of power that the lowest castes and classes in nineteenth-century India perceived in Christian missions was the power to improve their social status, and thereby gain some dignity and respect in Indian society. Sometimes this meant availing of mission education, when that had not yet been monopolized by the middle and upper classes (which it quickly tended to be). In 1867, Methodist missionary James Thoburn opened a school in Pauri, Garhwal, soon after he arrived there, and was pleased that two girls had come as boarders and were attending. ‘Their parents are low caste and bring them to me with the wish that I “make them *Angrez* [English]”. They have much to unlearn and nearly everything to learn in the way of religion. They wear a profusion of jewellery and have good clothing. May God lead them to Jesus.’<sup>9</sup>

Thoburn’s diary entry reveals something about the thinking of the Indians seeking schooling for their children. For the parents, *Angrez* or English was not a racial category, but rather a social and cultural one.<sup>10</sup> One could be Indian, from low-caste background, in fact, and still become *Angrez*. Missionary evangelicalism had driven a wedge between the European race and its religion and culture by insisting that Indians could convert to Christianity, purportedly the religion of the Europeans. Not all

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<sup>8</sup> T.J. Scott, *Missionary Life Among the Villages of India* (Cincinnati, OH: Hitchcock & Walden, 1876), 30.

<sup>9</sup> James M. Thoburn, *Personal Diaries* (Special Collections, Allegheny College, Meadville, PA), 2nd April 1867.

<sup>10</sup> Many years ago, William Henry Scott called attention to the importance of throwaway remarks made by Spanish chroniclers in the Philippines for the historians trying to reconstruct Filipino society and perspectives during the Spanish era: William Henry Scott, *Cracks in the Parchment Curtain and Other Essays in Philippine History* (Quezon City, Philippines: New Day Publishers, 1982), 1-17.

Europeans believed this could or should be done.<sup>11</sup> The girls' parents also assumed that Christianity could be deployed to raise one's social status in Indian society. The fact that the low-caste girls (perhaps along with their mother) wore a profusion of jewellery and had good clothing suggests that the family's economic standing was higher than its location in the Indian caste hierarchy. For these parents, Christianity was a means of improving their family's social status, perhaps to make it more commensurate with their economic status. Thoburn seems to have been aware of this; hence his prayer that God would 'lead them to Jesus'.

While the two girls most probably did not become Christian – Thoburn stops mentioning them in his diary before a month is over – many Indian Christian converts were eager to use Christian missions to improve their social status. This phenomenon manifests itself most vividly in nineteenth-century debates in mission circles on the westernization of Indian Christians. In many parts of British India, as opposed to some other parts of the world, in a surprising number of cases it was Indian Christians who wished to look and live more like westerners, and missionaries who insisted that they hold on to as much of their Indian heritage as possible. Of course, both sides agreed that what they deemed as the bad behaviour and bad habits of non-Christians were to be avoided. Yet what the contending parties could not agree upon was the extent to which western civilization was to provide the cultural norms for an Indian Christian lifestyle.

During the Allahabad Missionary Conference of 1872-73, the Rev. W. Tracy, an American missionary working in Madurai, spoke at length about the undesirability of Indian seminary students taking up 'European dress or habits of life'.<sup>12</sup> One missionary did argue that becoming a Christian meant adopting 'Christian civilization', which involved much expense – for example, a clean lifestyle, education, clothing, reading materials, lamps for reading and prayers, windows in houses, a separate kitchen and so on. However, he went on to criticize Indian Christians for their enthusiasm in appropriating western culture. 'It is very difficult in India as well as elsewhere to define the limits between necessity and luxury, and I am well aware that there is a great tendency of the converts to overstep it; but a certain allowance must be made for them.'<sup>13</sup>

The Indian Christian speakers at the conference, on the other hand, were generally in full sympathy with their compatriots' desires to adopt western civilization. The Rev. K.C. Chatterjee of the American Presbyterian

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. the comment of Thoburn's dentist in Calcutta on converting Indians to Christianity: 'Might as well try and convert that pillar into a Christian.' James M. Thoburn, *My Missionary Apprenticeship* (New York: Philips & Hunt, 1886), 40.

<sup>12</sup> W. Tracy, 'The Training of Mission Native Agents', in *Report of the General Missionary Conference Held at Allahabad, 1872-73* (London: Seeley, Jackson & Halliday, 1873), 211.

<sup>13</sup> A. Wenger, 'Interference with Secular Matters', in *Report of the General Missionary Conference Held at Allahabad, 1872-73*, 320.

Mission argued that adopting a western lifestyle was part of the process of conversion to Christianity:

When a Hindu or a Mohammedan embraces the Christian religion, the missionary has in most cases to provide him with a house to live in, and get him some means of subsistence. He has to educate his converts and their children. He has to teach them good manners, self-reliance, energy and industry. When they are in difficulty or distress, the missionary has to come forward and help them out of it. In fact, he has to seek and promote their temporal welfare as much as their spiritual good, and be to them as a father to his children.<sup>14</sup>

In his paper, Mr Chatterjee went on to argue that it is a legitimate duty for missionaries to provide secular support for Indian converts to Christianity. However, missionaries should not interfere with the converts' 'mode of living – the manner and matter of their dress and their household management'. The Presbyterian pastor noted that it was missionaries who objected to the converts' adoption of 'English dress and mode of living'; the implication was that the missionaries would prefer that Indian Christians keep more of their Indian and less of the European customs and manners.<sup>15</sup> Similar sentiments had been voiced a decade earlier at the Punjab Missionary Conference by Mr J.P. Raow, who criticized certain missionaries who 'find fault' with Indian Christians' 'dress, with the mode of living, and the desire to learn English, and for reading the Bible and Prayer Book in English'.<sup>16</sup>

Why were so many Indian converts to Christianity so eager to adopt the trappings of western civilization? The Rev. Golaknath, of the American Presbyterian Mission, proposed the following reason at the Punjab Missionary Conference in 1862:

Native Christians, in common with their Hindoo friends, try to imitate the manners and customs of their rulers. They did so in the time of the Mussulman – and they will do so now. If you go among the Sirdars [Sikhs], or visit a respectable Hindoo or Mussulman in the town, you will find chairs, tables, drawers and couches. In almost every place they prefer English things to those of country manufacture. The missionaries should not oppose Native Christians in these matters, but leave them to their own inclinations.<sup>17</sup>

What Mr Goloknath is arguing here is that South Asians, of whatever religious background, but especially those who see themselves as 'respectable', tend to imitate at least some of the features of the civilization

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<sup>14</sup> K.C. Chatterjee, 'The Relations of Missionaries to Converts in Secular Matters', in *Report of the General Missionary Conference Held at Allahabad, 1872-73*, 337.

<sup>15</sup> Chatterjee, 'The Relations of Missionaries to Converts in Secular Matters', 338.

<sup>16</sup> J.P. Raow, 'Sympathy and Confidence', in *Report of the Punjab Missionary Conference, Held at Lahore, in December and January, 1862-63* (Ludhiana, India: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1863), 179.

<sup>17</sup> Golaknath, 'Sympathy and Confidence', in *Report of the Punjab Missionary Conference, Held at Lahore, 1862-63*, 184.

of their current rulers. This is true regardless of the religion of the local people, and regardless of the religion of the rulers. What is important is the fact that the rulers have brought a certain civilization that is admired and therefore selectively adopted by upwardly mobile segments of Indian society. Indeed, Golaknath argues, this has happened in the past – as the popularity of Mughal (‘Mussulman’) culture in South Asia attests.

Thus, by becoming part of the Christian community, formerly low-caste Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in nineteenth-century Uttar Pradesh were availing themselves of higher social status and greater social respectability within the North Indian social structure. It is important to note that they were using cultural symbols that would be readily understood by their North Indian neighbours. Westernization was not a pandering to missionaries – in fact any number of missionaries were against it. Rather, westernization was a means of gaining respectability in local Indian society. This is precisely what Chad Bauman has argued happened with the Satnamis who became Christians in nineteenth and twentieth-century Chhattisgarh.<sup>18</sup> Christian missions, then, provided power for social mobility to those in the lowest strata of North Indian society. This phenomenon continues today in North Indian society, where Christian converts adopt clean and sober lifestyles, and when possible clothes, education and other selected trappings of western civilization – all social markers in North India of middle class society.<sup>19</sup>

Besides providing access to power for material gain and social respectability, evangelical missions in the nineteenth century provided power for a spiritual life that promised an intimate relationship with the divine. This was the third way in which Christian missions were a source of power for the lowest classes in society. Evangelicalism offered access to a divine saviour (Jesus Christ, or Yeshu Masih) who had entered into the human condition, and therefore intimately knew its difficulties and hardships. This divine saviour was alive, and promised to help those who turned to him in faith. And like the contemporary *Khris̥t Bhaktas* of Varanasi, there were those in nineteenth-century North India who indeed turned in faith to worship this divine Saviour, and to live according to a way that would be pleasing to him.

While the Christian message as proclaimed by evangelical missions was new, it was not utterly alien in the North Indian religious landscape. For centuries before the arrival of Protestant missions, *bhakti* movements had flourished in North India, propagating certain ideas and practices to which evangelicalism later bore some resemblance. The *bhakti* movement is believed to have started in the Tamil area of South India somewhere between the fifth and seventh centuries of the Common Era, and gradually

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<sup>18</sup> Chad M. Bauman, *Christian Identity and Dalit Religion in Hindu India, 1868-1947* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 187-88.

<sup>19</sup> This is true even of the *Khris̥t Bhakta* movement: San Chirico, ‘Between Christian and Hindu’, 34-35.

spread westward and northward until it swept over North India and Bengal, beginning in the fifteenth century.<sup>20</sup> The word *bhakti* comes from a Sanskrit root *bhaj* meaning ‘to divide or distribute, to share, to partake of, or to love’.<sup>21</sup> This root points to the importance of an intimate relationship with the divine, which is only possible when the divine and the human are divided from each other, and are not seen as essentially a unity. *Bhakti* is an ‘enthusiastic, often congregational kind of religion’ that emphasizes the cultivation of an ardent devotion and love to a supreme god, in the hope or faith that this god will grant salvation to the devotee.<sup>22</sup> This form of religion does not look for salvation solely in the performance of ritual and social duties pertaining to caste Hinduism, nor in ascetic withdrawal from society – even though duty-conscious Hindus and world-denying ascetics embrace *bhakti* as well. It opens the possibility of salvation to everyone in society, including women and persons from the lowest rungs in the caste hierarchy who, according to the norms of Brahminical Hinduism, cannot attain salvation at the end of this life but must wait for reincarnation into a male member of one of the three higher castes.<sup>23</sup> This is one of the reasons that persons from low-caste communities have gravitated to *bhakti*-inspired religious communities. Finally, *bhakti* shifts religious authority from the Brahmin priest, who is well versed in the Sanskrit scriptures, to a religious leader, such as a *guru* or poet-saint, whose personal charisma, manifest in his religious knowledge and lifestyle, draws followers to him.<sup>24</sup>

While there are notable theological, ritual and social differences between them, evangelicalism and *bhakti* share some important features. In terms of theology, both evangelicals and *bhaktas* look to and worship a divine saviour. For various *bhakti* sects, their devotion is either to a particular god or goddess, the most popular divinities being Ram and Krishna, or to a pure apprehension of the divine which eschews all representations of the divine in the phenomenal world.<sup>25</sup> Despite this theological similarity, one must

<sup>20</sup> Karine Schomer, ‘Introduction’, in Karine Schomer and W.H. McLeod (eds), *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), 1-9; John Stratton Hawley, *The Bhakti Movement – From Where? Since When?* (New Delhi: International Centre, n.d.); John Cort, ‘Bhakti in the Early Jain Tradition’, in *History of Religions*, 42:1 (August 2002), 86.

<sup>21</sup> San Chirico, ‘Between Christian and Hindu’, 50; John Carman, ‘Bhakti’, in Mircea Eliade (ed), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 30.

<sup>22</sup> John Stratton Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>23</sup> John Stratton Hawley, *Three Bhakti Voices* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 48.

<sup>24</sup> Schomer, ‘Introduction’, 1.

<sup>25</sup> For a helpful summary of *bhakti* sects in North India, see John Stratton Hawley, ‘Hindi Religious Traditions’, in Lindsay Jones (ed), *Encyclopedia of Religion, Second Edition*, Vol. 6 (Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2005), 3983-88. Two of the most famous *nirguna* poet saints are Kabir and Nanak, the latter being the

immediately note that a very important difference between evangelicalism and the *bhakti* movement is that the latter is not monotheistic, as this is understood in the Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions. Another theological feature held in common is that this god is not simply a divine being, but has a personal – indeed, an intimate – relationship with the devotee. Moreover, the personal god is the devotee’s saviour. In both *bhakti* and evangelicalism, devotion and salvation are intimately related. To be sure, the understanding and method of salvation are very different in the two traditions. In *bhakti*, the devotee ‘seeks the protection and the grace... of the Lord. He surrenders to his Lord, satisfied to adore him’. Liberation (*moksha*) from the cycle of death and rebirth is ‘a remote matter for most worshippers’.<sup>26</sup> In evangelicalism, as in all Christianity, the divine rescues the devotee from eternal damnation through the forgiveness of sins attained by the atoning death of the Saviour on the cross. Such an idea of salvation is simply not present in *bhakti* or other Hindu religious traditions.

A second broad similarity between the two sub-traditions within Hinduism and Christianity is that, in terms of religious expression, both may be described as ‘heart religion’.<sup>27</sup> If religion is conceived of as having intellectual, behavioural and affective dimensions, heart religion emphasizes the affective dimension. Also common to *bhakti* and evangelical religious expression is a choice of vernacular rather than sacred languages, such as Sanskrit or Latin, for the articulation of theology and devotion. Again, the history of translation in Christianity and Hinduism is quite different, yet both *bhakti* and evangelicalism in India propagated a faith in vernacular languages.

A third similarity is that a reformist impulse pervades both *bhakti* and evangelicalism.<sup>28</sup> This reformation is both theological and social. In the realm of theology, both sub-traditions criticize impediments put up by

founder of what has become known as the Sikh religion. For a discussion of the limitations of the *nirguna/saguna* distinction, see John Stratton Hawley, ‘The *Nirgun/Sagun* Distinction in Early Manuscript Anthologies of Hindi Devotion’, in David H. Lorenzen (ed), *Bhakti Religion in North India: Community, Identity and Political Action* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 160-80.

<sup>26</sup> Emmanuel Francis and Charlotte Schmid, ‘Introduction: Towards an Archaeology of Bhakti’, in Emmanuel Francis and Charlotte Schmid (eds), *The Archaeology of Bhakti I* (Pondicherry, India: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2011) 8-9.

<sup>27</sup> See Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment* (Cambridge, UK: CUP, 2008); Richard B. Steele, ‘Heart Religion’ in *the Methodist Tradition and Related Movements* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001); Ted A. Campbell, *The Religion of the Heart* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991); John Stratton Hawley, *A Storm of Songs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 2.

<sup>28</sup> In fact, the proponents of ‘heart religion’ are not infrequently involved in the reformation of religious thought and practice – which belies the notion that ‘mysticism’ or ‘spirituality’ is simply an inward turn.

religious authorities which prevent the devotee from gaining personal access to the divine. Jack Hawley notes that ‘the *bhakti* poets seem united in their conviction that one must cultivate personal experience as a way to approach God; hence they downplay and often ridicule the preoccupations of ritual religion’.<sup>29</sup> The *bhakti* tradition has also criticized the institution of caste and the construction of gender in Hinduism, although these criticisms are neither uniform nor universal. Yet many *bhakti* poets are famous for having established communities in which people of all castes, and women as well as men, could join and devote themselves to the divine.

In a similar manner, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Protestant evangelicals often severely criticized formalism in Protestantism and especially Roman Catholicism’s high view of ritual in the Christian’s approach to God. Evangelicals were also famous for their deep concern for the poor in society, especially as the Industrial Revolution was creating severe economic and social upheaval in England and parts of America.<sup>30</sup> While inconsistencies were rife in the movement, for example, in the way that many American evangelicals accepted slavery (even as others fought against it), evangelicalism wished to reform all people, regardless of social status.

The similar goals of religious and social reformation, however, do not mean that *bhakti* and evangelicalism viewed and promoted such reformation in the same way. For *bhakti*, it was music and poetry in a communal setting that drew the worshipper and the divine together, and it was in the community that new social arrangements could be developed. *Bhakti* is well known not to have practically challenged the hierarchical nature of Hindu society.<sup>31</sup> Evangelicalism on the other hand, stressed an affective religious conversion from worldliness to holiness, and its goal was to reform society radically. Thus there was a high degree of social activism in nineteenth-century evangelicalism. So, in the realm of social reform, the two traditions differed significantly. Nevertheless, they both criticized significant aspects of prevailing religious and social norms, and advocated a personal approach to God, which appealed especially to the lowest strata of society.

Fourth, both *bhakti* and evangelicalism stressed social formation, the shaping of distinct religious communities in which the appropriate religious devotion could be practised, cultivated and developed over time. Both the *bhakti* and evangelical movements, in their own distinct ways, formed and nourished religious communities where their particular beliefs, practices, and emotional and spiritual expressions could be regularized and cultivated.

<sup>29</sup> Hawley, ‘Hindi Religious Traditions’, 3985.

<sup>30</sup> See Jean L. and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Vol. 1 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 49-85.

<sup>31</sup> See Patton Burchett, ‘*Bhakti* Rhetoric in the Hagiography of ‘Untouchable’ Saints: Discerning *Bhakti*’s Ambivalence on Caste and Brahminhood’, in *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, 13:2 (August 2009), 115-41.

One other interesting characteristic shared by both evangelicals and *bhakti* groups is that they were eager to convert or recruit people to their movement.<sup>32</sup> While the desire to convert is generally well known in the evangelical movement, the desire for *bhaktas* to recruit people to worship their own deity is not commonly recognized.<sup>33</sup> The image of Hinduism as a tradition that not merely allows but encourages people to stay with their faith tradition was so successfully propagated by international luminaries such as Vivekananda and Mohandas K. Gandhi that its conversionary tradition, especially among *bhakti* sects, has been overlooked. Yet frequently *bhaktas* have not been content simply to worship their own deity; their devotion compels them to bring others into their own community and way of believing.<sup>34</sup>

There is no question that nineteenth-century evangelicalism in North India offered people a new spiritual life and a new way to access the divine. And there were those who were convinced of the truth of the evangelical Christian message. However, that message was able to be understood and appropriated because of certain similarities that it bore to particular forms of Indian religiosity that had preceded it – namely *bhakti* traditions. Evangelicalism offered new sources of spiritual power, but these sources appeared somewhat familiar in the North Indian religious context.

For the majority of North Indians who were attracted by evangelical Christianity in the nineteenth century, Christian missions provided a source of power to assist them materially, socially and spiritually. Unlike children of the Enlightenment – such as European missionaries and contemporary scholars of religion – North Indians from the bottom of the class and caste hierarchies did not generally divide the world into religious and secular spheres. The material, social and spiritual were normally seen as inextricably bound up together – even as they are for *Khrist Bhaktas* today. The divine saviour who is spiritually approached is the same saviour who can help the devotee in various difficulties of secular life. And many Indian Christians have believed that, given its considerable resources, Christian mission needs to employ its power for the good of the totality of the Christian community's life.

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<sup>32</sup> Karen Pechilis Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 6.

<sup>33</sup> For example, see the converting activities of Basavanna, a twelfth-century Kannada poet and founder of an egalitarian religious community, in A.K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva* (London: Penguin Books, 1973), 63-64.

<sup>34</sup> Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva*, 29.

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# THE GLOBAL SHIFT OF POWER AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN MISSION

Nico Botha

## **Introduction: The Renewal of Christ's Mission in the Entire World**

We have reached a stage, perhaps for the first time in the history of humanity, where every human being is involved with the whole world and the whole world with every human being. The worldwide ecological problem of pollution giving rise to global warming and climate change, for example, is threatening the existence of all. The world as such has become globalized and we with it. Is this, perhaps the original worldwide vision of Christ – that we must go *into the whole world in a globalized way* and proclaim the gospel?

Is posing the question of the shift of 'power' from North to South regarding the large numbers of Christians in the South *vis-à-vis* the North not ignoring the positive development of mission? Should the North not celebrate with the South that their seeds of mission have eventually created seed-buds towards fruit in the South? Are we not back, in a sense, in the New Testament times of substantial growth in mission in all directions, starting from multiple geographical and cultural points, *except that growth is taking place in a more globalized way*? Is that not the work of God with his reign in the whole world? These questions are neither rhetorical nor easy to answer. Attempts at answering them can quite easily create more controversies.

Jerusalem, the original starting point of mission, soon ceased to be central to the early church's work, giving way to Antioch's dynamic mission where the followers of Jesus were first called Christians. Soon Ephesus became the centre of outreach into Asia Minor. Thessalonica became the radiating centre for Macedonia and Achaia. Eventually Rome became the centre of Pauls' mission strategy.

The early Christians overcame the inevitable potential for division, distrust and disorder in such a confused context. How did they manage it? Mainly, it seems, through personal visits, reciprocal travel and letters of recommendation from trusted friends, crossing the boundaries of ethnicity, language and culture – and basically through the denial of self and love for the Lord and for one another, especially the other. We will have to research and focus more on the first development of the globalization of Christianity, and in our day of a massively globalized world.

Consequently, we concentrate on the vision of Jesus which seemingly has arrived only now. And therefore attention is drawn in this chapter to *The Global Shift of Power and its Implications for Christian Mission*,

which should be the emphasis of the worldwide church. This needs a close analysis of the globalized world – economically, culturally, politically, scientifically, technologically and in a vast and comprehensive communications network – to adapt mission strategies to confront this transformed world with new paradigms of mission and the gospel.

In addition, we have to get back to our Christian roots in a post-modern way to cut to the bone and drink from the wells of our spiritual ‘power’ to be able to encounter the ‘power’ of the globalized world – the same as the way in which the ‘quantum world’ overturned modern science, pushing it from the throne of absolutism, controlling our thinking, rationalism being debunked by experience and holistic emotion, and modernism ‘over-emphasizing’ reason, degraded by a post-modern approach, which is concentrating mainly on experience, but not being unreasonable.

We have also emphasized already in the introduction the steps taken by the early Christians to confront the vast gap between rich and poor in practical ways in the early church, which we need urgently in a capitalistic globalized world, usurping cultures and societies in a draconian way: Paul convinced the ‘rich’ Christians in Corinth to contribute to the ‘poor’ in Jerusalem, and deacons were appointed to support the struggling Greeks in the first congregations, etc.

There is one condition to be able to do the above:

We, especially in the North, but also in the South, have to listen closely to one another, to understand each other truly and also positively appraise one another’s situation with its problems and challenges in humility through the Spirit of Christ.

In listening ‘tolerance does not suggest papering over our difficulties... It suggests rather a real and continuing recognition of the right to have differences and the effort to listen and to learn.’<sup>1</sup>

This contribution is organized around three main elements:

First, the global capitalist empire is presented as the matrix within which the relationship between Christianity in the global North and global South plays out.

Secondly, some broad strokes are offered on what a new mission paradigm might potentially look like.

Thirdly, a post-modern approach is interrogated, albeit in fragmentary fashion, for its fruitfulness in the renewal of mission and the gospel in the encounter between the global North and the global South.

### **Setting the Scene: A Global Capitalist Empire**

Globalization, globalism, glocalization and globality<sup>2</sup> are complex and vast subjects which need to be studied in depth to be able to understand our

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<sup>1</sup> J. Kevin Livingston, *A Missiology of the Road: Early Perspectives in David Bosch’s Theology of Mission and Evangelism* (Cambridge: James Clark, 2014), 88.

contemporary capitalist world and its problems and challenges for mission. Rethinking, re-conceptualizing and recreating the gospel and mission for our time is vital and inescapable. The time for a narrow construing of mission and the gospel is over as the stakes are too high in our convoluted worldwide situation.

There is also the approach of interpreting globalization in terms of common suspicions. The common suspicions are understood to be:

Gaps between the rich and poor are widening, decision-making power is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, local cultures are wiped out, biological diversity is destroyed, regional tensions are increasing and the environment is nearing the point of collapse. That is the sad reality of globalization, an opportunity for human progress whose great potential has been thwarted. Instead we have a global economic system which feeds on itself while marginalizing the fundamental human needs of people and communities.<sup>3</sup>

Many... blame globalization for economic and technological imperialism, the loss of local cultures, the rise of fundamentalism, and greater general insecurity – a world characterized by global disease, a growing gap between rich and poor, international terrorism, ethnic cleansing and environmental degradation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Globalization is a process of interaction and integration among the people, companies and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment, and aided by information technology. This process has effects on the environment, on culture, on political systems, on economic development and prosperity, and on human physical well-being in societies around the world’:

[www.globalization101.org/what-is-globalization](http://www.globalization101.org/what-is-globalization)

‘Globalism... seeks to describe and explain nothing more than a world which is characterized by networks of connections that span multi-continental distances. It attempts to understand all the interconnections of the modern world – and to highlight patterns that underlie (and explain) them. In contrast, globalization refers to the increase or decline in the degree of globalism. It focuses on the forces, the dynamism or speed of these changes. In short, consider globalism as the underlying basic network, while globalization refers to the dynamic shrinking of distance on a large scale’: Joseph Nye, *Globalism versus Globalization* (15th April 2002):

[www.theglobalist.com/globalism-versus-globalization](http://www.theglobalist.com/globalism-versus-globalization)

‘The term ‘glocalism’ identifies the *momentous changes* generated by globalization, changes which have resulted in a permanent intertwining of the global and the local dimensions’: Piero Bassetti:

[www.globusetlocuseng.org/About\\_Us/Piero\\_Bassetti\\_President/Piero\\_Bassetti.kl](http://www.globusetlocuseng.org/About_Us/Piero_Bassetti_President/Piero_Bassetti.kl)

<sup>3</sup> Wayne Ellwood, *The No Nonsense Guide to Globalization* (Oxford: New Internationalist Publications, 2004), 11.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Globalization and the gospel rethinking mission in the contemporary world’, Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 30, in David Claydon (ed), *A New Vision. A New Heart. A Renewed Call*. Vol. 1, Lausanne Occasional Papers from the 2004 Forum for World Evangelization (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2005) 1-60, 10.

Globalization is the present worldwide drive toward a globalized economic system dominated by supranational corporate trade and banking institutions that are not accountable to democratic processes or national governments...<sup>5</sup>

Of course, each of these descriptions depends on the place from where we relate to them: whether we are on the advantage side or the negatively receiving end. What we cannot deny is that globalizing capitalism, which exists as a practicality, is

... technologically-enabled, neo-liberal capitalism-driven by Western-dominated international financial institutions, multinational corporations and consumer markets increasingly backed by the US military.<sup>6</sup>

Perkins elaborated on this aspect comprehensively.<sup>7</sup> In the light of a massive darkening of our world, we need to listen again to the striking message of our Lord Jesus Christ to us as Christians: *You are the light of the world*. In the context of our topic regarding the power switch from the North to the South, the emphasis has to change towards *a radical transformation from a predominantly powerful Northern Christianity to a genuine World Christianity with a global impact*: a sharing of resources, open assistance regarding comprehensive training, uniting Christian churches and combining Christian action and proclamation.

This alone, however, is not sufficient – and this may be a major surprise to many – as the impact of mission and the proclamation of the gospel depend completely on the issues that are confronted and the message of profound transformation that are to be effected. To use a plain example: it would not assist the colossal plight of the poor and suffering in the world in a major way if we concentrated mainly on increased ‘evangelistic outreaches’.

The result may be astounding and damaging if we simply continue with the traditional approach of evangelism and a general witness against injustice:

*Mission may be considered as merely another form of domination and exploitation under the influence and in the shadow of, and even as part of, globalizing capitalism.* Consequently, we have to be completely distinct about the unquestionably globalized issues and the renewed powerful contents of mission and the gospel:

- What do the Christians, mission and churches throughout the world do with the *growing gap between the rich and the poor*? If one

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<sup>5</sup> See the PowerPoint <http://slideplayer.com/slide/4942276> (emphasis added) of the International Forum on Globalization, a global coalition of anti-globalization (www.ifg.org). See also ‘Globalization and the gospel rethinking mission in the contemporary world’.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Globalization and the gospel rethinking mission in the contemporary world’, 12.

<sup>7</sup> John Perkins, *The Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (San Francisco, CA: Berrit-Koehler, 2004).

compares the world with a global village composed by 100 people, the richest person of that 100 owns the same as the poorest 57 taken together. Fifty of the 100 do not have a reliable source of food and are hungry some of or all the time. Thirty of the 100 suffer malnutrition. Fifteen do not have access to safe drinking water. Half of all wealth in the entire world is owned by only two of the 100. As the World Bank describes it, two thirds of the planet lives in dire poverty.<sup>8</sup>

- What is the Christian witness in word and deed when three billionaires own more than the combined Gross National Product of 48 of the 192 nations in the world?
- We may all be in some way ‘citizens of one world’ – *nevertheless we are not equally so*. Hence the question remains: ‘Of whose world?’ How can we transform mission, the church and the Christian paradigm to gain a critical edge in proclaiming the Lordship of Christ in all spheres of society, and to announce the Kingdom of God towards justice?
- What must happen amidst all the crises in the world that the churches and mission take God’s work seriously, ‘to seek first the reign of God’ (Jesus, Matt. 5), so that the Christians *unite* in Christian action, service and proclamation (Jesus, John 17)?<sup>9</sup>

We need the courage and power of a ‘David’ of God behind him, to confront and conquer our ‘Goliath’, facing and threatening us with centralizing power structures and the widening of the gap between rich and poor with all its suffering in globalized capitalism, struggling with our disunity.

### **Rough Contours of a New Paradigm Emerging in the Relationship in Mission between ‘North’ and ‘South’**

It cannot be denied that Christians in all denominations struggled continuously with a clear vision of mission in the changing situations and the new contexts of a developing history during the past century. This might not have been a bad preoccupation as it showed that the churches intensely faced the issues of relevant mission.

One major issue, however, might have been totally different and to some extent devastating: the shifting of power regarding the demographic challenges of Christians between the ‘North’ and the ‘South’. At the start of the twentieth century, European and North American Christians numbered

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel G. Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice: Navigating the Path to Peace* (Theology in Global Perspective Series), (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 3-4.

<sup>9</sup> Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice*.

approximately 80% of all Christians, and after about 100 years this was reduced to approximately 40%.<sup>10</sup> ‘Christianity began the twentieth century as a Western religion, and indeed *the* Western religion; it ended the century as a non-Western religion, on track to becoming progressively more so.’<sup>11</sup> Most of Christianity’s twentieth-century growth has been in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania. ‘... at the same time, Europe and the West have become increasingly secularized, even post-Christian. Certainly, Church demographics indicate the dethroning of European influence so that we can now claim to have a post-Christian West and a post-Western Christianity.’<sup>12</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century at the Edinburgh Conference, there was great optimism about mission, expressed by the well-known slogan *the evangelization of the world in this generation*, but it soon became clear that it was based on the wrong premises: it was basically constructed on the advance of technology, science and European colonialism. These dreams of western superiority were shattered by two world wars, economic depression, communist and fascist ideologies, independence movements and the population explosion.

One can argue that there were encouraging signs for mission after colonialism, despite the ongoing struggle against neo-colonialism, and after the devastating effects of the Holocaust. In a sense, a more mature sense of Christian life developed with the new relationship with the post-colonial independent states and approach to mission. Evangelization remained the priority, but the Kingdom of God, the reign of God in this world, was also emphasized, as well as enculturation, the struggle for liberation, reconciliation and ‘the option for the poor’.

There was a colossal shift in missionary thinking, consisting of paradigms of different approaches in mission: The concept of the church was questioned as a ‘ghetto church’ with a restricted concept of its mission ‘to convert the world towards salvation’, moving to mission also as dialogue with the world. Previously, mission was regarded in terms of a ‘sending church’ – Europe, North America and Australasia – and a ‘receiving church’ – Africa, South America, Oceania and Asia. Now the whole church is understood as missionary. The churches, however, changed *from having missions to being missionary* – all Christians are to be ‘missionaries’. The objects of mission were no longer the ‘pagans’ in foreign countries, but rather everybody, including secular, post-Christian societies. This could be regarded as the ‘democratization’ of mission where Christians as such, male and female, clerical and lay people, North

<sup>10</sup> Gerald Hall, SM, ‘Have We Lost Our Nerve? Changing Theologies of Christian Mission’, in *Australian eJournal of Theology* 8 (October 2006), 1-11, 8.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 64.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 242.

and South, received the calling from Christ to be responsible for spreading the gospel.

Within the turmoil of the crises of the past century, theology played a major part in the developing of paradigm changes in mission: the aim of mission was not to expand the church or even church planting any more, but the emphasis on the reign of God in society was slowly emerging. A Lutheran scholar from Germany emphasized this remarkable message: 'This resounding motif of Jesus' message – the imminent Kingdom of God – must be recovered as a key to the whole of Christian theology.'<sup>13</sup> In the meantime, this message of the Kingdom was applied to society as a task of mission, and a Reformed scholar from South Africa regarded this as an essential task of mission: 'The church's primary mission as citizens of God's kingdom, is to live as citizens of God's kingdom... the calling of the church is to be a community of witness to and participation in God's future – here and now!'<sup>14</sup>

### Responses from the Global South

What are the responses from the global South to the shift in the centre of gravity of Christianity from the 'North' to the 'South'? What are the perceptions of people from the global South on how Christianity in their part of the globe has been affected? Do they experience the shift as a genuine shift in real power, and if so, in what manner does this manifest itself in the global South and in the relationship between the 'North' and the 'South'? Each of the questions could be broken down further into a number of underlying questions.

The responses from the global South to the shifts under discussion so far will be treated in the following way: first, the issue is approached in a general and speculative fashion. Secondly, an example from the Southern African Missiological Society (SAMS) is called into service to illustrate that some measure of critical reflection is emerging. Thirdly, a strong draught from the global South speaking to the shift in the centre of gravity of Christianity is discussed here.

#### *Between underestimation and over-romanticizing*

In broad and generalizing terms, it seems as though the so-called mainline or historical churches are underestimating the shift. A *rationale* for research into this might be an investigation into whether the indifference of these churches contributes to the loss of sheep to the Pentecostal and Charismatic

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<sup>13</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1975), 53.

<sup>14</sup> Cornelius J.P. Niemandt, 'Trends in missional ecclesiology', in *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 68 (1), 2012, Art. No. 1198.

churches. On the part of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, there seems to be an over-romanticizing tendency. Much as the exponential growth of these churches is there for everyone to observe, the issue to be scrutinized seriously is whether an accompanying deepening of discipleship and spirituality is to be seen.

### **South African Missiological Society (SAMS): Called to a Radical Discipleship**

A minor example of some critical thinking emerging on the numerical growth of Christianity in the global South, particularly in Africa, was the theme chosen for the 2016 annual congress of SAMS. Perhaps it is important to say that the growth is first and foremost a source of celebration, but precisely for that reason also a source of critical reflection. The theme chosen for the congress, namely, *Called to a Radical Discipleship in mission praxis and the academy in Africa*, finds the following motivation:

The exponential growth of Christianity in Africa is well documented and shows that such growth is recorded particularly amongst the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. More often than not, the numerical growth of Christianity in Africa is called into service by mission practitioners and academics alike as a handy export article when they go outside the continent to speak at conferences.

Much as those across the world with a keen interest in Africa marvel at the growth of the churches, some begin to interrogate such growth in terms of the very simple question: is what we witness merely numerical growth or also deep spiritual growth? More and more Africans themselves begin to wonder what all the increase in numbers in the churches means.

The measure of scepticism is strongly informed by internal factors in the churches and external issues in society at large. Some of the internal matters are the leadership crisis in quite a few churches, the lack of stewardship amongst church members which feeds into the neo-colonial situation of perpetual dependence on outside funding, the fact that quite often the provision of quality theological education and ministerial formation are not commensurate with the growth that is recorded in the churches. On the external side, there are issues like religious strife, human migration, refugees, hair-raising corruption and the plundering of resources, undemocratic practices, inequality, unemployment, poverty, disease, civil war, *coup-d'états*, ecological devastation, and of course natural disasters like drought, floods, fires and famine which are beyond the control of people.<sup>15</sup>

If, however, the rubrics identified for the SAMS congress were anything to go by, the expectation was not to manifest negatively or to lament, but to engage critically with a wide range of issues, including mission and missiology, and to respond to those positively and pro-actively. The rubrics

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<sup>15</sup> 'Call for papers: Southern African Missiological Society 2016 annual congress'.

identified were discipleship in relation to spirituality, power and political governance, socio-economic inequalities, unemployment, poverty, justice to the poor, healing and reconciliation, conflict resolution and peace-building, post-colonial resistance and the quest for identity, human migration, Africanization (culture and ideology), other faiths, information and communications technology, and youth and children.

These rubrics were quite wide-ranging and could quite easily invite the criticism, that 'if everything is mission, nothing is mission'.<sup>16</sup> They were, however, pinned to the expectation that, in dealing with these questions from a missiological perspective, a deeper and more sustainable understanding of mission as discipleship might be arrived at. After all, part of mission is *bringing the whole gospel into conversation with the whole of life*.

### **Reflections from the Global South: Ecclesiological Perspectives on where they Stand**

Much bigger than the initiative of SAMS was the consultation of Ecumenical Evangelicals (or should it be Evangelical Ecumenicals?), which took place in London in late July 2016.<sup>17</sup> The document drafted in preparation for that consultation captured the suggestive moment by posing the very simple, but simultaneously complex, question: where are we today? The genius of the working document seemed to be less about the normal and justifiable critique of the 'North' but *more about the self-reflection, self-criticism and self-affirmation of the global South*. A closer look at the preparatory draft was due to be taken: the following elements came in for treatment, albeit briefly and cursorily. The elements that emerged in the draft were a statistical perspective on the ebbs and flows of economic power globally, a statistical perspective on shifts in Christianity, the perpetual dependence of the 'South' on the 'North', and issues relating to how the 'South' could create greater congruence between the exponential and numerical growth in Christianity, and the churches in greater self-reliance in the areas of worship, spirituality, life and ministry, church organization, theological education, and the sharing of resources and finances.

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### **Statistical Perspectives on the Global Economy and Christianity**

Drawing from *The Economist*, the draft document showed the ebbs and flows in the global economy by looking at what is happening between countries such as America, Britain, China, France, Germany, India, Japan

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<sup>16</sup> Stephen Neill, *Creative Tension* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1959), 81.

<sup>17</sup> See 'Draft document for the July 2016 London Consultation'.

and Russia.<sup>18</sup> The consulted economic diagram indicated how America in 1950 to 1973 was outpacing the rest, but how by 2030 the situation would have changed dramatically, with China leading and India gaining on America in terms of their share of global Gross Domestic Product. Though percentages were shown, the diagram was deceptive in terms of not showing the following two trends: the gross inequalities in the countries mentioned and the mammoth discrepancies between the global 'North' and the global 'South', or between citizens of the same country. The conclusion was that *these relationships were extremely asymmetric*. An interesting speculation relating to the strong emergence of China might be about the behaviour of Chinese Christians reacting to the new rising empire.

Turning briefly to some statistics on the shifts in Christianity, the draft showed that, whereas in 1900 only about 16.7% of Christians were located in the 'South', by 2025 this would have changed significantly to 69.1%. The areas singled out for very dramatic growth are Africa, Asia in countries like China, India, Indonesia, Korea and the Philippines, while in Latin America the growth is clearest among Pentecostal Christians.

### Self-Reliance or Perpetual Northern Tutelage?

The draft document struck a balance between instances in the global South where attempts were afoot to bring a growing maturity and self-confidence into correlation with the increasing size of Christianity, and the many instances where churches in the global South remain under western tutelage. As far as the issue of western tutelage is concerned, the draft document referred to attempts in the global South to emulate American mega-churches and the theological captivity to western theological categories. The document took a realistic approach to the prevailing power relations, stating:

... despite the fundamental shift of the center of gravity of Christianity from the West to the global South, for the moment the centers of power remain largely in the 'North': denominational and organizational structures, institutions and established mission agencies, publishing houses, academically trained personnel and, above all, money.<sup>19</sup>

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### Right Questions More than Right Answers

There was a strong underlying assumption to the draft document, it seems, that unless Christianity in the global South should start asking self-critical and painful questions, it would not live up to the shift in the centre of gravity of Christianity. Of particular importance in the document was the set of questions relating to the shape of world mission in the coming

<sup>18</sup> See 'Draft document for the July 2016 London consultation'.

<sup>19</sup> See 'Draft document for the July 2016 London consultation'.

generation. Emerging in the manner in which the issues were identified was a healthy balance or creative tension between mission as ecclesiology, evangelization, inter-religious encounter and nation-building. For the sake of clarity it needs to be mentioned perhaps that in the draft document for the London consultation the term ‘inter-religious encounter’ did not appear, but instead a rather problematic formulation like ‘the multifold challenge of Islam’. A further issue was that evangelization referred specifically to the re-evangelization of the West, whereas nation-building would be aimed at building stable, peaceful, equal and economically strong societies in the global South.

### **Sources for the Emergence of a New Paradigm**

It was tricky to predict the outcomes of the London 2016 consultation. Based on the questions raised in the draft document discussed here the consultation could contribute to the emergence of a new mission paradigm by and for the global South. Transformation and a number of changes in the global South would be needed for this to happen.

The following is a basic set of issues in the global South to be attended to:

- Overhauling and transforming mission agencies in the ‘North’ and the ‘South’ from the subject-object scheme of things to a liberating *interdependence*.
- Creating a mission theory and practice based on a holistic understanding of theology and mission.
- Shaping new models of theological education, informed by a post-colonial mission approach.
- Listening to the marginalized voices in the local context and their cry for social transformation, allowing this to inform the understanding of mission.
- Facing all manner of challenges relating to the unequal allocation of resources, the explosion in the demand for tertiary education, the burden brought to bear on the provision of theological education by the growth in numbers in Christianity, and the rise of Christian fundamentalism and human migration.

### **The Centrality of the Reign of God**

An Anglican New Testament scholar from Britain redirected the gospel of Christ and the mission task in a completely different direction, which has to be taken into serious consideration, not only by the whole church and theology, but especially by the mission task: ‘... an escapist view of salvation... Jesus is God and came to snatch us away from this world... *has left out the heart of the matter*. God is the creator and redeemer of the

world, and Jesus' launch of the kingdom – God's worldwide sovereignty on earth as in heaven – *is the central aim of his mission...* God's great future purpose was not to rescue people out of the world, but to rescue the world itself, people included, from its present state of corruption...<sup>20</sup> In the light of the dire poverty around the globe and the effects of globalized capitalism harming virtually all countries, this is indeed a formidable challenge for our mission task.

In addition, during the twentieth century, the concept of the reality of the world and its historical existence was dramatically transformed. This innovation, however, was not genuinely assimilated by society, not to mention the churches and theology, but especially not by the concept of the mission of God. A Reformed Dutch scholar summarized this concept significantly, relating it to theology and mission: *'There is but one reality, this visual and sense reality in which we stand, and this is God's action...'*<sup>21</sup> Again, the transformation of theology and mission was the concept and practice of the Kingdom or reign of God: 'The departure point of van Ruler's theology is the reign of God and reasoning from the end of times. The Spirit does not work psychologically and mystically, but historically-eschatologically, as well as politically and culturally...'<sup>22</sup>

The Kingdom theology is to be reformulated in all the theological disciplines, especially *systematic theology* and *missiology*. This is a monumental task as theology's reformulation is 'a task which *demand[s] a thorough reshaping of our whole understanding of reality...* ontology, epistemology, anthropology and the philosophy of history'.<sup>23</sup> This is not merely an adaptation, or emphasizing a neglected aspect, but a fundamental shift: the reign of God 'the overarching reality that *informs our understanding of existence*'.<sup>24</sup>

Tom Wright is also comprehensively startling: 'Jesus announced a *whole new world* and how to live within it... *there was a different way to be human*'.<sup>25</sup>

This goal of mission was now not only directed to potential church members, however; slowly but surely it was turned to the whole of society; the agents of mission were not only Christian missionaries, but the Holy

<sup>20</sup> N.T. Wright, *How God became King: Getting to the Heart of the Gospels* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), 45 (emphasis added).

<sup>21</sup> Arnold Albert van Ruler, *Religie en politiek* ['Religion and politics'] (Nijkerk, Netherlands: G.F. Callenbach, 1945), 270 (own translation).

<sup>22</sup> Arnold Albert Van Ruler, *Woord en werkelijkheid: Over de theocratie* ['Word and reality: About theocracy'] (Nijkerk, Netherlands: G.F. Callenbach, 1973), 146 (own translation).

<sup>23</sup> E. Frank Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1973), 44 (emphasis added).

<sup>24</sup> R.J. Neuhaus in Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, 12, 25 (emphasis added).

<sup>25</sup> Wright, *How God became King*, 47, 233 (emphasis added).

Spirit in relation to the entire Christian community. The Pentecostal and Charismatic churches experienced a revival of 'mission' with the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which also attracted masses of people. *The church was no longer the aim of mission, but the church and all its members were at the service of Christ the King.*

The church became the instrument of mission instead of the goal of mission. This was a major theological reversal: *missio Dei*, God's mission, was now central – and not the *missio ecclesiae*, the church's mission. The new theological approach was: *the church does not have a mission; the mission of God has a church.* This obliterated the distinction between a 'sending church' and the 'receiving church' – 'North' and 'South' are one in the service of God's mission.

Despite the above advances in mission and the fundamental shifts in the concept of mission a number of questions remain regarding basic differences between the 'North' and the 'South'. Here we cannot delineate these dissimilarities in depth and the focus will be on an indispensable question: why has Christianity 'declined' in the 'North' in such a dramatic way? If the issue of modernism and post-modernism is part of the problem in the 'North', what about the 'South', where modernism – not to mention post-modernism – has hardly been experienced as a problem? The 'South' is slowly setting off on the issues of modernism and post-modernism, but this is a different scenario which cannot be dealt with here in depth. The issues of modernism and post-modernism will be dealt with in a provisional way in the next section regarding the 'North'.

### **Is Post-Modernism a Viable Option for Mission in the Relationship between 'North' and 'South'? Problems and Challenges of Both Modernism and Post-Modernism**

Despite all the calamities, as well as the societal and cultural problems in the 'North' during the past millennium, mentioned above, these 'Christian' countries and societies have become highly sophisticated and particularly developed. A consequence of this developed cultural refinement of Christians was unexpected: it seemed that it has become difficult for these erudite Christians to distinguish between sophisticated culture and Christianity. The problem was that a good humanitarian was not necessarily a Christian. If all your needs are basically fulfilled and you lack very little in life without deficiencies, Christianity could be seen as maintaining 'a God of the gaps' – only when you experience a need do you turn to God. This is rather an illogical argument as the greatest needs of the human being are incurable illness and death, which are not met by sophisticated culture. Be that as it may, it might have been that these modern educated folk found it difficult to understand why they need Christ as Saviour, fulfilling their comprehensive needs. This is an important task of the theologians and missiologists to characterize in a clear and comprehensive

way the need for Christ as Lord and Saviour, and also for sophisticated people.

Why has this happened? Ronald Inglehart, Director of the World Values Survey in Sweden, suggests that Christianity has been a comfort to people in times of crisis. 'For most of history, people have been on the borderline of survival,' he explains. 'That's changed dramatically. Survival is certain for almost everyone (in the West). So one of the reasons people are drawn to religion has eroded.' In other words, Mr Inglehart believes that religion fulfills a social function. Once that function is no longer needed, the entire structure of Christian belief becomes unnecessary. This kind of reductionism is now common in the social sciences, where religious faith is seen in functional terms rather than in theological categories. Others, looking at the same pattern of secularization, point to the impact of theological liberalism, the rise of a technological society, and the cultural shift towards autonomous individualism as the main factors behind Christianity's decline.<sup>26</sup>

Arguably, the basic difficulty and conundrum of the 'North' has been and still is its modernistic background, culture and philosophy with its disastrous results. I agree in general with Andrew Kirk that the most important transformation in the twentieth century was the change from modernism to post-modernism.<sup>27</sup> This is not the place to argue the merits and demerits of modernism and post-modernism, but to explore no more than the disastrous results of modernism on Christian belief and the advantages of a post-modern approach to Christian faith.<sup>28</sup>

One of the most difficult issues for Christians regarding post-modernism is the concept of truth. Different views of truth, for example, denote different views of reality, and a different way to be human: *modernism* maintains a fundamental Greek concept of truth as a timeless, once-for-all

<sup>26</sup> [www.albertmohler.com/2005/08/18/christianity-recedes-in-europe-is-america-next](http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/08/18/christianity-recedes-in-europe-is-america-next)

<sup>27</sup> J. Andrew Kirk, 'Postmodernity', in John Corrie (ed), *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations* (Nottingham, UK: IVP, 2007), 299.

<sup>28</sup> The final section of this chapter is triggered by discussions between the author and Dr Rudolph Meyer, a close friend of the late Dr Beyers Naudé in the Christian Institute, and erstwhile anti-apartheid activist and editor of the Christian Institute's journal, *Pro Veritate* ('For the Truth'). As a knowledgeable scholar of post-modernism, Naudé raised convincing arguments as to why any discussion on renewal of mission would be incomplete without some engagement with post-modernism. Lately he became a scholar in missiology, and his research and interpretations are especially to be found in a lecture he presented at the University of Pretoria in 2014 on *Reconceiving theology: God's reign as the missing link in our societal and theological crises: transforming societal structures and individual paradigms – A postmodern approach to God's mission*. He also lectured part-time at University of South Africa, and his doctoral thesis was Rudolph Meyer, *Dancing with Uncertainty – From Modernism to Postmodernism in Appraising Christian Counselling* (Pretoria, RSA: University of South Africa, 2009).

concept of a state of affairs. According to this Greek concept, truth lies hidden in the core of things, in their substance, and it lacks a historical character. Consequently, truth is hidden behind changing appearances. Truth is also grasped through a fixed logical necessity, namely that ‘what is’, is. The experience of truth is conceived as a passive reception by the mind of the true. In addition, the identity of truth and meaning is sealed enduringly. The essence of truth is considered as fixed. Modernism makes a present truth absolute and final, and misconstrues the historical openness and multiplicity of truth. Modernistic truth, however, substitutes a particular narrow-minded perspective of a specific truth for the whole of truth.<sup>29</sup>

This is not the gospel concept of truth.

The *post-modern* approach to the concept of truth corresponds with the gospel’s concept, which is not timeless, but truth happens continuously – reality and truth in it is seen as history. The theories of the contemporary quantum world corroborate this approach: truth does not lie hidden in the core of things, in its substance, but in the historical character of life; it shows itself towards and into the future. The gospel concept of truth does not disclose itself fully to reflective reason, but especially in trust in God’s faithfulness in historical action; it integrates truth that continuously happens with ongoing historical changes. Truth ‘... is thought of not as timeless but instead as historical, and it proves its stability through a history whose future is always open’.<sup>30</sup> Truth itself has a history, such as Christ as ‘the truth’, with his remarkable history. Historical change itself is to be maintained as the lifeblood of truth.

Another difficulty and challenge of both modernism and post-modernism is knowledge and the certainty of ‘facts’. The post-modern approach is that all human experience is shaped, moulded and constituted by linguistic and cultural forms; science is one of these forms, while faith, theology and missiology is another. Epistemologically, twentieth-century physics changed radically and, in a vital sense, brought modernism with universal objective facts and certainty to a close. In the post-modern world of quantum phenomena, the foundation of reality is elusive and indeterminate; the essence of matter is merely enlightened approximations. Both science and Christian theology are a set of research traditions, born out of a particular community of enquirers and lived practice. Humans perceive and understand the world through one or more of these ‘languages’.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See Wright, *How God became King*, 49.

<sup>30</sup> Pannenberg quoted in Tupper, *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, 47.

<sup>31</sup> George A. Lindberg, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-liberal Age* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1984).

'In a post-modern "world" Christianity is intellectually relevant.'<sup>32</sup> Christian theology is to educate the mind, our language and the sensibility of society, as well as to structure the framework of meaning for contemporary Christians in society: *this is the vital task facing us and the bottom line of reconceiving or rewriting theology and especially missiology*. The aim of hermeneutics is to reposition the gospel as a unique medium of God's message in self-communication of the Holy Spirit, enduring through the cultural metamorphoses that succeeded each other as history unfolds.<sup>33</sup>

The modernistic approach to the Bible and its message has run its course, and it is to be replaced with a post-modern approach *towards enlivening the gospel*. Modernistic 'historical criticism' approached the biblical text as an object to be studied according to the model of objective scientific understanding that emerged from the Enlightenment. The primary objective was to derive from the text historically accurate knowledge about the persons, events and religious understandings of ancient times. Consequently, the text became the property of the scholar, who alone and with great difficulty could decipher the text. This became less spiritually nourishing as it became more objectively and historically 'accurate'. Pastorally, the modern church and mission tried to bridge the gap between the ancient texts and the modern community towards religiously meaningful terms. This pastoral application, however, remained a second-order operation and not a first-order experience of the Word through the Holy Spirit. The inviolable distinction between what the text actually meant in objectively correct historical terms, and what it now meant for contemporary Christians, made the application an *extrinsic* operation. This often left believers alienated from the revelatory encounter, which brought them to the text in the first place. This modernistic way, however, seems to come to a close.<sup>34</sup>

The locus of revelation for the contemporary Christian, including the post-modern approach, is not the events behind the texts, or the theology of the biblical authors, nor even the preaching of these texts in the community, but *the texts themselves as a language that involves the readers*. We have to remember that the post-modern approach was especially 'a turn to language'. The focus is not so much on what produced the texts as on what the texts, when fully engaged by the reader, produces in the reader.

This is a new paradigm: the modern positivistic objectification of the text, which resulted inevitably in the subject-object paradigm of

<sup>32</sup> Diogenes Allen, 'Christian values in a Post-Christian context', in F.B. Burnham (ed), *Postmodern Theology: Christian faith in a Pluralist World* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1989), 20ff.

<sup>33</sup> Albert Outler, 'Toward a Post-liberal Hermeneutics', in *Theology Today*, 42, 1985 (October), 286.

<sup>34</sup> Compare Sandra M. Schneiders, 'Does the Bible have a postmodern message?' in F.B. Burnham (ed), *Postmodern Theology*, 56-73.

understanding by analysis, began to give way to a post-modern approach, to a hermeneutical paradigm of understanding by participative dialogue, *opening space for the Holy Spirit*. This dialogue mutually transforms the reader *and* the text – the reader not by capitulation, but by conversion; the text not by dissection, but through multiple interpretations and perspectives, by the surplus of meaning, and also by generations of readers whose interpretations enrich the text.<sup>35</sup>

The post-modern approach teaches us how the text functions as language: language, also gospel language, is not a literal semantic container in which theological information is stored and delivered for consumption. Language is the medium through which transformative understanding occurs, that enables learning to deal in metaphors, to let gospel kingdom parables ensnare, subvert and enliven, to find the symbols that function in our culture and to use them in a theological way, as well as to research all language as symbolism, to ‘reach’ Christ by faith. ‘We are entering a post-modern approach period of biblical scholarship and preaching... unlimited and finally definite knowledge... of the Bible’s meaning has not been fulfilled because it was not fulfillable. Revelation is not primarily... a matter of more or better knowledge, but of deeper and richer encounter... scientific criticism is necessary, but it is not sufficient.’<sup>36</sup>

In the post-modern approach, the distinction between ‘this world’ and the world ‘to come’ in the gospel is not metaphysical (Hellenistic), but rather eschatological. Eschatology distinguishes Christianity both from natural utopianism, e.g. evolutionary theories, and from Greek otherworldliness. The gospel maintains time and eternity – not natural and supernatural. History and this life are not meaningless as in Greek thought (Platonism and neo-Platonism), nor is its fulfilment in some heavenly sphere, where form is abstracted from the concrete content of historical existence. Heidegger, an important forerunner of the post-modern approach, stated fundamentally, as I interpret him, that because ‘we are’, *sein* (in German), we and our lives are meaningful. (Heidegger taught theology, the letters of Paul and Luther’s interpretation for some time in his philosophy classes; at this period, he moved from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism.) In a post-modern way *the gospel symbolises that meaning as fulfilment*, as it both transcends and is relevant to our historical lives.

Christian belief in the post-modern framework is no longer understood reductively, as in modernism, as a psychologically or culturally determined belief in ‘non-existing’ realities, or is it explained away as an accident of biology, but is recognized as a basic human activity and beliefs in which people symbolically and metaphorically interpret and engage God through the gospel of Christ.

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<sup>35</sup> Schneiders, ‘Does the Bible have a postmodern message?’.

<sup>36</sup> Schneiders, ‘Does the Bible have a postmodern message?’ , 63 (emphasis added).

In general, one can summarize the basic direction of the renewal of theology and missiology that the post-modern has indicated:

In philosophy, science and also theology and missiology, the universal literalism in modernism has been critiqued, censured and rejected. In its place, a new approach has arisen, namely, a greater appreciation of the multi-dimensional nature of reality, the many-sidedness of the human spirit, including imagination, feeling, sensation, perception, sensitivity, affection and instinct.

In virtually every contemporary intellectual discipline, the fundamental schism, division and rift between science and theology has been increasingly undermined.

In the light of the above there is a renewed endeavour to reconcile the subject and object, spirit and matter, the conscious and 'unconscious' mind, the intellect and 'soul', etc. Two contemporary antithetical impulses can be discerned in the intellectual situation: the one is radical deconstruction, debunking and unmasking of objective (scientific) knowledge, beliefs, and ultimate or final 'worldviews'; the other is radical reconciliation and integration towards holism. In obvious ways they are working against each other, but more subtly, they are also working together as polarized and differentiated, but complementary and paired tendencies – contemporary life, society, science, theology and missiology are in many ways deconstructive and post-modern, as well as integrative and holistic beyond modernism.

The post-modern has assisted us in that long-established categories that had sustained traditional oppositions, dualities and exploitation, between subject and object, human and nature, body and spirit, male and female, self and the other, are to be *deconstructed and reconceived*. This allowed the contemporary mind to think through less dichotomized alternative perspectives that could not have been envisioned within modernistic frameworks.

The present intellectual, social, political and economic background and environment, however, is still riddled with tension, conflict, perplexity, mistrust, irresolution and indecisiveness despite this comprehensive paradigm shift. Fragmentation and incoherence in state, society and the churches have inhibiting consequences. Cultures suffer both psychologically and practically from the philosophical anarchy, social instability and an abandonment of morality. There is a disorientation and alienation from society and churches caused by the perceived absence of supporting social or moral frameworks. In the absence of any viable embracing cultural forms, old assumptions of societal, missiological and theological visions remain blunderingly in force, providing an increasingly unworkable and dangerous design, and even blueprints for human plans and personal and social activity towards disaster and ecological crises.

### Conclusion: Hope or Denouement?

Not imposing any *a priori* limitations on the possible range of legitimate interpretations and reconceived conceptualizations, the post-modern approach might bring authentic and coherent wholistic alternatives out of the present personal and social fragmentation and disintegration:

*The intellectual question looming large over our time is whether the present state of profound epistemological, social, political and missiological irresolution will continue indefinitely, and would even take more radical disorientating forms.*

Is the present crisis in mission perhaps some kind of apocalyptic denouement of our history, or is it possibly an epochal transition to another era with a new form of civilization and mission? Is it possibly a theology and mission towards the reign of God in society, transforming society according to the will of God in Christ, not based on objective facts, *but created by a novel lively experience of God through the Holy Spirit towards mission?*

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# POWER ENCOUNTERS: EVANGELIZATION AND LOCAL RELIGIOUS SPIRITS IN LATIN AMERICA

Raimundo C. Barreto Jr.

And I saw Salvador: Salvador da Bahia de Todos os Santos, the 'black Rome', with three hundred and sixty-five churches, which stand out against the line of hills or nestle along the bay, churches where the gods of the African pantheon are honored.<sup>1</sup>

I grew up in Salvador, Bahia, one of the most religiously effervescent cities of Brazil. One can sense the African influence everywhere one looks in Salvador. Most Brazilians identify themselves as Roman Catholic, and that by no means mean a uniform religious confession. Catholicism takes traditionalist, charismatic, popular and liberationist forms in Brazil. In Salvador, popular Catholicism also means black Catholicism. Every week, the Igreja Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Pretos, an eighteenth-century Catholic church in the heart of the city, draws crowds of natives and tourists to an 'inculturated mass',<sup>2</sup> which combines elements of Afro-Brazilian traditional religions and popular Catholicism. *Candomble*,<sup>3</sup> an Afro-Brazilian religion based on the worship of the Orishas, was formed in Salvador in 1830, and remains strongly active in the city today. *Umbanda*,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Umberto Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum* (Orlando, FL: A Harvest Book, 1988), 169.

<sup>2</sup> For more on inculturated Catholic mass, see John Burdick's study of the field of popular Christianity in Rio de Janeiro, Chap. 2 in John Burdick, *Blessed Anastacia: Women, Race, and Popular Christianity in Brazil* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 51ff. As for black devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary in Brazil, see Elizabeth W. Kiddy, *Blacks of the Rosary: Memory and History in Minas Gerais, Brazil* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2005), and Carlos Ott, 'A Irmandade de Nossa Senhora do Rosario dos Pretos do Pelourinho', in *Afro-Ásia*, 6/7(1968), 83-90.

<sup>3</sup> *Candomble* is 'essentially a religion which teaches people a way to live in harmony with the energies of nature, which are manifested in the *Orixás*, the spirit emanations of the supreme divinity'. It emerged as 'a religion of slaves and freed slaves', which created 'an Afro-Brazilian synthesis of the African religious heritage brought by the slaves to Brazil'. Raimundo C. Barreto Jr. and Devaka Premawardhana, 'Protestantism and Candomblé in Bahia: From Intolerance to Dialogue (and Beyond)', in Arvind Sharma (ed), *The World's Religions after September 11*, Vol. 3 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009), 137-51 (139, 141).

<sup>4</sup> *Umbanda* is 'a deliberate synthesis of various aspects of traditional Brazilian religious beliefs and practices'. It is considered a Brazilian religion *par excellence* because it integrates elements of all traditions that make up Brazilian culture. Many *umbandistas* identify themselves also as Catholics. Whereas *Umbanda* has sometimes been identified with whitening initiatives in Brazil, others have noticed

Spiritism,<sup>5</sup> and different sorts of Protestantism, particularly Pentecostalism, are also important players in this religious mosaic. Each of these Brazilian religions and spiritualities can be fully understood only in relationship to each other.

Such a lively spirituality was part of my spiritual formation growing up in Salvador da Bahia. At a very young age, I learned about spirit-possession as something that was just another part of day-to-day life. However, in the context of an Evangelical Christian church, I was taught to perceive that phenomenon as being associated with demonic activities. Such association of the Afro-Brazilian and African religions with evil spirits can be traced back to the first encounters between European missionaries and African religions. According to John Mbiti, missionaries, both Catholics and Protestants, understood their mission in Africa in terms of bringing God to a dark continent, which did not have a religion.<sup>6</sup>

Part of the problem on their part was pure arrogance, racial prejudice, insufficient knowledge, misunderstanding, a narrow concept of anthropology and an unwillingness to be challenged and enriched by other peoples and cultures.<sup>7</sup>

In Latin America, the dominant attitude among Catholic and Protestant missionaries was no different. The formation of Christianity in that region took place in the context of violent conquest, which brought together military power and cultural/religious domination. As Justo Gonzalez has rightly stated, 'God's work was done with the sword as well as with the cross.'<sup>8</sup>

While a dominant Christianity willingly advanced the colonial project, Gonzalez identifies some 'voices of compassion' among the European

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instead its important role in spreading the cultural values of the lower classes and minority ethnic groups to mainstream life in Brazilian society. Harmon A. Johnson, 'Umbanda: A Modern Brazilian Religion', in David J. Hesselgrave (ed), *Dynamic Religious Movements: Case Studies of Rapidly Growing Religious Movements Around the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), 250.

<sup>5</sup> The Spiritism of Allan Kardec, or Kardecism, was imported from France to Brazil in the mid-nineteenth century. Mixing philosophy, science and religion, and emphasizing the immortality of the soul and communication with spirits, it attracted primarily the white Brazilian bourgeoisie. Over the years, it has incorporated elements from other Brazilian religions, in particular from Catholicism. See Tina Gudrun Jensen, 'Discourses on Afro-Brazilian Religions: From De-Africanization to Re-Africanization', in Christian Smith and Joshua Prokopy (eds), *Latin American Religion in Motion* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 275-95 (277-78).

<sup>6</sup> John Mbiti, 'Challenges Facing Religious Education and Research in Africa: The Case of Dialogue Between Christianity and African Religion', in *Religion and Theology* 3/2 (1996), 170-79 (171).

<sup>7</sup> Mbiti, 'Challenges Facing Religious Education', 171.

<sup>8</sup> Justo L. González and Ondina E. González, *Christianity in Latin America: A History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Kindle edition, 23.

missionaries,<sup>9</sup> highlighting that not all Christians were guided by greed in the evangelization of Latin America. Those voices, however, did not oppose colonization as such. Instead, they stood in solidarity with the indigenous people in opposing cruelty and advocating a more peaceful or 'evangelical conquest'.<sup>10</sup>

This chapter considers the power relations involved in the intercultural encounter that informs both Christian evangelization and the relationship between Christianity and the local spirits in Latin America. Although I address the systemic and enduring nature of the oppression perpetrated by colonial powers, I do not portray indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans simply as victims of violence and abuse. On the contrary, I pay serious attention to the agency of Afro-Latina/os and Amerindians.

Furthermore, I do not see Latin America as encompassing a cultural unity. There are multiple cultures in the region, and such cultural diversity must not be overlooked. The only kind of unity I assume when referring to Latin America is the common experience of colonization, which affected all the different peoples of the region. The term 'Latin American Christianities',<sup>11</sup> thus relates to Christian expressions that emanate from the encounter between Latin American cultures and the gospel. It gives priority to the indigenous interpretation of the Christian faith. On the other hand, I use the term 'colonial Christianity' to refer to the religion of the colonial empire. The latter was the first kind of Christianity the indigenous peoples of Latin America ever met with. As an essential element of the colonial matrix of power, colonial Christianity did not disappear with the demise of the Iberian empires. It has taken new forms in the era of neo-colonialism.

### Changing the Focus

Nowadays, it is not necessary to say that Christianity is not a European religion. Christianity was born in the Middle East, and has ever since been a religion on the move, making itself at home in many different cultures. Towards the end of the first millennium of the Common Era, a larger number of Christians were located in Europe. Such a trend reached its peak in the sixteenth century, when 92% of all Christians were Europeans.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Justo Gonzalez, 'Voices of Compassion Yesterday and Today', in Guillermo Cook (ed), *New Face of the Church in Latin America* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 3-12.

<sup>10</sup> Gonzalez, 'Voices of Compassion', 8.

<sup>11</sup> I use the plural 'Christianities' to highlight the diversity of Christian expressions in the region. Throughout this chapter though, I will use the plural and the singular forms interchangeably.

<sup>12</sup> As Todd Johnson and Sun Young Chung have shown, in the first Christian centuries, the demographic epicentre of Christianity was the Eastern Mediterranean. Christianity had quickly been translated into different languages and cultures from Egypt and Syria to India and Central Asia. Todd M. Johnson and Sun Young

In the course of the second millennium, Christianity was Europeanized. Thus, the Christianity that most Africans, Asians and Latin Americans first encountered during the missionary era was a Christianity culturally dressed in European clothes.

Given the prominence of European aggression, and the apparent subjugation of non-European peoples, historical narratives of those encounters have privileged the European perspective. Despite that power asymmetry, one must not forget that there was human agency on both sides of that encounter. Even when merely trying to survive, Latin American indigenous peoples never completely lost their humanity and agency as historical subjects. The simple fact that they have managed to survive the worst genocide in history is a proof of their colossal resilience.

Latin American Christianity emerges in the context of that violent encounter, and as a result of multiple agencies, including the agency of Amerindians and enslaved Africans. Without their participation as cultural participants, Latin American Christianity would be merely an extension of European Christianity. Today it is clear that the history of Christianity in Latin America is not merely the history of the expansion of European Christianity. Instead, the history of Latin American Christianity is shaped by an intense interaction between the gospel and local religious spirits. Thus, evangelization in Latin America can be conceived of in terms of the outward movement of the gospel in its interaction with Latin American cultures. The gospel interacts and is interpreted in the particularity of different local cultures. Nevertheless, gospel and culture are never the same. The gospel incarnates in distinctive ways in every culture without ever being contained by any of them.

If Christian faith is experienced only in the context of a particular culture, one must always refer to concrete and cultured Christian identities. As John Mbiti has stated, Christianity is always indigenous.<sup>13</sup> It is the result of an encounter between the gospel and a given culture. Therefore, as I will show in the course of this paper, Latin American Christianity is more than

Chung, 'Tracking Global Christianity's Statistical Centre of Gravity, CE 33- CE 2100', in *International Review of Mission*, 93/369 (2004), 166-81.

<sup>13</sup> I follow John Mbiti's view on the indigenization or contextualization of Christianity: 'I do not think that we need to or can "indigenize Christianity". Christianity results from the encounter of the gospel with any given local or regional community/society. To speak of "indigenizing Christianity" is to give the impression that Christianity is a ready-made commodity, which has to be transplanted to a local area. Of course, this has been the assumption followed by many missionaries and local theologians. I do not accept it any more. The Gospel is God-given.' This quote comes from John Mbiti's response to John W. Kinney's paper, 'The Contribution of John Mbiti to the Development of Christian Theology in Africa: An Overview and a Critique', presented at the American Society of Church History at the Dallas, Texas, meeting in December 1977. Quoted in John W. Kinney, 'The Theology of John Mbiti: His Sources, Norms, and Methods', in *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 3/2 (1979), 65-67 (66).

simply an indigenized expression of a universal religion. Other forms of Christianity must also be concretely named.

Since Christianity is always culturally shaped,<sup>14</sup> one should not refer to the Christianity Latin Americans encountered when Columbus arrived in the Caribbean merely as ‘Christianity’ in the abstract. One should instead use an embodied description such as ‘European colonial Christianity’. Such Christianity had universal aspirations as a central piece of an incipient world system that began to take shape at the time of the European invasion of the Americas.<sup>15</sup> But it was still culturally located in a specific context.

It is extremely important to name that Christianity when one thinks about it in relation to Latin American Christianity. If I were to talk about an abstract and universal Christianity, indigenized in Latin America, I would have to either surrender to the ideals of the colonial project or, as a Latin American, reject Christianity on moral grounds. The following anecdote about the encounter of Peruvian indigenous leaders and Pope John Paul II, during his visit to the Andes, illustrates this point:

When John-Paul II visited Peru, he received an open letter from various indigenous movements which contained the following passage: John-Paul II – We, Andean and American Indians, have decided to take advantage of your visit to return to you your Bible, since in five centuries it has not given us love, peace or justice. Please take back your Bible and give it back to our oppressors, because they need its moral teachings more than we do. Ever since the arrival of Christopher Columbus, a culture, a language, religion and values which belong to Europe, have been imposed on Latin America by force. The Bible came to us as part of the imposed colonial transformation. It was the ideological weapon of this colonialist assault. The Spanish sword, which attacked and murdered the bodies of Indians by day and night, became the cross, which attacked the Indian soul.<sup>16</sup>

After telling this story, though, Chilean theologian Pablo Richard argues for a more radical move: ‘Instead of giving the Bible back to the colonizers, why don’t we “make it our own”?’<sup>17</sup>

The encounter between the gospel and culture has taken place continuously in Latin America for five centuries, but in a number of ways

<sup>14</sup> John Mbiti, ‘On the Article of John W. Kinney: A Comment’, in *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 3/2 (1979), 68.

<sup>15</sup> European modernity created the modern world system, turning itself into the centre of that system and all other peoples and societies into its margins. Christianity was the European religion at the time of the conquest. As Dussel says, interpreting Hegel, Christian Europe was the eschatological fulfilment of Christianity. As such, it had nothing to learn from other cultures. It had achieved its full realization: Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: The Eclipse of ‘The Other’ and the Myth of Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 9, 24.

<sup>16</sup> Pablo Richard, ‘1942: The Violence of God and the Future of Christianity’, in Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo (eds), *The Voice of the Victims, Concilium* (London: SCM, 1990), 58-67 (66).

<sup>17</sup> Richard, ‘1942’, 66.

such encounter remains unexamined. Instead of focusing on the indigenous nature of Latin American Christianity, scholars have predominantly paid attention to other protagonists such as the missionaries, or those who replicated their work.

There is a lack of trust in the Latin American peoples to shape their own Christian faith. Popular forms of Latin American Christianity have frequently been dismissed as deviations, or failed evangelization. Even some of the most recent historical accounts of Latin American Christianity, like Todd Hartch's exceptional narrative in *The Rebirth of Latin American Christianity* (2014),<sup>18</sup> fall into that temptation.

Hartch has the merit of moving beyond the antagonistic narratives that dominated the study of Latin American Christianity in the 1990s and 2000s, which saw the Pentecostal boom in the region against the backdrop of a declining Catholicism and liberation theology. The success of the former represented the fading of the latter.<sup>19</sup> Hartch, instead, takes a more nuanced approach, emphasizing the mutual reinforcement of Pentecostal growth and Catholic revitalization, and highlighting the importance of stronger ecumenical relations for the future of Latin American Christianity. He fails, however, to pay adequate attention to the agency of Amerindian and African peoples in Latin America, often depicting popular religion in not very friendly ways. Interfaith relations, especially Christian relations with indigenous and Afro-Latin American religions, do not seem to be a priority for him either.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Todd Hartch, *The Rebirth of Latin American Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> One example is the analysis made by British sociologist David Martin in the early 1990s. See David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990). Martin argued that Latin American Pentecostalism is the third wave of religious change movements, which represents a cultural pattern that characterizes the Anglo-Saxon Protestant cultures. That cultural pattern contains the seeds of voluntarism and religious democracy, and clashes with the Hispanic monolithic empire that has dominated Latin American culture for over four hundred years. One of the problems with Martin's analysis is his imposition of a foreign model which emphasizes the clash of two European-born imperialistic projects. He does not take Latin American native culture seriously as having any significant element of its own, which can subvert and transform both projects as it interacts with them.

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<sup>20</sup> Although Hartch emphasizes the rise of the laity as a characteristic of the revitalization of Latin American Christianity (see chapters 7 & 8), and often refers to the success of Protestant witness as being exactly due to its Latin American leadership, making it 'truly indigenized' (see Hartch, *The Rebirth*, 36), he lacks a more thorough analysis of Latin American colonial history, and of Christianity's participation in the colonizing project. His modernist impetus leads him to portray traditional indigenous values and lifestyles in basically negative ways (see, for instance, 172). The survival of traditional religious beliefs and practices, and their presence in popular forms of Christianity come across as a failure, mostly on the part of Catholics to evangelize, or as an expression of syncretism. More problematic yet is how Hartch does not mention slavery or the contribution made by millions

Likewise, liberation theology, which emerged as the prophetic face of Latin American Christianity in the 1960s, was slow to recognize the protagonist role of indigenous and Afro-Latin American cultures in the process of liberation. In its initial years, Latin American liberation theology mostly used socio-economic categories to interpret the context of injustice and oppression in the continent. Since the late 1980s, though, it has experimented in a cultural turn. Categories such as ‘the poor’ and ‘the oppressed’ have been expanded to incorporate non-socio-economic aspects of oppression, such as race, gender and sexuality.

For a long time, Latin American liberation theology was predominantly led by middle-class white males who saw their role as that of organic intellectuals standing in solidarity with the poor and oppressed. It is true that there was an expectation on the part of some founders of the movement, like Gustavo Gutierrez, that liberation theology would evolve to the point at which the economically, racially, socially, gendered and sexually oppressed would rise up and speak with their own voice.<sup>21</sup> However, for most of its history, liberation theology’s place of enunciation has predominantly been one of solidarity of those who, in spite of their privilege, decide to live and stand in solidarity with the subaltern.<sup>22</sup> Thanks to significant changes in the demographics of Latin American Christianity in the past few decades, the number of women, Afro-Latin Americans, Amerindians and Pentecostals articulating their own theological discourses is increasing.

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire was one of the first intellectuals in Latin America to pay attention to the cultural agency of the oppressed peoples. His critical pedagogical theory affirmed that only the oppressed can liberate both themselves, and their oppressors, on the basis of the contradictory power of their weakness.<sup>23</sup> Such agency, however, depends on

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(4.9 million in Brazil alone) of enslaved Africans to religious life in general, and to Latin American Christianity.

<sup>21</sup> That expectation of a ‘new presence’ can be noticed in Gutierrez’s use of the expression ‘the irruption of the poor’: Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 15th Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), xx.

<sup>22</sup> The Boff brothers distinguish between the socio-economically poor and the evangelically poor. The latter, even if not socio-economically poor, make themselves poor ‘out of love for and in solidarity with the poor’, joining them in their struggle against unjust poverty, and for liberation and justice. See Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 48. In spite of the importance of taking such a stand, it is not yet the poor who are becoming the ‘subjects of their own history’.

<sup>23</sup> Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th anniversary edition (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), Kindle edition, 538-41: ‘This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be

*conscientização*, the process of awareness-raising, which depends on the work of organic intellectuals or cultural agents among the poor.<sup>24</sup> In spite of its phenomenal impact on movements like the Christian Base Communities, Freire's analysis is still too dependent on western rationality. Indeed, *conscientização* can be instrumental and empowering for those who are oppressed or marginalized as they advance the process of their own liberation. However, even before such *conscientização*, moral agency, resistance, and even liberationist aspirations already exist. That aspect of agency is often missed.

There are many forms through which people's agency in situations of oppression may be displayed.<sup>25</sup> Although I support liberation theology's preoccupation with the structures of oppression that perpetuate injustice, and its commitment to dismantle them whenever and wherever possible, I submit that those studying Latin America must pay greater attention to the agency of the indigenous peoples, their more subtle strategies of survival and resistance, and the extent to which they have contributed to shape Latin American Christianity.

### Beyond Indigenized Christianity

Because Christianity emerges in the context of a concrete encounter between the gospel and culture, sooner or later it takes indigenous forms.<sup>26</sup> The continuous and dynamic encounters between Latin American cultures and the gospel have produced a number of Latin American Christianities in the course of several centuries. However, most studies of Latin American Christianity still treat it from the totalizing perspective of Eurocentric Christianity. The increasing emphasis on World Christianity can reverse that trend by focusing on Christians whose voices have been overlooked, and who are increasingly becoming protagonists of their own history.

Lamin Sanneh, one of the pioneers in the field of World Christianity, made this choice clear:

I have decided to give priority to indigenous response and local appropriation over against missionary transmission and direction, and accordingly have reversed the argument by speaking of the indigenous discovery of Christianity rather than the Christian Discovery of indigenous societies.<sup>27</sup>

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sufficiently strong to free both.'

<sup>24</sup> According to Freire, '*Conscientização* is the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence': *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Kindle edition, 1577.

<sup>25</sup> See for instance, James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>26</sup> Mbiti, 'On the Article of John W. Kinney', 68.

<sup>27</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 10. As he puts it, 'It is difficult to overestimate the implications of this indigenous change for the future shape of the religion', 11.

Mine is a similar perspective. I am interested in understanding how the gospel has been appropriated, interpreted and understood by Latin Americans, particularly the poor, ethnic and racial minority groups, and women.<sup>28</sup>

As Christians move across cultures, spreading the Jesus story, new forms of Christianity emerge. Christianity's vocation is outward. It moves beyond itself, towards the other, concerned with 'the world beyond the boundaries of the Church'.<sup>29</sup> Latin American Christianity is a missionary faith, concerned about the world. However, its missionary nature is not without problems. In the light of their own history, Latin Americans cannot deny the close association between European/US missions and western colonialism. Thus, in Latin America, Christian mission needs to be 'decolonized'.

In his work on the conversion of the Maya people, William Hanks states:

The Spanish conquest of Yucatan rested on two major columns, military subjugation and the so-called *conquista pacifica*, 'peaceful conquest'. The military conquest was carried out by a relatively small number of soldiers, armed with swords, armour, muskets, horses and dogs, and assisted by their indigenous allies. After decades of advances, setbacks and regroupings, it came to an end, at least officially, in 1547. The peaceful conquest, by contrast, was carried out by an even smaller number of missionaries and their recruits, armed with monumental built spaces, the cross, religious vestments, the Bible and doctrine, the Host, wine and oil, and speech.<sup>30</sup>

Latin American Christianity exists in the shadow of the temptation of a religio-political monism, which can be traced back to the close association between the Iberian colonial project and the Christendom ideal.<sup>31</sup> The same can be said about the North American Protestant missions that arrived in

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<sup>28</sup> 'The gospel' is always understood and enunciated from the particular cultural location of whoever reads the Scriptures. But it is also always related to the proclamation of God's salvation in Jesus, in accord with the Christian Holy Scriptures. The interpretations of 'the gospel' may vary from one cultural context to another. What keeps it 'Christian', though, is the centrality of the Biblical narrative as its 'primary and essential source for theological development'. See Kinney, 'The Theology of John Mbiti', 65.

<sup>29</sup> Paulus Y. Pham, *Towards an Ecumenical Paradigm for Christian Mission: David Bosch's Missionary Vision* (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2010), 315.

<sup>30</sup> William F. Hanks, *Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), Kindle edition, 217-21.

<sup>31</sup> José Miguez Bonino quotes Lucio Gera as saying, 'To annex a territory to the crown of Spain and to bring it to the altar of the Lord were one and the same thing; the cause of Jesus Christ and the cause of Spain were identical for that country which had just completed "under the banner of the Catholic faith" the expulsion of the Moslems from its territory and the unification of the kingdom': Lucio Gera, 'Apuntes Para Una Interpretation de la Iglesia Argentina', in *Vispera*, 15 (1970), 59ff, quoted in Jose Miguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), Kindle edition, 143-45.

Latin America in the nineteenth century. While helping to break the monopoly of European colonial Catholicism, they functioned as the religious legitimization of neo-colonialism, announcing US 'free-tradism' as the new age of modernization. As Bonino says:

Protestantism, in terms of its historical origin, of its introduction to Latin America, and of its ethos, came into our world as the religious accompaniment of free enterprise, liberal, capitalist democracy.<sup>32</sup>

Christendom, as a colonial force, benefited from genocide and slavery and, in its neo-colonial forms, continues to contribute to the economic and cultural oppression of millions in Latin America. The colonial nature of European Christendom has particularly affected 'the darker nations'<sup>33</sup> of the world. The colonial/modern project in the sixteenth century set in motion a new understanding of race, and a subsequent process of racialization, which deeply informed relations between the colonial powers and their subjects in the colonized nations. European Christian missions were the ambassadors not only of a 'superior religion', but also of an idea of cultural and racial superiority which they spread in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Duncan Forrester refers to the painting by Thomas Barker in the National Portrait Gallery in London as an example of that imperialist sentiment and of its religious and theological justifications. In that painting, a young Queen Victoria delivers a Bible to an African chief who humbly kneels at her feet. 'The message' that painting communicates is:

Christian mission is an element of the imperial project; colonialism and evangelism belong together; and the expansion of empire is providential, part of God's plan, the fulfilment of which has been delegated to the imperial power. The chieftain who kneels and covers before the queen apparently receives the Bible from her hand in awe, reverence and gratitude. That striking picture captures something of the complex and important interweaving of imperialism and Christianity, which, for long, was considered by many as essential to both.<sup>34</sup>

Implicit in this portrayal is the idea of subservience on the part of the African leader who kneels before the white queen to receive from her the book of life, which contains the directions for the salvation and subsequent

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<sup>32</sup> Bonino, *Doing Theology*, Kindle edition, 231-32.

<sup>33</sup> 'Darker nations' is the provocative epithet Vijay Prashad uses in his thoughtful analysis of the 'third world project', an attempt on the part of predominantly dark-skinned nations to fight the imperial forces on both sides of the Cold War. This epithet refers to the way Eurocentric projects have often associated predominantly dark-skinned peoples with barbarism, attributing to them a childish behaviour, which legitimizes paternalistic and imperialistic attitudes towards them: Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the World* (New York and London: The New Press, 2007).

<sup>34</sup> Duncan B. Forrester, 'Preface', in David Joy and Joseph Duggan (eds), *Decolonizing the Body of Christ: Theology and Theory After Empire?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), xi-xii (xi).

progress of dark-skinned Africa, and the adoption of the core elements of the 'superior' British civilization.

The evangelization promoted by European Christianity in Latin America demanded a break with the indigenous past and the adoption of the superior way of life exemplified by the European missionaries. Speaking of the conversion of the Mayas, Hanks says:

For the missionaries in colonial Yucatan, the focal object of conversion was clearly Indian behavior and beliefs, as is evident from their actions and from the standard definition of *convertir(se)* as 'convince, be convinced or repentant' (Covarrubias 1995 [1611], 350). By combining conviction with repentance, conversion designates a voluntary turning away from past and current ways, to take on different, better ways. It must be kept in mind that while force was in fact liberally used in the *conquista pacifica*, its defining features were persuasion, habituation and discipline.<sup>35</sup>

The social space in which conversion took place in colonial Latin America was the *reduccion*, a controlled environment where

the *Indios* [sic] would continue to speak their own language, but it had to be a new version of that language, purged of the 'vomit of idolatry' and the insubordinate genres of hieroglyphic reading and history telling: reduced by erasure, yet incremented with the means to speak to and of God and his designs.<sup>36</sup>

Implicit in this idea of evangelization was the racist ideology emerging in a new world order that had Europe as its self-proclaimed centre.<sup>37</sup> Colonial Christianity not only justified such a power matrix in the name of evangelization, but also provided a religious language that implied the inferiority and even deturpation of indigenous worldviews.

The good news is that, in spite of all this, a darker-skinned, indigenously Latin American Christianity has emerged. The year of 1992 marked the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in Latin America. It provided an occasion for that darker-skinned Christianity to speak up, forcing Latin American Christians to face the ambiguity of evangelization in the continent, and for alternative narratives of that story to be told. For the first time, many in Latin America heard the memories of its original peoples, the descendants of the millions killed and silenced in the conquest. Amerindian theologians who had been so far ignored began to be heard.

Amerindians began to tell of the five hundred years of common history since the European invasion on their own terms.<sup>38</sup> Those indigenous

<sup>35</sup> Hanks, *Converting Words*, Kindle edition, 285-89.

<sup>36</sup> Hanks, *Converting Words*, Kindle edition, 308-10.

<sup>37</sup> Walter Mignolo, 'Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality, and the Grammar of De-coloniality', in *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, fns. 2 3, March-May 2007, 449-514.

<sup>38</sup> Aiban Wagua, 'Present Consequences of the European Invasion of America', in Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo (eds), *The Voice of the Victims* (London: SCM, 1991) 47-56 (47).

narratives were a big reminder that, contrary to what some dominant narratives suggested, indigenous cultures remained alive. It is still common in some parts of Latin America to refer to indigenous peoples as having been wiped out. In response to that, Aiban Wagua, a Kuna Catholic priest, and others, said: ‘We are still here!’<sup>39</sup>

The continuous existence of indigenous cultures and religions in Latin America is in itself an act of resistance. For Latin American indigenous peoples, the struggle against colonialism remains ‘a present history, history that is not over but still going on, a living history of oppression and resistance’.<sup>40</sup> As Wagua affirms, the retelling of ‘the marginalization, the violence, the genocide or ethnocide perpetrated against our indigenous communities of Abia Yala’,<sup>41</sup> as painful as it is, is also a remembrance of ‘our indomitable will’.<sup>42</sup> The genocide continues, but so does resistance.

As a Christian, Wagua addresses the crucial role played by colonial Christianity in the desecrating of indigenous religions, condemned as superstition.<sup>43</sup> In the same way, Vitalino Similox Salazar, a K’aqchiquel Maya Protestant minister from Guatemala, highlights the cultural and religious dimension of the invasion by referring to the encounter of his Maya people with European Christianity as ‘the invasion of Christianity into the world of the Mayas’.<sup>44</sup> Because of its underlying racism, European Christianity was unable to learn from the indigenous communities. Instead, considering indigenous ways of life superstitious and idolatrous, it set in motion a process of cultural genocide.<sup>45</sup>

As these indigenous Christians began to speak up, it became clear that they had never been merely passive objects of evangelization. They have always been important cultural components in the make-up of Latin American Christianity. The same can be said with regard to Afro-Latin American spiritualities. There was a consistent attempt on the part of the white colonizer to separate enslaved Africans from their cultural and religious roots. Such attempts, however, failed. In the words of Peter Paris,

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<sup>39</sup> See – for this kind of argument and the indigenous response – ‘Still here, have always been’, Tony Castanha, *The Myth of Indigenous Caribbean Extinction: Continuity and Reclamation in Borike (Puerto Rico)*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), xiff.

<sup>40</sup> Wagua, ‘Present Consequences’, 49.

<sup>41</sup> Wagua, ‘Present Consequences’, 49.

<sup>42</sup> Wagua, ‘Present Consequences’, 49.

<sup>43</sup> Wagua, ‘Present Consequences’, 48.

<sup>44</sup> Vitalino Similox Salazar, ‘The Invasion of Christianity into the World of the Mayas’, in Guillermo Cook (ed), *Crosscurrents in Indigenous Spirituality, Interface of Maya, Catholic and Protestant Worldviews* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1997), 35-48 (35).

<sup>45</sup> Guillermo Cook, ‘Introduction: Brief History of the Maya Peoples’, in *Crosscurrents in Indigenous Spirituality*, 1-33 (15). Cook links the cultural genocide with the missionary aim of eradicating all non-Christian religion and beliefs.

‘Africans brought their worldviews with them into the diaspora, and as a result of their interaction with their new environments, their African worldviews were gradually altered into a new African consciousness.’<sup>46</sup> Integral to that worldview was African spirituality.<sup>47</sup>

What I call Latin American Christianity is thus the embracing of Christianity by the Latin American people on their own terms. It is true that most native people, as well as most enslaved Africans transported to Brazil, did not have a choice. They were forced to convert to Christianity. However, even under those coercive circumstances, many of them managed to embrace Christianity as their own. Instead of being simply Christianized, they found ways to make Christianity indigenous – so, forced to relinquish outward signs of their indigenous and African spiritualities, they interpreted Christianity through their own cultural lenses, transforming it in the process. The view of the indigenous people as a sort of *tabula rasa* proved to be naïve. Missionary efforts to Christianize the individual indigenous souls and their surrounding culture also failed. Indigenous and Afro-Latin American spiritualities remained alive.

Latin American Christianity has never been monolithic. There has always been at least a Catholicism of the church and a Catholicism of the people, even though they sometimes come together. Popular religion has always shaped Latin American Christianities.<sup>48</sup> When observed from the perspective of colonized and marginalized peoples, popular religion exemplifies the active agency of indigenous and Afro-Latin American cultures as they create meaning in face of new and changing realities. The persistence of indigenous spiritualities in the context of popular religion has often been met with suspicion and evaluated negatively.<sup>49</sup> From the perspective of indigenous peoples, however, it has been a means of survival and resistance.

Popular Catholicism is an important expression of popular religion in Latin America. It has in many ways subverted the dominant European interpretation of Christian devotion with the infusion of a spirituality that keeps the traditional indigenous worldview alive. One major example is the devotion of Our Lady of Guadalupe, *La Morenita*, in Mexico. In 1531, on

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<sup>46</sup> Peter J. Paris, *The Spiritualities of the African Peoples: The Search for Common Moral Discourse* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 24.

<sup>47</sup> For Paris, spirituality ‘is synonymous with the soul of a people: the interpreting center of their power and meaning’: Paris, *The Spiritualities of the African Peoples*, 22.

<sup>48</sup> Popular religion includes popular Christianity, but is also present beyond it. As Miguel de la Torre and Edwin David Aponte state, ‘through popular religion, Latina/o peoples voice and act out their own theological and spiritual understandings of the Divine, themselves and the world.’ It urges that the faith of the people be given proper attention. Miguel de la Torre and Edwin David Aponte, *Introducing Latino/a Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 118.

<sup>49</sup> Salazar, ‘The Invasion of Christianity into the World of the Mayas’, 40.

the hill of Tepeyac in present-day Mexico City, there appears to Juan Diego, a Nahuatl peasant, Our Lady of Guadalupe. There was a shrine for the female Azteca deity Tonantzin in that location. In that event, Mary, a Christian symbol, is turned into a dark-skinned woman dressed in indigenous clothes. Indigenous spirituality appropriates a Christian symbol. According to Judith Gleason:

The Virgin of Guadalupe came to life in response to the putting down of her Nahuatl predecessor, Tonantzin, whom she continues in mysterious ways to embody.<sup>50</sup>

On the hill where the Azteca mother goddess had been worshipped, a brown Catholic saint emerges to remind a Nahuatl convert that she remains the mother-goddess of her people.<sup>51</sup> The Virgin, as an indigenous mother, chooses to address her indigenous son, not the Spaniard.<sup>52</sup> Commonly dismissed by early scholarship, such expressions of popular religion are now being taken more seriously as “the faith of the people” on their own terms.<sup>53</sup>

There is an enormous body of literature on categories such as *mestizaje*<sup>54</sup> and syncretism.<sup>55</sup> However, more recently, dissatisfied with approaches that emphasize mixture but not as equally difference, some scholars have chosen to talk about the hybridity of Latin American and Latina/o Christianity from the perspective of liminality.<sup>56</sup> In accordance with that view, religious experience takes place in transitional, interstitial spaces. Such spaces are an avenue for creativity.<sup>57</sup> Thus, for instance, Afro-Brazilian religions disguising themselves within Catholic symbols during the colonial era did not simply imply a mixing of African traditional values and European Catholicism. Such understanding loses sight of the singularity and significance of both religions. Instead, in that unequal encounter, two different symbolic worlds occupy the same space but still

<sup>50</sup> Judith Gleason, ‘Oya in the Company of the Saints’, in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 68/2 (2000), 265-92 (265).

<sup>51</sup> See Robert Orsi, ‘She Came, She Saw, She Conquered’: book review of Ana Castillo (ed), *Goddess of the Americas: Writings on the Virgin of Guadalupe* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996), in *Commonwealth*, 124/5 (1997), 24-25 (24).

<sup>52</sup> Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of ‘The Other’ and the Myth of Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 126.

<sup>53</sup> De La Torre and Aponte, *Introducing Latino/a Theologies*, 119.

<sup>54</sup> Virgilio P. Elizondo, *The Future is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2000).

<sup>55</sup> Tânia Lima (ed), *Sincretismo Religioso: O Ritual Afro-Brasileiro* (Recife, Brazil: Editora Massangano, 1996). Also, Gustavo Benavides, ‘Syncretism and Legitimacy in Latin American Religion’, in Anita Maria Leopold and Jeppe Sinding Jensen (eds), *Syncretism and Religion: A Reader* (London: Equinox, 2004), 194-216.

<sup>56</sup> Luis C. Nascimento, ‘Religion and Immigration: Towards a Transformative Prophetic Spirit’: PhD dissertation (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, 2012), 17ff.

<sup>57</sup> Nascimento, ‘Religion and Immigration’, 18.

hold on to their distinct meanings. Whereas colonizing outsiders saw African slaves in Brazil bowing before Catholic saints, Afro-Brazilian insiders continued to understand their distinct worldview as surviving in a different and oppressive context where they could not worship freely. From that perspective, Afro-Brazilian religions become sacred symbolic spaces where the ‘cumulative cultural cognizance and worldviews of enslaved Africans transported to the New World during the trans-Atlantic slave trade (1538-1888) remain operative’.<sup>58</sup>

Alternatively, Mara Medina, influenced by Gloria Anzaldúa, has used the Nahuatl word *nepantla*, meaning ‘middle space’ or ‘in-between’ space, to refer to indigenous perspectives in the Americas *vis-à-vis* the conquest.<sup>59</sup> The world as the pre-Columbian peoples had known it was mortally wounded. A Christian order, imposed by the Iberian *conquistadores*, was in the process of full implementation. They were caught in between worlds, being challenged to keep their heritage alive while making sense of an new and overwhelming reality. As Medina points out, the indigenous response went beyond resistance:

Indigenous peoples did not merely resist the imposition of Christianity but they responded to the foreign tradition by crafting their religiosity, developing unsanctioned traditions, reinforcing their community networks, and ultimately asserting their religious autonomy. They became Christian on their own terms and, in the process, Christianity was changed.<sup>60</sup>

The story of the initial documentation of the word *nepantla* is enlightening. According to Medina, this word was first recorded in the sixteenth century by a Dominican friar to describe an indigenous new convert who was still *nepantla*, i.e. in the middle, not yet firmly rooted in the Christian faith. *Nepantla* described the trauma of living between ancient institutions and the new, incomprehensible, ones brought by the colonizers. However, it did not represent a state of confusion, but one of creative survival.

The in-between space that the indigenous worldview inhabits encompasses multiple manifestations of the divine, which co-exist without losing their distinctiveness.<sup>61</sup> *Nepantla* is a complex area, a space of discomfort. It does not allow for the easy reconciliation of multiple worldviews without considerations of difference. An emphasis on *mestizaje* and syncretism – consequently, on the idea of a shared culture – risks

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<sup>58</sup> Mikelle Smith Omari-Tunkara. ‘Candomblé’, in Ed. F. Abiola Irele and Biodun Jeyifo (eds), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of African Thought* (Oxford African American Studies Center: [www.oxfordaasc.com](http://www.oxfordaasc.com)), (accessed 24th June 2015).

<sup>59</sup> Lara Medina, ‘Nepantla Spirituality: Negotiating Multiple Religious Identities Among US Latinas’, in Miguel A. de La Torre and Gaston Espinosa (eds), *Rethinking Latino(a) Religion and Identity* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2006), 248-66.

<sup>60</sup> Medina, ‘Nepantla Spirituality’, 251.

<sup>61</sup> Medina, ‘Nepantla Spirituality’, 253-54.

overlooking the significance of the Indigenous worldview. True reconciliation between Indigenous and Christian traditions demands the privileging of the mother culture, the Indigenous, until the Indigenous can be fully respected.<sup>62</sup> Reclamation and reinterpretation of Indigenous epistemology thus become vital tasks for theology.<sup>63</sup>

Chilean scholar Diego Irrarazaval has suggested that Latin American evangelistic vocation can be best understood in terms of 'inculturated liberation'.<sup>64</sup> By that, he means an evangelistic style that emanates from the Latin American people, mostly from lay movements, rooted in community-building and standing in solidarity with the most vulnerable groups.

These proposals emerge as alternatives to a view of evangelization which reinforces the colonial spirit, ignoring local peoples and cultures, and promoting death and oppression in the name of salvation. They represent a viable way for Latin American Christians to rethink evangelization in a continent that experienced genocide and slavery in conjunction with the idea of Christian evangelization.

### Concluding Thoughts

With the rise of liberation theology in the late 1960s, the theological voices emerging out of Latin American Christianity began to be noticed. As a consequence of that awakening, new theological voices emerged in the Latin American scenario in the following decades. Indigenous peoples, Afro-Latin Americans and women have found their own theological voices and their 'locus of enunciation'.<sup>65</sup> They are now taking back the ownership of their own destinies, and reclaiming their places as subjects of their own history. This is the context in which the relationship between evangelization and culture must be discussed today in Latin America.<sup>66</sup>

The question about evangelization in Latin America has to be asked again. The indigenous peoples of Latin America can no longer be understood as passive objects of European and North American evangelism. New questions must be raised as to the extent to which they have transformed Latin American Christianity.

The time has come for a full 'irruption of the poor' in Latin America. The first liberation theologians emerged out of the middle class. Under the

<sup>62</sup> Medina, 'Nepantla Spirituality', 250.

<sup>63</sup> Medina, 'Nepantla Spirituality', 249. Medina speaks from a Chicana perspective, as a Chicana liberation theologian. I believe, though, that her insights speak similarly to the different liberating theologies that have emerged in Latin America and in US Latino/a communities.

<sup>64</sup> Diego Irrarazaval, 'Mission in Latin America: Inculturated Liberation', in *Missiology*, 20/2 (1992), 221-37 (221).

<sup>65</sup> Walter Mignolo, 'Introduction', in *Cultural Studies*, 21/2-3 (2007), 155-67 (158).

<sup>66</sup> Emilio Castro, 'On Evangelism and Culture: Some Reflections', in *International Review of Mission*, 84/335 (2001), 365-70 (365).

influence of Paulo Freire, they became the organic intellectuals or the cultural workers of the time, standing in solidarity with the oppressed. In the 1980s, new actors – women, indigenous peoples, black Latin Americans and Pentecostals – began to appear on the scene, giving birth to Pentecostal theologies, indigenous theologies and black theologies in Latin America which have not yet received proper attention. They are contributing more sophisticated insights on socio-economic justice, while integrating relevant contributions from the area of critical cultural studies.<sup>67</sup>

Latin America is experiencing a new sort of religious pluralism. Catholicism remains the majority religion and one of the most major cultural influences in the region. However, it is not a monolithic religious power. Pentecostalism has unquestionably become an important player, serving on many levels as the venue for popular Protestant religiosity in the region. Just as in the case of Catholicism, Latin American Pentecostalism is plural in its make-up. More than ever before, Latin American Catholicism and Protestantism are challenged to find creative ways of engaging traditional indigenous and Afro-Latin American religions.

At the end of the day, what is really potentially revolutionary in Latin American Christianity is its increasing self-awareness. Latin American Christianity is increasingly realizing the distinctiveness of its cultural location and identity. It has realized that it is a 'Cristianismo Moreno',<sup>68</sup> a dark-skinned Christianity. There is a new evangelization taking place in the region. That evangelization, however, cannot be described simply in terms of Christian revitalization. It also implies a revitalization of Indigenous and Afro-Latin American identities. Whereas some indigenous and Afro-Latin Americans choose to reaffirm their traditional ethnic and cultural heritages by joining their traditional religions, for many others, who remain Christian, such revitalization means a renewal of Christianity and of its attempts to be reconciled with indigenous and Afro-Latin American spiritualities. Each of the new theological voices mentioned above thus becomes 'a voice in search of freedom, independence and autonomy... a voice that wishes to lay claim to its own reality and experience, to give expression to its own view of God and the world, and chart its own future'.<sup>69</sup> Whereas they do not represent the whole of Latin American Christianity, these voices are expressions of the most obstinate, creative

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<sup>67</sup> See, for instance, Thia Cooper (ed), *The Re-emergence of Liberation Theologies: Models for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>68</sup> Eduardo Hoornaert, *O Cristianismo Moreno do Brasil* (Petropolis, Brazil: Vozes, 1991).

<sup>69</sup> Fernando F. Segovia, 'Two Places and No Place in Which to Stand', in A. Banuelos (ed), *Mestizo Christianity: Theology from the Latino Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 35. Cited in Maria Pilar Aquino, 'Theological Method in US Latino/a Theology', in Orlando Espin and Miguel H. Diaz (eds), *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 6-48 (9).

and liberating movements one can see in Latin American Christianity today.

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**A THEOLOGY BASED ON COMMON MEMBERSHIP  
OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD:  
TOWARDS AN INTERCULTURAL THEOLOGICAL  
HERMENEUTIC IN CONTEMPORARY GERMANY**

Wilhelm Richerbächer

**Life-Enhancing Service to the Powerless in the Name of the Triune  
God – Biblical Inspiration for the Exercise of Power  
in Mission and Theology**

Unlike the natural logic of keeping under our control whatever our hand can grasp, the gospel does not work according to the logic of the fist. It is rather a case of a flexible hand receiving with openness, impressing one's gratitude on the received and thereby passing it on to others in need. Thus, mission means witnessing to Christ's transforming power – one that has already changed lives and continues towards the future of God's eternal *shalom*.

Reliable and life-enhancing power is power entrusted to one who is commissioned 'in the name of the Lord' (Mic 5:4) and exercised as a servant. The one commissioned abstains from making the message his or her own brand, but ensures that justice is done in the situation of its addressee, as we can see throughout the Acts of the Apostles. In Acts 3, Peter and John – in the authority of the Risen Christ – fasten their gaze on the alms-begging lame man at the 'Beautiful gate' of the temple. Instead of giving the lame man what he begged for in order to ease his burden, they offered him their hands 'in the name of Jesus Christ' helping him stand on his own feet. Similarly, in Acts 10, Peter receives the paradigmatic lesson on the power in mission. God enables him to do mission by the vision of the sheet descending from heaven filled with all kinds of food ritually unclean for Peter, ordering him to eat instead of sticking to his principles of ritual purity.

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Pedagogically, God prepares the ground-breaking insights Peter later will be able to express when meeting the pious Roman centurion Cornelius at his home: 'Truly, I perceive that God shows no partiality but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him' (Acts 10:34). Such an experience enabled the primitive church to grow together in a unity crossing cultural and traditional ritual borders and concluding at the Apostles' council in Jerusalem laying upon people from all nations when becoming Christians no greater burden than some of the laws of ritual hygiene and moral integrity (Acts 15:28-29).

Thus the gospel mandate is not an instrument to spread the messengers' cultural power and influence, to occupy cultures and their codes or assimilate them to one's own, but rather a mandate for transcultural communication and convergence from God the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> The Triune God is being revealed through the life-empowering Word in the Spirit towards the new creation started on the day of Christ's resurrection, understood and spelled out in the witnesses' mouths as well as in theirs and their addressees' life destinies (Is. 59:21).

This revelatory and transformative process of mission of peace and recreation is what the epistle to the Ephesians at the beginning of the first century CE pictures as representing the growth of all 'members of God's household' (Eph. 2:19; also 1 Cor. 3:9; 4:1) into 'a holy temple in the Lord' (Eph. 2:21). This 'temple' is based on the gospel message with its apostolic authenticity (Eph. 2:20) and grows by integrating the various spiritual gifts and treasures of church tradition, until it reaches its fullness in Christ as the cornerstone and head of a new humanity (Eph. 4:11-16). All involved in the representation of this bodily growth are reassured of the foundation of their mandate: the *Call* to live as children of God through Jesus Christ the Son (Eph. 2:3), and given the *Peace* already found in him (Eph. 2:14) in order to attain unity, while they are to use the *Gifts* of their ministries in order to build believers up for the service of divine love in the world (Eph. 4:12).

### **The Application of Biblical Inspiration among Churches in Germany**

Building on the basis of common membership of God's household as presented above, two years ago the mainline Protestant Church in Germany (EKD), together with migrant churches, established by people from many countries, have set up a vision document for their future unity entitled *Gemeinsam evangelisch!* ('Jointly Protestant!').<sup>2</sup> In this, they opt for a more intensive relationship beyond the usual models of fellowship in moving towards a communion of churches in common witness. They see the move as a 'paradigm shift... from a diaconally shaped towards an ecclesiological founded togetherness'.<sup>3</sup> One can see here how migration as the demographic factor of globalization gives a new urgency to implementing the essential relationship between church unity and common

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<sup>1</sup> See the interpretation of Acts in Kirsteen Kim, 'Von den/Bis an die... Enden der Erde: Mission im Geist', in *Interkulturelle Theologie*, 2-3/2015, 284-300, 285-88.

<sup>2</sup> Kirchenamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (ed), *Gemeinsam evangelisch! Erfahrungen, theologische Orientierungen und Perspektiven für die Arbeit mit Gemeinden anderer Sprache und Herkunft*, EKD-Texte 119 (Hanover, Germany: 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Kirchenamt der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, 11 (trans. mine).

witness.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps it also helps the mainline churches (EKD) to give migrant churches in their neighbourhood a rank similar to that of ‘partner’ churches on other continents on the priority list for developing ecumenical unity. In fact, this process will offer a ‘unique chance to reach a common understanding on liturgy, spirituality, unity and mission by common searching and investigating’.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, the EKD is reaching out for a critical-theological dialogue in order to strengthen the common confession of faith by preparing an authentic unity of different theological traditions on a common basis of understanding. But at the same time the vision document *Gemeinsam evangelisch!* has stated that the theological traditions of migrant churches are not yet considered appropriate for discussion on a level playing field, since their educational background is still unfamiliar to EKD churches, readily causing them to disapprove of the respective degrees. At this point one may not be surprised that *Gemeinsam evangelisch!* does not have a very visionary title beyond ‘Jointly Protestant!’ Hopefully, this lack of positive expectation on the part of mainline churches can be compensated for by academic programmes of intercultural theological studies, in which processes of mutual learning accompanied by a growth in spiritual sensitivity can be incorporated from the start. This could help present Protestant theology in Germany to depart from the erroneous assumption that traditional denominational clusters will either exist in an unchanged continuity or be replaced more and more by a simple ‘non-confessionalism’.<sup>6</sup>

According to my view, both assumptions will not help the different churches to a more viable unity in the future. Rather, one has to take seriously how serious cultural differences and spiritual understandings of Christianity are for Christians living together in Germany. This will also help to what is needed to bring about further co-operation. And in order to establish a proper understanding of Christian fellowship, it will not be sufficient to apply traditional categories such as ‘traditional’, ‘free church’, ‘majority’ or ‘minority’.

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<sup>4</sup> See Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Geneva/Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989); Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1998; orig. 1953); Robert J. Schreier, ‘Globalisierung, Postmoderne und die neue Katholizität’, in *Ökumenische Rundschau*, 53/2, 2004, 139-59.

<sup>5</sup> Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland (EMW), ‘Hinterm eigenen Horizont geht’s weiter: Rückfragen an das Impulspapier des Rates der EKD’ (Hamburg, Germany: 2006), written in response to the EKD handout ‘Kirche der Freiheit – Perspektiven für die evangelische Kirche im 21. Jahrhundert’, 3 (trans. mine); cf. <http://emw-d.de/fix/files/emw-stellungnahme.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> See Hans Martin Barth, *Konfessionslos glücklich: auf dem Weg zu einem religionstranszendenten Christsein* (Gütersloh, Germany: 2014).

How important it is to break away from using these categories has been indicated by many authors. Among them, Christine Lienemann-Perrin prefers to describe World Christianity under the three criteria of (i) affiliation, (ii) community-building, and (iii) organization and communication beyond geographically fixed communalities.<sup>7</sup> In her reflections, Lienemann-Perrin touches on the core of the issue when referring to the moment when World Christianity was conceived in the Primitive Church (Acts 15). She shows how two models of inclusion into Christianity, *assimilation* and *transculturation*, have since then been in conflict with each other.<sup>8</sup> As I understand it, in these two models, two types of either culturally or politically centralized or decentralized exercise of power re-emerge, as mentioned above.

Inspired by such works, I observe the different characteristics of Christianity found in Germany beyond those that shape denominational teachings or ethical principles. Rather, I wish to acknowledge how a church offers a communal stability to her members' circumstances, how religion works out in daily life for one's good, in which way inter-religious dialogue and respect are furthered by this or that church, how intensely or circumspectly a political witness can be developed with the assistance of that church – and, last but not least: how experiences of healing and deliverance are possible in a church's fellowship.

### **An Observation of the Christian Landscape in Contemporary Germany**

Having the last-named criteria in mind, we now recall the historical background and reveal the treasury of life's experience that German churches bring and sketch out the needs of change each one might have to undergo in order to serve Christ's body and society. In addition, I consider the two models of admission to Christian communion, assimilation and transculturation found in the early church, when showing three clusters: the first two, people's church Christianity and diaspora Christianity are mainly directed at solving the question of power by assimilation or non-assimilation, because they are following an expansionist-historical ideal of Christianity. Unlike these, the third model of cultural-dynamic Christianity gives much more room for processes of transculturation, as those representing it are experienced in migration and transculturation.

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<sup>7</sup> Christine Lienemann-Perrin, 'World Christianity als Erfahrungsfeld und theoretisches Konzept', in *Theologische Zeitung*, 1.2/69 (2013) 118-45. She calls this phenomenon the 'biodiversity' of Christianity, 121.

<sup>8</sup> Christine Lienemann-Perrin, 'World Christianity als Erfahrungsfeld', 133-34.

### *People's church Christianity*

The first and statistically still the principal face of Christianity is represented by the big denominational churches of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. As Mariano Delgado<sup>9</sup> paradigmatically describes, its logic of mission is oriented in a linear historical expansion and the rational-moralistic progression of humankind through God's unique revelation in Christ. Its premise of a missionary, 'Therefore go...' is built on (a) the theological prototype of the Trinity structurally compromising between Greek polytheism and Jewish monotheism, (b) decisive social progress towards a new morality of love to one's neighbour versus an outdated master morality, and (c) the overcoming of all sacrificial blood cults in an bloodless cult of complete self-commitment to a God of reconciling love among all people. This type of Christianity assumes it represents God's kingdom of eschatological justice and peace in the historic realm of Christian political rule. It was strong in past centuries, but still exists today, also modified in some conceptions of developmentalism trying to rehabilitate the world by generic, though in fact western, formulae.

Self-critically in the future, this type of Christianity should be open to fresh types of the gospel's inculturation in the diverse social and cultural contexts of Germany. This includes understanding itself as only one cultural type of Christianity. It might include discussing anew the three cultural maxims mentioned above with theologians from South and East in order to get their truth implemented insofar as it is in line with the gospel. As I will discuss later in the paper, an intercultural discourse on the meaning of the two natures in their complex mutual penetration for God's and humankind's sake as expressed in the Chalcedonian Confession CE 451 could be one hermeneutical component of that.

### *Diaspora Christianity*

The second type of Christianity one finds in German contexts today is not of course a newcomer in history. Diaspora formats of living this faith with its universalistic claims – furnished with the awareness that real strength does not come through big numbers, dominant political influence or sovereign academic conception, but rather by firm and reflected convictions and their culture-critical and culture-supportive effects – have existed since early Christianity. In German church history since the Reformation, diaspora Christianity existed almost exclusively in the two forms of minority Roman Catholicism or minority Protestantism. In recent

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<sup>9</sup> Mariano Delgado, 'Das Christentum – die historische Konstruktion seiner Identität', in Gregor Maria Hoff, Hans Waldenfels (eds), *Die ethnologische Konstruktion des Christentums. Fremdperspektiven auf eine bekannte Religion*, Religionskulturen, Vol. 5, Christian Strecker et al (eds), (Stuttgart, Germany: 2008), 64-83.

decades, our society has been enriched by various types of Diaspora Christianity. Diaspora Christianity will enable us to take a more differentiated look at German Christianity as a whole, if we continue in close ecumenical communication and common ministry. One eminent example of this is the Arabic-speaking Greek Orthodox Church (Orthodox church) of Antioch and All the East. This church could enrich mainline churches' understanding of inter-religious dialogue. Besides this, it could offer a field of mutual learning where (as in areas of the former German Democratic Republic) churches suffer a loss of confessional and political profile. Rum-Orthodox churches have received strong appreciation in their dominantly Muslim environment, an experience probably surprising to those areas of minority Protestantism just named, where a loss of numbers rather seems to be equated with loss of societal influence and power.<sup>10</sup> One of their most prolific theologians, George Tamer, describes the character of his church as that of a perennial diaspora existence in a constructive juxtaposition with majority faiths, in their case specifically under Muslim domination in Syria and Lebanon over 1,300 years. Since the beginning of this church (tracing its origins back to ancient Antioch and Damascus of Acts 9:11 and 11:26) it has developed into an Arabic church, self-confidently embodying the gospel in Arabic 'language' and having natural dialogue with Islam. Having been strongly oppressed though tolerated by Byzantine Christian as well as Muslim overlords, they temporarily experienced even Islamic leadership as more liberating and therefore developed a tradition of voluntarily serving the state and its society's prosperity by co-operating in administration, education and science.

Exactly this tradition of inherited ability to collaborate beyond denominational and even religious borders contains plenty of lessons for European mainline churches these days. In order to enable religious minorities, such as Muslim minorities in Western Europe, to integrate in a new social and political realm, there has to be the upbringing of a societal and cultural basis accepted by both sides of the integration process, a basis going along with the mutual acceptance, yes – even a fostering of religious differences.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, this church tradition might consider and appreciate afresh the possibility of Christianity being politically influential in the socio-political and cultural processes of Germany which they could never experience in their original homelands.

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<sup>10</sup> In these areas, therefore, the whole organization of church life needs a structural pattern of community and pastoral self-image quite different from other regions with traditional peoples' church identities.

<sup>11</sup> George Tamer, 'Warum der christlich-islamische Dialog notwendig ist', in Ursula Spuler-Stegemann (ed), *Feindbild Christentum im Islam* (Freiburg, Germany: 2004), 62-74, 70.

### *Cultural-dynamic Christianity*

A third type of Christianity, recently the fastest-growing in Germany owing to several waves of marked immigration, is represented by churches of the Pentecostal and Charismatic types. Meanwhile more than 1,500 churches – mostly small in membership – may be found in the country. Normally, they are multilingual and multi-ethnic and have a strong sense of South-North ('reverse') mission. Recently, Moritz Fischer<sup>12</sup> has made a thorough analysis of one church of this category: *Nzambe Malamu* ('God is good'). Comparing it with a traditional church in the parochial sense, one should rather speak about a congregational network. A number of small groups characterized by multiple new splits and fusions, this network was established about fifty years ago in the Congo. Meanwhile, plenty of satellite groups have arisen in the USA and in Europe, all of them strongly under the authority of the first prophetic leader Aidini Abala and a group of charismatic spiritual leaders mainly linked with him in blood relationship. The network is found in eighteen German towns, with each gathering 50-150 members. A special characteristic of this church lies in its manner of transcultural communication: instead of a predetermined doctrinal tradition or a certain liturgical order, there is instead a spiritually transmitted collective ritual in constant re-appropriation of their foundational text of Mark 16:15-18 (see below in Part 4). The same ritual is fostering the reconstruction of social lives in families and professions, as many of its members have not yet completed their process of migration. The spiritual representation of God's word they see in the concrete fruits of the Spirit in their own lives. The leaders in person guarantee this representation.<sup>13</sup> Their authority is being exercised and re-strengthened in a comprehensive service of individual counselling for members in the constant fighting of structural fluctuations (changing membership, new splits etc.).

Looking at the lively and impressive service network and spiritual communion of such a form of Christianity it is obvious how attractive it can be offering direct and effective solutions in life crises to many people in Germany who have isolated themselves from traditional formats of western churches. Nevertheless, there will be strong challenges to such churches in learning how multifarious – and not just shaped by criteria of spirituality and traditional ethics the terms of affiliation to Christianity have become in this country.

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<sup>12</sup> Moritz Fischer, *Pfingstbewegung zwischen Fragilität und Empowerment. Beobachtungen zur Pfingstkirche 'Nzambe Malamu' mit ihren transnationalen Verflechtungen, Kirche-Konfession-Religion*, Vol. 57, by Konfessionskundliches Institut Bensheim and Evangelische Zentralstelle für Weltanschauungsfragen (eds), (Göttingen, Germany: 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Claudia Währisch-Oblau, 'The Missionary Self-Perception of Pentecostal/Charismatic Church Leaders from the Global South in Europe: Bringing Back the Gospel', in Andrew Davies and William K. Kay (eds), *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies Series 2* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 2012), 61-83.

### **Theological Hermeneutics in Transition towards Intercultural Togetherness**

The constellation just described poses a great challenge to German academic theology too. Meanwhile, most of its representatives appreciate that contextualization has a central, and not a peripheral, role to play in theological hermeneutics. Why?

First of all, for more than half a century a steadily growing number of theologians and philosophers from around the globe such as Gustavo Gutierrez, Kwame Bediako, Fernando Segovia, John Pobee, Benézét Bujo, Kosuke Koyama, John Parratt, Virginia Fabella, Justo González et others, from their existential perspective as theologians of the global South, as well as Hans Margull, Walter Hollenweger, Richard Friedli, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Emmanuel Levinas, and specifically Jürgen Moltmann, Gilbert Keith Chesterton et others as culturally and ecumenically sensitive colleagues from western perspectives,<sup>14</sup> have urged that any theology has the ecumenical responsibility for exchanging the rigid domination of World Christianity's theology by the western rationalist methodology for a more flexible use of various approaches of different cultural and philosophical origins.

Secondly, developing a creative answer to this important request, European theologians have risked an encounter with resources from different Christianities worldwide. Good examples of this in recent conceptions of intercultural theological hermeneutics are given by Heike Walz,<sup>15</sup> referring mainly to *Andine Theology* and *Postcolonial Biblical Theology in an African Context*. Another exemplary attempt to include non-European worldviews in contemporary missiology has been presented in the Mission Statement of the World Council of Churches (2013) *Together Towards Life*. Here a universalist pneumatological view of God the Holy Spirit's mission through and with creation, and not only in inter-human communication, has been initiated though not yet brought into a deeper discourse with more traditional missiological approaches.<sup>16</sup> But besides this and in agreement with other colleagues,<sup>17</sup> I consider it wise not to ignore

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<sup>14</sup> Well comprehended with Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 'One Rule to Rule Them All?' Theological Method in an Era of World Christianity' in Craig Ott, Harold A. Netland (eds), *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 85-126; see especially on power-related theological terminology with by J. Gonzalez, 95.

<sup>15</sup> Heike Walz, 'Kritik der europäischen Vernunft? Herausforderungen für die Interkulturelle Theologie aus Lateinamerika und Afrika', in *Interkulturelle Theologie*, 2-3/ 41 (2015) 261-83.

<sup>16</sup> [www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commission/Mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commission/Mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes)

<sup>17</sup> Franz Gmainer-Pranzl, 'Welt-Theologie: Verantwortung des christlichen Glaubens in globaler Perspektive', in *Interkulturelle Theologie*, 38/ 4 (2012), 408-33, 409. It is particularly impressive when colleagues of non-European descent

useful resources for an intercultural theological hermeneutic in historical German Protestant theology itself. After that, I will turn to some challenging theological concepts from the global South.

Helpful roots for intercultural theological hermeneutics are to be rediscovered with scholars like Gerhard Ebeling and Eberhard Jüngel. According to Ebeling's hermeneutics of the 'Word event' theology consists of an open and ongoing process of interpreting Holy Scripture in the horizon of current circumstances. This type of theology will never confine itself to a universal and timeless expression or language. It cannot hide itself behind principles such as 'Justification by Faith alone' or *missio Dei* as allegedly universal ecumenical compromises. Further, it cannot simply delegate its universal relevance to several autonomous contextual theologies. It rather has to make use of concrete cultural or religious expressions in order to convey the universal claim of the gospel.

On this basis, recent approaches to intercultural theology as the Protestant ones of Volker Küster, Klaus Hock, Henning Wrogemann, as well as the Roman Catholic approaches of the Salzburg school under Franz Gmainer-Pranzl, have moved beyond two foregoing stages to a third, new one. The foregoing were (i) missiological teaching on inculturation as translation of a timeless gospel into single historical expressions, and (ii) contextual variations of the one word that can only appear in, with and under certain historical shapes of language. The new and third stage meanwhile is rather an ongoing (iii) inter-contextual theological discourse open to the common discovery of theological truth from all participating perspectives. Here the subject of theological interpretation is a 'universal hermeneutical community'<sup>18</sup> instead of a pre-formulated transcendent and transcultural doctrine. Thus, theology has associated with cultural sciences as methodological co-pilots besides historical or philosophical sciences, as it has mostly in the past. A culture-sensitive theology goes for a vivid expression of the culture- and Scripture-transcending relevance of God's word in ever-new paradigms of understanding. Like all theology, it stands after the demarcations of 'unconfused and unmingled' as well as 'undivided and unchanged' of the Chalcedonian Confession of CE 451 in a tradition confining God's self-revelation in Christ Jesus without binding this self-revelation to a single confessional expression only. Judith Gruber describes this hermeneutical foundation for intercultural theology by saying: 'The Christological witness comprising the self-revelation of God in Christ, by which the harrowing experiences with Jesus... were brought

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explore new horizons of inter-contextual theology related to European and Asian resources, as Atola Longkumer does in 'Hildegard of Bingen and Mirabai: A Comparative reading of Women Mystics', in *Interkulturelle Theologie*, 4/ 41, 2015, 369-84.

<sup>18</sup> Judith Gruber following David Bosch: see Judith Gruber, 'Theologie nach dem Cultural Turn: Interkulturalität als theologische Ressource', in *Religionskulturen*, Vol. 12, Christian Strecker et al (eds), (Stuttgart, Germany: 2013), 71, 81.

forward, presses to rearrangements in the theological discourse as a whole. It witnesses to the analogy between the event and the content of revelation, and by that brings up the interpretative fixation of the Christ-event itself as a crucial aspect of God's own identity.<sup>19</sup>

This can be exemplified by the inter-contextual model of calling Christ an 'Ancestor' in African Christian theology. African churches thereby authentically express Christ's importance for themselves, especially in their church and social life performed in worship of Christ the New Adam as the ancestor of all African Christians. Yet this traditional interpretation of Christ the ancestor already takes place in the eschatological horizon of seeing in Christ Jesus as the universal Ancestor of all believers – indeed, of all humankind in God's coming kingdom, i.e. the one who has 'gone ahead' (from Latin *antecedere*) in reconciling people of different colours and cultures in one community. This shows how definitely limited cultural expressions in symbolic theological formulae carry an enriching exploration of Christ's relevance to different contexts in a common Christological discourse. Probably such discourse will bring to light another question: how can the content of Christology be updated in expressions of post-modern people in Western Europe by theological 'languages' whose categories of interpretation seem to be permanently fixed?

A second area of common conceptualization is that of *Intercultural Pastoral theology*, e.g. in the field of health care chaplaincy. Here intercultural theology enables us to seriously listen to and consider useful different traditions of understanding God the Holy Spirit, for instance, when it comes to cases of *spiritual warfare*.<sup>20</sup> Charismatic theologians from a migrant church background, now living in Germany but who grew up and were educated in an environment of African charismatic prayer campaigns against evil spirits for the protection of life, will insist that only a re-enacted ritual of Spiritual empowerment will be an authentic and thorough witness to God's transforming message in Christ in situations of sickness

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<sup>19</sup> Judith Gruber, 'Theologie nach dem Cultural Turn', 160, trans. by author, in German: 'Das christologische Zeugnis, dass sich in Jesus dem Christus Gott selbst offenbart und das die erschütternden Erfahrungen mit Jesus... zur Sprache bringt, drängt zu Umstellungen im theologischen Diskurs. Es bezeugt eine Entsprechung von Offenbarungseignis und Offenbarungsinhalt und bringt damit die interpretative Ereignishaftmachung des Jesus-Christus-Ereignisses als Aspekt der Identity Gottes selbst zur Sprache.'

<sup>20</sup> Claudia Währisch-Oblau and Henning Wrogemann (eds), *Witchcraft, Demons and Deliverance: A Global Conversation on an Intercultural Challenge*. Dieter Becker, Henning Wrogemann (eds), *Beiträge zur Missionswissenschaft / Interkulturellen Theologie*, Vol. 32, Vienna 2015; see also Wilhelm Richebächer, "'Spiritual Warfare' – a Viable Concept in Intercultural Theology?" in Claudia Rammelt, Cornelia Schlarb, Egbert Schlarb (eds), *Begegnungen in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart: Beiträge dialogischer Existenz, Festschrift Martin Tamcke* (Berlin, 2015), 398-406.

and temptation. As a kind of holy pattern for the re-enactment, they point to Mark 16:15-18:

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; ... And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.

In his above-mentioned analysis, Moritz Fischer shows how the historically grown format of a 'sending' ritual based on the Great Commission is being re-enacted during the regular worship of the Nzambe Malamu church network in the following manner: the main preacher, always endowed with the mandate of healing in a Sunday service, performs the commission with strongly consoling and encouraging words and shouts towards the gathering congregation. 'Translators' may work as 'bridges' and leading recipients in the congregations, but the whole congregation stands before the healer-preacher to receive these commands like an enthronement, or like a therapeutic treatment, with closed eyes and amid constant prayer.<sup>21</sup>

By contrast, a Protestant-Lutheran colleague in hospital chaplaincy work, raised in a climate of rational discourse and natural science, might argue: in the authority given to an ordained pastor from the Risen Lord Christ to preach and baptize people in the Triune God's name, Christ's victorious power against all devastation is being included and by that granted to the baptized believer. According to that view, spiritual power doesn't have to be transferred specifically in certain threatening situations. Christ has decisively defeated all evil influence and therefore mere intercession for sick people would be sufficient to represent this. And he/she might prove this by referring to an experience with German congregants in a rural area who, after feeling so much fear at night time, had asked him/her to cleanse their house from Satan's influence. After he/she had given them a tried and tested old prayer of house benediction to be used regularly by the householder, they later reported with gratitude that their fear had disappeared immediately after they had started praying.

With Klaus Hock<sup>22</sup> I would support in our situation of encounter with the clash of convictions and arguments, that it will not be sufficient for our Protestant pastors to withdraw behind their learned concept of the Spirit as a rational or existential construction. They should not just wonder about, let alone arrogantly vent their opinions about, charismatic church leaders who might practise praying for deliverance not only against spirits of sickness,

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<sup>21</sup> See Fischer, *Pfingstbewegung*, 271ff, 283-85.

<sup>22</sup> Klaus Hock, 'Passions-Feier. Kreuzungen der Christentümer als Kreuzwege der Christenheit', in Arnd Bünker, Eva Mundanjohn, Ludger Weckel, Thomas Suermann (eds), *Gerechtigkeit und Pfingsten: Viele Christentümer und die Aufgabe einer Missionswissenschaft* (Ostfildern, Germany: 2010), 17-46, 39ff.

but also against – what is predominant in their eyes – the ‘spiritual traditions’ of Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx for the distortion of religion. Rather, in a new attempt of discoursing with colleagues, they could recall and theologically reflect on all the manifold practical experiences from their ministry. They will see how often they themselves treated and passed on God’s word as a performing and powerful reality of God’s Spirit, and not just as a medium of interpreting an inexplicable reality in front of their eyes.<sup>23</sup>

### Conclusion

The growing international and multicultural pluriformity of Christianity offers plenty of opportunities for different theological traditions to step into a qualified dialogue with each other, seeing oneself relative to God’s manifestation in love to all people in Jesus Christ as foundation of all Christian traditions. Some encounters show that many a western theologian will rediscover the special character of ritual and holistic religious approaches, whereas others will teach how much common rational reflection in discourse alone can bring and keep intercultural theologians together. However, such exchange will only find its adequate format and sustainability if future theologians and ministers in other professions of church and development agencies are trained together and in the awareness that interculturality is more than an attribute of the results of missiological debates, but rather a methodological quality of all theological studies.

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<sup>23</sup> Kevin Vanhoozer, *One Rule to Rule Them All*, 108-112, finds common hermeneutical ground for theologians from a traditional Protestant origin and Pentecostal Charismatic background in a theology of performance, defining it as ‘Faith Seeking Theodramatic Understanding’, 109.

# PROCLAIMING AND STRUGGLING FOR LIFE IN PLENITUDE: *BUEN VIVIR* (GOOD LIVING) AS A NEW PARADIGM FOR ‘MISSION’?

Josef Estermann

In Latin America or *Abya Yala* (the indigenous name for the continent),<sup>1</sup> since the 1990s there has been emerging a new (and old) concept that intends to offer an alternative to hegemonic western-dominated politics and the market economy. According to the geographical and ethnic context, it has a different name, but internationally, it is commonly known as *Buen Vivir* (in the Spanish translation). As this concept is not just a new name for a new approach on global problems and the multiple crises of capitalism and western civilization, but rather an overwhelming spiritual and even religious category, it has also been discovered (although hesitantly) by scholars of religious studies and theology. In the following essay, I'll try to show to which extent the concept of *Buen Vivir* could also be adopted by missiology and become part of a new paradigm of 'mission'.

## ***Buen Vivir* – A Rich and Controversial Concept**

Before trying to articulate the Andean concept of *Buen Vivir* with (western) theology and even with missiology, it is necessary to clarify the origin, the context of use, the significance, the different variations of the concept and the problems with the translation into Indo-European languages, especially English.

Western philosophy has its own conception of 'the good life' which has its roots in Aristotle and his political and ethical theory. The Aristotelian concept of *Eubiós* or *Euzén* ('good life')<sup>2</sup> is embedded in his ethics of

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<sup>1</sup> The expression *Abya Yala* which has its origin in the Kuna ethnic group of Panamá, means literally 'earth in full maturity', and has been proposed in the early 1980s by the indigenous Bolivian Aymara leader Takir Mamani as an indigenous reference to the continent called by the conquerors 'America'. The word 'America' is derived, as far it is known, by the Italian navigator and cartographer Amerigo Vespucci (1454-1512), whose *Lettera* were published in Latin in 1507 by the German Martin Waldseemüller, in which he calls the new continent, in honour of the navigator, 'America'. Before 1507, the regions just 'discovered' were known as the *Indias Occidentales* (West Indies).

<sup>2</sup> There are two Greek notions for 'life': *biós* (βίος) and *zoé* (ζωή), terms which are almost synonymous. While *biós* stresses more the 'biological' aspects of life and living beings, *zoé* is more often used to refer to lifetime. As part of the ethical

middle terms: ‘the good life’ or *Euzén* for the Greek philosopher means a life between two extremes, in balance and with moderation – for instance, between poverty and abundance, between avarice and generosity, between asceticism and luxury. It is, in principle, an ideal for the particular life of the conscientious individual, but in ancient times it has in fact been restricted to adult male citizen (*polités*) and landowner. Women, children, old people, foreigners and slaves were not included in Aristotle’s ethical ideal of ‘the good life’. As his ethics has always had a political and social dimension, the concept of *Euzén* includes also a social dimension and could be used as a base for a theory of justice, as the most recent examples of recovering the ancient concept by scholars as Martha Nussbaum show.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the same concept, often in an Epicurean adaptation, has been introduced also by theoreticians of post-modern lifestyle, meaning a hedonistic life of pleasure and luxury, close to the famous *dolce vita* (‘sweet life’) and the hegemonic market economy and consumerism, as it appears as a metonym in the brand LG (‘Life is good’).<sup>4</sup>

As the translations of *Buen Vivir* and *Euzén* to Indo-European languages often confuse the totally different ideological and philosophical backgrounds, it is very important to establish the necessary distinctions and to show the opposition and even incompatibility between the western ‘Good Life’ and indigenous ‘Living Well’ or ‘Good Living’. The Spanish expression *Buen Vivir* (Good Living) is the translation of *Sumak Kawsay* (Ecuador), *Sumaq Kawsay* (Peru), *Allin Kawsay* (Bolivia), or Quechua (or Quichua)<sup>5</sup> words used by large indigenous populations in the Andes, from Columbia to the north of Argentina. Meanwhile, in Aymara-speaking contexts,<sup>6</sup> mainly in Bolivia, the northern parts of Chile and the extreme southeast of Peru, the Spanish expression is *Vivir Bien* (Living Well), which is a translation of the Aymara words *Suma Qamaña* or *Suma Jakaña*.

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theory in Aristotle, the notion of *zoé* is mostly used (in combination with the prefix *eu* (εὖ): *euzôia* or *euzén*).

<sup>3</sup> Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, *The Quality of life* (Oxford/New York: OUP/Clarendon Press, 1993); Martha Nussbaum, *Gerechtigkeit oder das gute Leben* (Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> *Dolce vita* (‘sweet life’) is the title of one of Fellini’s movies (1960). The transnational US-American electronic company LG (Life is Good) uses the post-modern philosophy of ‘good life’ as a brand that reflects a certain sentiment of life, as opposed to the indigenous concept of ‘Good Living’.

<sup>5</sup> The pan-Andean Quechua language, called by its speakers *Runa Simi* (the Language of Human Beings), has some remarkable regional differences. In Ecuador, the language is called *Quichua* (*Kichwa*), but elsewhere *Quechua* or *Runa Simi*. It is spoken by more than seven million people in Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and the northern parts of Argentina and Chile. Most of them live in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador.

<sup>6</sup> Aymara (in the language spelt as *Aimara* and known as *Jaya Mara Aru*) is the second native language of the Andes region, spoken mainly in the triangle between Peru, Bolivia and Chile by some 2.2 million inhabitants.

But the concept is also known outside the Andean context, as by the Guaraní people (*Ñaña de Reko; Ivi Marãei; Teko Kavi*), in the eastern parts of Bolivia, Paraguay, the southern parts of Brazil and the northern parts of Argentina, among the Mapuche people (*Küme Mogen*), in the southern parts of Chile and the western parts of Argentina), and even among Maya people (*Lekil Koxlejal*) in southern Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras.<sup>7</sup>

The English translations of this indigenous concept as ‘Good Living’ or ‘Living Well’ take the Spanish versions of *Buen Vivir* or *Vivir Bien* as a starting point, but we should go back to the original expressions in the different indigenous languages in order to understand what the concept really means. I will limit myself to the Andean context and the two main Andean indigenous languages, Quechua and Aymara. In both expressions (*sumak/q* or *allin kawsay; suma qamaña/jakaña*), the second word is a (substantiated) verb, so the correct translation is not *Vida* (‘life’), but *Vivir* (‘living’). In the Quechua version, the first word is understood as an adjective, in the Aymara version as an adverb; that’s why one gets the two translations *Buen Vivir* (*buen* as an adjective) or Good Living, on the one hand, and *Vivir Bien* (*bien* as an adverb) or Living Well, on the other. In an international context, the Ecuadorian version of *Buen Vivir* (‘Good Living’) has been imposed (probably because of its presence in the 2008 Constitution) as the standard translation, although the Bolivian version of *Vivir Bien* (‘Living Well’) is probably the most accurate translation of the deep indigenous insights of the dynamism of ‘living’.

The adjective or adverb *sumaq/sumak/allin/suma* (‘good’, ‘well’) has its origins in the culinary context of eating and drinking, and means literally ‘tasty’, ‘savoury’, ‘flavoursome’. In combination with ‘living’, it could be translated as ‘tastily/sweetly living’, an expression that is strongly suggestive of the powerful biblical metaphors of the eschatological banquet and the different parables of Jesus referring to eating and sharing together, but also Plato’s *Symposium*. It does not have a direct connection with the semantic fields of (economic) richness, wealth, prosperity or abundance. The corresponding verb *kawsay/qamaña/jakaña* (‘living’) reflects indigenous Andean wisdom and thinking, and is not to be understood in the western tradition of *biós* or *zoé*, as the Greek thinkers and, after them, the whole of western civilization has conceived of ‘life’. *Kawsay* (Quechua) or *qamaña* (Aymara) are so-called ‘transcendental concepts’, which means that they are characteristics that belong to all entities and processes in the whole cosmos. In other words, all that exists, has life, is living.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Without entering into linguistic details, most of the expressions mentioned would not be translated literally as ‘Good Living’, but rather as ‘our way of living’, ‘earth without evil’ or ‘life in the balance’.

<sup>8</sup> For more linguistic details, see Josef Estermann, “‘Vivir bien’ como utopía política: La concepción andina del “vivir bien” (*suma qamaña/allin kawsay*) y su aplicación en el socialismo democrático en Bolivia”, in MUSEF (ed), *Vivir Bien: ¿Una nueva vía de desarrollo plurinacional?* (La Paz: MUSEF, 2011), Vol. II, 517-

As a synthesis of our linguistic analysis, we can affirm the following characteristics of the concept of *Buen Vivir*:

- It is a dynamic concept (verb) and not a static one (substantive); it has to do with an ongoing process rather than with a state which one day will be fully realized.
- The concept of 'life', in an Andean context, includes all existing beings and reaches far beyond the strictly biological dimension. It is, to speak in western terms, a transcendental concept (*transcedentale*).
- 'Good Living' is based on the fundamental rationality of the categories of Andean wisdom and philosophy. The principal of relationality is crucial, according to which everything is interconnected.<sup>9</sup>
- Any change in the sense of an 'improvement' or 'deterioration' of a situation, a living being, a transaction, any action or quality of life, has consequences for the corresponding aspects (complementarity and correspondence) of other beings and 'places' (*topoi*).
- 'Good living' is neither anthropocentric nor androcentric, but includes as a holistic concept all that has traditionally been excluded from human nature: ancestors, the dead, future generations, the spiritual world and the divine.
- 'Good Living' in the Andes is based on the ideal of cosmic balance and universal harmony ('cosmic justice'), expressed at every level and in each aspect of reality.
- 'Good Living' in the Andean sense does not imply a comparative or superlative ('better/best living') because, if that were the case, the principle of universal applicability ('cosmic sustainability') would no longer be valid. There is no 'good living' for a few, if a majority (or even a minority) is living in misery.
- The Andean utopia<sup>10</sup> of 'Good Living' is not the result of the ideology of progress and unlimited economic growth, based on a linear comprehension of time. 'Real future' lies behind in the 'past'.
- Therefore, Andean 'Good Living' implies cosmic, ecological (in the sense of a spiritual and inclusively metaphysical ecology), religio-spiritual, social, economic and political dimensions.

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33. For a systematic presentation of Andean philosophical thinking, see Josef Estermann, *Filosofía Andina: Sabiduría indígena para un mundo nuevo* (La Paz: ISEAT, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> See Estermann *Filosofía Andina*, 123-48. The principle of 'relationality' means that everything is interconnected, and that relationships are logically and ontologically before particular beings.

<sup>10</sup> In the Andean context, 'utopia' is not just an ideal state of reality in a far future or at 'no place' (*u-topos*), but can also lie behind in a not-achieved past. The Andean concept of time is not linear, but rather cyclical. The Quechua and Aymara expressions for the future (*qhipa pacha*) mean 'the world that lies behind', and those for the past (*naira/ñawi pacha*) mean 'the world that lies in front of our eyes'.

### ***Buen Vivir* and ‘Life in Plenitude’ (John 10:10)**

For more than twenty years, the Andean concept of *Buen Vivir* has been discussed by indigenous leaders, scholars and politicians, before it was included in the political constitutions of the Republic of Ecuador (2008) and the Plurinational State of Bolivia (2009).<sup>11</sup> It also plays a growing role in debates about post-development theories, post-colonial studies, post-capitalist theories, de-growth theories (*decrecimiento*), the economies of solidarities and subsistence, as well as deep ecology, post-secular theories and shamanistic spiritualities.<sup>12</sup> Although there is some intent to include the concept in theological reflection and religious (syncretistic) practice, not much has yet been done in this respect. In the context of the emergent *Teología India* (Christian indigenous theology) in *Abya Yala*, many communities and leaders refer to the concept of *Buen Vivir* as a point of orientation for an indigenous understanding of religiosity and spirituality.<sup>13</sup>

Although Semitic (Judæo-Christian) and Andean worldviews differ in many respects, there is also a surprising convergence, or at least a complementarity, between both. Semitic thinking goes far beyond western anthropological dualism (body and soul) and has a concept of ‘life’ that is not restricted to so-called ‘living beings’. It is a crucial concept for the divine, more prominent than ‘power’, ‘almightiness’, ‘transcendence’, ‘omniscience’ or ‘impassibility’, all of them very important in dominant western philosophical tradition. To say that ‘God is life’ means that the universe is full of life or is itself a living being, which comes very close to

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<sup>11</sup> As *Buen Vivir* or *Sumak Kawsay*, it appears more than twenty times in the new Ecuadorian Constitution (2008), and as *Vivir Bien* or *Suma Qamaña* nine times in the new Bolivian Constitution (2009). In the Bolivian version, only the Aymara expression (*Suma Qamaña*), but not the Quechua or Guaraní version, is included.

<sup>12</sup> As examples, Arturo Escobar, ‘Imagining a Post-Development Era? Critical Thought, Development and Social Movements’, in *Social Text*, No. 31/32 (Third World and Post-Colonial Issues), (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 20-56; Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree (eds), *The Post-Development Reader* (London: Zed Books, 1997); Serge Latouche, *In the Wake of the Affluent Society: An Exploration of Post-Development* (London: Zed Books, 1993); Wolfgang Sachs (ed), *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (London: Zed Books, 1992); Serge Latouche, ‘Degrowth Economics: Why less should be so much more’, in *Le Monde Diplomatique* (November 2004, English Edition, Paris: Le Monde Diplomatique).

<sup>13</sup> Among the (very few) contributions on *Buen Vivir* and theology and religious or spiritual issues, we can mention Josef Estermann, ‘Gott ist nicht europäisch, und die Theologie ist nicht abendländisch: Eine interkulturelle Dekonstruktion der abendländischen Theologie aufgrund der indigenen andinen Weisheit’, in *Interkulturelle Theologie*, 2-3 (Leipzig, Germany: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2014), 186-200; Leonardo Boff, *El cuidado necesario* (Madrid: Trotta, 2011), 62-63; Víctor Hugo Colque, ‘Horizontes del Vivir Bien: Análisis crítico de los presupuestos teóricos del Vivir Bien’, in Víctor Hugo Colque Condori et al, *Vivir Bien: Contextos e interpretaciones* (La Paz: ISEAT & PIEB, 2013), 15-50.

what Andean thinking is affirming (panzoism or hylozoism).<sup>14</sup> Except for these cosmic (and eschatological) dimensions of ‘Good Living’, both traditions stress the social and communitarian dimensions of ‘living’. In opposition to modern western individualism and enlightened egoism (in the form of capitalism, hedonism and consumerism), both the Semitic and Andean traditions stress the communitarian and social aspects of living, to such an extent that scholars recently use rather the notion of *Buen Convivir* (‘Good Living Together’) than just *Buen Vivir* (‘Good Living’).

In Christian tradition, the communitarian dimension is present in the very core of divinity, as the Trinitarian God is a community of ‘Good Living Together’. From the very beginning and at the heart of Christian religiosity, the principle of relationality (all has to do with all; all is related to all) comes before the principle of substantiality such as western philosophical tradition believe. God is not in the first place ‘substance’, but ‘relation’. The same can be said of divine economics (creation, incarnation and redemption), the Christian community (*ekklesia*) and the main topic of eschatological understanding (Kingdom of God). The prevalence of relationship above substantiality means, in the fields of ethics and social life, the prevalence of the communitarian above the individual. A Christian utopia is not one of individual pleasures and isolated existence, but much more one of social and communitarian life (hence the metaphors of the banquet, the wedding, communion with God). Andean *Buen Vivir* has nothing in common with the post-modern dream of the ‘happy few’ of unlimited joy and pleasure (‘good life’), in some gated communities and at the cost of billions of people suffering every day, and nature which is struggling in agony against its own extinction.

Moreover, Andean *Buen Vivir* includes and stresses the spiritual and religious dimensions of human beings and beyond of humanity. One could even define ‘Good Living’ as ‘Spiritual Living’, as long as ‘spirituality’ is not understood in a limited western sense. Spiritual life in the Andes has to do, not so much with the ‘spirit’ or with a contemplative lifestyle, but more with a feeling, an ethical and ritual practice and deep consciousness of cosmic interconnectedness, of deep religiosity in the sense of feeling the power of the divine (which is female and male), and of the presence of the past (ancestors) and the future in a cyclical conception of time. In the Andes, it is quite normal to ask an animal for forgiveness before it is killed, or Mother Earth (*Pachamama*) before it is opened by the plough or the

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<sup>14</sup> Panzoism is a (philosophical) theory that states that anything has in some degree ‘life’, from the sub-atomic to the cosmic level. The term ‘hylozoism’ stresses the fact that all kind of material (*hyle*) is living and becomes a synonymous term for panzoism. Famous Western representatives of the panzoist or hylozoist theory have been most pre-Socratic philosophers, probably Aristotle himself, and in modern times Giordano Bruno, Denis Diderot, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz, Ralph Cudworth and Ken Wilber.

peasant's *chakitaklla*.<sup>15</sup> At indigenous rituals, ancestors and the dead are in the same way present as the astronomical phenomena – the mineral, vegetable and animal worlds. Andean spirituality is a way of living together with cosmic dimensions, not opposed to but rather including materiality and culinary delights (such as cocoa leaves, corn beer, beans and potatoes).

The ideal of Andean *Buen Vivir* has to be sustainable in many ways, and not just in the ecological and social sense, in the same way as the 'Green Economy' or the 'Social Market Economy' has been introducing recently:

A. It has to be sustainable cosmically: this means that human beings have to understand themselves as part of the cosmic network of relationships and energies, and not as an 'island' or an isolated and superior species.

B. It has to be sustainable spiritually: this means that any kind of economy or pure materialism has to be rejected; economics has a subordinate function in the preservation and conservation of life, but by no means the almost absolute function it has in a modern neo-liberal capitalist society.

C. It has also to be sustainable inter-generationally: this means that any action or omission has to be compatible with future generations, not only of human beings, but of all beings which form the huge network of interconnected relationality.

D. And it has to be sustainable religiously, insofar as every real living relationship is also some kind of religious bond (*relatio – religio*).

Andean *Buen Vivir* has nothing to do with abundance or luxury, but much more to do with 'dignity'. This concept, almost lost in western societies, is very important in the indigenous communities of *Abya Yala*, and has a special relationship with the concept of 'Good Living'. Somebody cannot live 'well' if he or she does not live in 'dignity', which means to be respected, appreciated, recognized and loved. So the criterion for 'Good Living' is not the amount of things and properties one has or the wealth one can display, but the vital relationships one can establish with other human beings, with nature, with the spiritual world and the divine. In this sense, the western 'good life' and the ideals of individual self-sufficiency and autonomy are the very opposite of Andean *Buen Vivir*; the hedonistic ideal of consumerism and exuberant wealth in 'splendid isolation' is, from the Andean perspective, really 'bad living'. Living in dignity means to have enough (life sustenance) in order to be able to

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<sup>15</sup> *Buen Vivir* has a lot to do with the religious and spiritual relationship with Mother Earth (*pachamama*), as a guarantee for life and its conservation. Cultivating the earth is a spiritual act, and the ritual communication with the 'female face of God' has a deep religious dimension. The *chakitaqlla* is the main instrument or tool of the peasant for working the earth; it's like a one-man plough, where the person removes the earth by digging with the power of the foot (*chaki*).

establish and practise vital relationships, mainly to love and to be loved. But ‘love’ in the Andean perspective is not a romantic or altruistic concept, but rather the very heart of ‘Good Living’, in the sense of an existence embedded in a variety of (social, cultural, natural, spiritual, religious) relationships.

The biblical – or, more precisely, Jesuanic<sup>16</sup> – concept of ‘life in plenitude’, as it is quoted in John 10:10b (‘I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full’), has been used by many preachers and theologians as support for the idea that Christianity leads to physical prosperity and ‘a good life’ in a western sense.<sup>17</sup> Most of the translations refer to the Greek word περισσόν as ‘abundant’ or ‘more than enough’,<sup>18</sup> but the etymological root (περί) means ‘about’, ‘concerning’, ‘around’, so that περισσόν could be translated as ‘all-round’ or ‘complete’. Without doing an exhaustive exegesis of John 10:10, we can understand that the divine gift for human beings is not wealth or prosperity (as the Prosperity Gospel or *Teología de la Prosperidad* might suggest), but a life of dignity and in full and continuous (‘all-round’) relationship with the source of life, God. The contrast with the ‘thieves who steal’ (John 10:10a) means that the new ‘full’ life is not defined by material things which can be stolen, but by vital relationships and human dignity.

‘Life in plenitude’ is a metaphor that fits very well with the Andean idea of *Buen Vivir*. The ‘fullness’ of life has nothing to do with (economic or financial) abundance, wealth or prosperity, but with the holistic and relational aspects of life, as the Andean concepts of *kawsay* (Quechua) and *qamaña* (Aymara) suggest. Life is ‘full’ when it is interconnected in an all-inclusive network of vital relationships reflecting ‘cosmic justice’ which can be translated in biblical language as the ‘divine justice’. That’s the reason indigenous people say that ‘Good Living’ is not ‘Better Living’ since, in a limited world, the prosperity (‘better’) of one part of the world necessarily implies the misery (‘worse’) of the other part. Capitalist logics build ‘justice’ on the comparative and superlative meanings of ‘good’, implying a theory of anthropology based on competence and egoism. Biblical logic (e.g. John 10:10b) does not speak of a ‘better life’, but of a ‘full life’, a ‘life in plenitude’. And, of course, this has eschatological dimensions.

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<sup>16</sup> I think that this pericope reflects the authentic perspective of Jesus, as a point of coherence and consistence between his ‘lifestyle’ and his preaching. So it is not just ‘biblical’, but genuinely Jesuanic.

<sup>17</sup> It is one of the pericopes which are supposed to support the so-called ‘Prosperity Gospel’ (*Teología de la Prosperidad*), so popular and widespread among neo-Pentecostal churches and movements.

<sup>18</sup> John 10:10b: ἐγὼ ἦλθον ἵνα ζωὴν ἔχωσιν καὶ περισσὸν ἔχωσιν (‘I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly’). The word used 17 times in the New Testament particularly for ‘fullness’ or ‘plenitude’ is πλήρωμα (*pléroma*) and refers to God’s characteristic of completeness and absolute power.

'Life in plenitude' cannot be fully understood if we do not articulate it with the core notion of the gospel, the 'Kingdom of God'. Although it is not just one more human utopia (or 'eutopia'),<sup>19</sup> it certainly has to do with the way we establish a world of justice, inclusiveness and *Buen Vivir*. It has, first of all, to do with 'life', and there are several places in the biblical Scriptures that extend the concept of 'life', and therefore the 'Kingdom of God' far beyond humankind and anthropocentric eschatology. Images such as Isaiah's reconciliation of the child and the lion,<sup>20</sup> or St Paul's metaphorical talk about 'creation in the pains of childbirth',<sup>21</sup> suggest that the biblical utopia of the 'Kingdom of God' is not just a human-centred concept, but has cosmic dimensions, just as *Buen Vivir* also has. Secondly, the 'Kingdom of God' has to do essentially with life in its fullness, life in dignity without respect to age, sex, race, social status, mother tongue or level of education. The welfare state and economic prosperity are not incarnations of the Kingdom of God, as long as other parts of humankind and non-human nature are suffering the consequences of a non-globalized lifestyle of some 'happy few.' And this is also an essential intuition of the concept of *Buen Vivir*.

When it comes to the question of 'power', the expression 'Kingdom of God' might suggest that it is just some kind of counter-power to the political and economic power structures and empires of the human history. I think it's not so much a 'counter-power' as much more an alternative 'power' based on life and relationships. Latin American Liberation Theology used to translate Βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ (*Basileia tou Theou*) not with the expression *Reino de Dios* ('Kingdom or Reign of God'), but rather with *Reinado de Dios* ('God's governing').<sup>22</sup> That means that the criteria and logics of worldly politics and economics no longer count, but the criteria and logics of God's justice, the opposite of the market and capitalist logics of competence and ecological exploitation, do so instead. In Latin American Liberation Ethics, the issue of 'life' has priority over the discursive logics of 'justice', because there are real asymmetries between

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<sup>19</sup> While 'utopia' just refers to the (axiologically neutral) 'no-place' of something that is conceived to be ideal, 'eutopia' adds the element of 'good': a 'good place' to live (as proposed by Genesis for the Garden of Eden).

<sup>20</sup> Is. 11:6, 'And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat. And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them' (New American Standard Bible).

<sup>21</sup> Rom. 8:22, 'For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now' (New American Standard Bible).

<sup>22</sup> This is especially the case for Ellacuría: Ignacio Ellacuría 'Recuperar el reino de Dios: Desmundanización e historicización de la Iglesia', in Ignacio Ellacuría, *Escritos Teológicos III* (San Salvador: UCLA, 2002), 307-16; see also Francisco Aquino Junior, 'El carácter prático de la teología: Un enfoque epistemológico', in *Teología y Vida*, Vol. 51/4 (Santiago de Chile: 2010), 477-99.

one part of the world and another.<sup>23</sup> The ‘Kingdom of God’ (or ‘God’s governing’) has a universal dimension, and is in this sense a counter-image of the real world order with First, Second, Third and Fourth Worlds.

The preferential option for and with the poor, misunderstood by many, is first of all the option of God (as a subject) for the poor to be the ‘first’ entering the Kingdom of God, not because they are ethically ‘better’ than the rich or because of some revanchist logics, but because they are closer to an understanding of ‘life in plenitude’ and *Buen Vivir*. The Kingdom of God is not compatible with class, society, racism, sexism, ethnocentrism and ecocide. There is a strong practice of Jesus’ criticism condemning the striving to be ‘better’ than the others (prostitutes, foreigners, not-Jews, impure people), to have a ‘better life’ than others (the disciples to occupy a pre-eminent place in heaven), or to be wealthy and powerful (the temptation in the desert). A ‘life in plenitude’ is of a totally different order, diametrically opposed to the dominant logics of competence and the maximization of profit. So is *Buen Vivir*: it is not a concept of how to become rich and have a pleasant life (*dolce vita*), but rather how to live in harmony and balance with all human beings and nature, the spiritual and material worlds, past and future, the divine and human, the sacred and profane.

### Can *Buen Vivir* Be a New Paradigm for ‘Mission’?

It is quite significant that the pericope ‘life in plenitude’ (John 10:10b) is found within the parable of the Good Shepherd and the Lost Sheep, as an image of human community and its relationship with the divine. Furthermore, Jesus considers his preaching of ‘life in plenitude’ as a consequence of his being sent by his father (‘I have come that they may have life’), that is as part of the *missio Dei*. The principal mission of God in Jesus is ‘that they may have life’, that there will be life in plenitude for the whole creation, and that there is *Buen Vivir* available for all, humans and non-humans alike. God’s option for the poor leads to the mission to proclaim and fight for life in all its aspects. The indicative (God opts for the poor) implies an imperative (struggling for life), because poverty (as well as wealth) can be obstacles to human dignity and a life in harmony and balance (*Buen Vivir*).

Therefore, the main purpose of ‘mission’ has to be life, life in plenitude, life in a global and cosmic balance. And as the concept of ‘life’, such as is implied by the indigenous notions of *kawsay* (Quechua) or *qamaña* (Aymara), is neither anthropocentric nor purely spiritual or material; the purpose of an authentic mission is proclaiming the utopia (or ‘eutopia’) of

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<sup>23</sup> See Enrique Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation: In the Age of Globalization and Exclusion* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

‘full life’ for the whole creation and struggling for its realization. That has some far-reaching consequences.

A. First of all, mission is not just ‘proclaiming’ or ‘preaching’. There is a very interesting and most revealing legend about the first ‘encounter’ between the Spanish conquerors (Pizarro and his followers) and the indigenous peoples of the Andes (Inca Atawallpa and his followers), in the later colonial city of Cajamarca in actual Peru. Father Valverde, as a representative of the conquerors and of the Christian religion, holds the Bible, showing it to Atawallpa, the political and spiritual leader of the Inca Empire. In the ‘best’ tradition of classical ‘mission’, Valverde points to the book proclaiming: ‘This is the Word of God; listen to it!’ According to the spiritual tradition of his people, Atawallpa took the book, put it to his ears, listened carefully and, after a while, said: ‘It does not speak’, and threw it into the sand. This was the starting point of the genocide committed against indigenous people in *Abya Yala*. For Atawallpa (and most indigenous people today), the divine does not speak through a book (in an oral tradition, scripture has not the same significance as in a written tradition), but through the wind, the mountains, the ancestors, the *Pachamama* (Mother Earth), the stars and all kinds of life. Proclaiming life is not enough and can even be offensive to life.

B. ‘Mission’ in this sense has to overcome an anthropocentric perspective. *Buen Vivir* has not just to do with human life, and less with just biological life. Christian missionary history has for centuries stressed the spiritual (‘soul’) conversion of human beings, setting aside the material conditions and the non-human nature. ‘Mission’ has to do with ‘life in plenitude’, which implies also the conservation and re-establishment of ecological balance and ecosophical spirituality.<sup>24</sup> Theological and missiological anthropocentrism have done a lot of harm to the fragile balance between human and non-human life, often following western dualistic thinking much more than biblical holistic wisdom.

C. ‘Mission’ has to be engaged with the issue of ‘life’ in all its aspects, and not just with some reductionist and individualist conception of it. In Andean philosophy, life is not a substance, but a relationship, or more precisely, a knot of energetic relationality. Proclaiming life means proclaiming the pre-eminence of relationality over mere substantiality and individuality. Life is not a property that a particular being ‘has’ (it isn’t a property), but a texture of relationships in which individuals are immersed. Life is a collective, communitarian and even cosmic network of relationships, in the sense that proclaiming life means proclaiming the living God as he/she is present in a living world. The ‘Kingdom of God’, as

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<sup>24</sup> The concept of ‘ecosophy’ (‘the wisdom of the house’) means that concern for the environment is not just about ‘conserving’ it for human purposes with the help of instrumental rationality (*logos*), but a wise and holistic articulation to the fountains and springs of life, as indigenous philosophy likes to tell us. So ‘ecosophy’ is an alternative notion to the strongly abused notion of ‘ecology’.

well as the *Buen Vivir*, does not stress individual life as something separate from other human beings and non-human nature, but communitarian life – that is, living relationships – as the vital base for life. Without relationship, there is no life (even biology proves it),<sup>25</sup> and the Trinitarian God as a living and loving community in relationship is the guiding paradigm for this understanding of life. That does also mean that biological life is important, but it is not the only form of life by far. In spite of the ‘spiritualistic’ reductionism of classical theology and mission, there has always been some particular ‘obsession’ with biological life in the sense of a reductionist conception (biologism).<sup>26</sup>

D. Proclaiming life, ‘mission’ at the same time has to struggle for just and adequate access to the basic conditions of life. It is nowhere near enough to fight for the ‘right to life’ of the unborn if there are millions or even billions of people who do not have sufficient conditions to live in dignity. Among these conditions of life are the material and economic means for living (food, drink, shelter, health care, protection), but also the recognition and respect of personal and collective integrity (cultural self-determination, gender justice, access to knowledge, etc.). This struggle is a clear option and can come into conflict with power structures which don’t give priority to the life conditions of the whole planet, but rather to the maximization of profit and the accumulation of capital and wealth. And this can imply a clear and uncompromized denouncing of mining companies, transnational agro-industrial companies, financial institutions and the corresponding governments which intend to ‘privatize’ (the word means literally ‘to withdraw’, ‘to rob’) the vital conditions of human and non-human life.<sup>27</sup>

E. ‘Mission’ is an example of sharing life, of establishing and re-establishing relationships where they are severed or damaged. What is called the ‘missionary presence’ could be the intent to put into practice the very ideal of *Buen Vivir*, not just for the recipients of proclamation, but primarily for the missionaries themselves. It would not only be incoherent to preach ‘life in plenitude’ or *Buen Vivir* while at the same time living a

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<sup>25</sup> Because of the strong androcentric tendency and determination of modern western thought, the main attitudes towards nature have been analytical and mechanist rather than what one might call a synthetic or organic approach. An androcentric worldview is fixated on decomposition (analysis) and lifeless mechanical machines, while a gynocentric worldview stresses relationships, organic and holistic interconnectedness. Indigenous philosophy is much more gynocentric than androcentric.

<sup>26</sup> This is a notable example in theological controversies on abortion, homosexuality and *in vitro* fertilization.

<sup>27</sup> On the global scale, ‘mission’ is confronted increasingly with the aggressive and life-threatening practices of huge transnational companies involved in exploiting natural resources, land grabbing, patenting indigenous knowledge, polluting basic common goods (air, water, food, etc.) and forcing people to adopt western consumer patterns.

life of luxury and abundance, but it would render *ad absurdum* the very concept of *Buen Vivir* and the biblical utopia of the Kingdom of God. *Buen Vivir* on a global scale is only possible by means of a considerable restriction ('de-growth') of the lifestyle established in the global North, because we do not have the seven planets Earth that we would need to universalize (or globalize) our ecological footprint.<sup>28</sup> Lifestyle is not just a secondary quality of missionary existence, but the necessary condition for its credibility and consistency. Opting for the poor implies an option for a lifestyle which is compatible with the ideal of *Buen Vivir* and 'life in plenitude'.

### The Urge for Decolonizing Mission

Dealing with an indigenous concept such as the Andean idea of *Buen Vivir*, and at the same time articulating mission and power, one cannot avoid becoming aware of the colonial and neo-colonial implications of classical and even actual missionary activities on the global scale. Since the very beginning of colonization – as the example of Valverde and Atawallpa has shown – mission has been in danger of proclaiming, not the gospel of liberation and life, but the gospel of western civilization, progress and prosperity. Although there are luminous examples of missionaries who fought against colonization and the imposition of western standards in Latin America (Bartolomé de las Casas is an eminent example), 'mission' has often been the faithful ally and partner of political, economic and military expansion and conquest. Indigenous concepts as *Buen Vivir* have for centuries been declared by western missionaries as something 'satanic' or 'diabolical', and mission and its message have often been used as the real 'opium of the people', preserving the status quo of injustice and global asymmetries.

The principal schools and paradigms of 'mission' were elaborated in a western cultural context and often carry the main principles of the modern hegemonic philosophy of individualism, dualism and anthropocentrism. Since the colonial enterprises of the main 'missionary' countries, many missionaries proclaim also the gospel (which is, in fact, a *dysangelión*) of western civilization, progress, the free market economy and consumerism, as though this paradigm would fit better with the biblical tradition than Jesus' proclamation of 'life in plenitude' or the Kingdom of God. Decolonizing mission means a sincere review of the values and images western mission has been carrying to non-western societies and civilization, but also a self-criticism of our own symbolic and real power structures. The

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<sup>28</sup> It is impossible to 'globalize' the American way of life, because the energy requirements would need seven times the total amount of energy and goods available on earth. This is one of the intrinsic contradictions of the actual process of capitalist globalization – a kind of systemic and egotistic blindness.

shift from one-way mission to a respectful and open process of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue opens the possibilities of a thoroughgoing and deep process of decolonizing western theology and missiology, in order to open space for non-western paradigms such as *Buen Vivir*.

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# PART THREE

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# INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION

Frieder Ludwig

## Introduction: Interpretations of Acts 8:26-39

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Go south to the road – the desert road – that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' 27 So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, 28 and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. 29 The Spirit told Philip, 'Go to that chariot and stay near it.'

30 Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. 'Do you understand what you are reading?' Philip asked.

31 'How can I,' he said, 'unless someone explains it to me?' So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

32 The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture:

'He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,  
and as a lamb before the shearer is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.

33 In his humiliation he was deprived of justice,

Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth.'

34 The eunuch asked Philip, 'Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?' 35 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

36 As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?' 38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

There are many dimensions of this remarkable encounter on the desert road. We learn about an Ethiopian eunuch who is on his way from Jerusalem to back home. Directed by an angel of the Lord, Philip joins him, accompanies him, instructs him and baptizes him. Then they part ways and we do not know much more of what happened to them afterwards. Encountering, accompaniment, being on the way together, being on the way rejoicing – these are the key dynamics of the story. They form the

framework of the story, which centres on conversation, conversion and baptism.<sup>1</sup>

There is an important prerequisite for the succeeding conversation: both men know Greek and communicate in Greek. Both are also well educated. Philip was elected as one of the seven deacons 'known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom' (Acts 6:3). The Ethiopian was a high-ranking official. He not only reads and understands Greek but also speaks it very well indeed; in his reply to Philip's question (in Acts 8:31), he asks, 'How indeed can I?' – using the Greek optative mood with an *ἄν* – (πῶς γὰρ ἄν δυνάμην?) – which is very rarely used in the New Testament and occurs only in Luke. This is the opening of the dialogue.<sup>2</sup>

It becomes clear from this text that the Christian faith invites understanding. In the encounter between Philip and the Ethiopian, discerning reflection is important.<sup>3</sup> Inspired by the Spirit, Philip asks the question that teachers ask of their students: 'Do you understand what you are reading?' The eunuch replies: 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' 'All teachers,' Chris Anderson concludes, 'are teachers of reading, whatever else they are, and what all teachers know is that reading requires community. It is not a solitary act because the texts we have to interpret are never self-evident. The eunuch cannot understand the Scriptures on his own, without context, without an interpretative frame. There is always more than meets the eye, there's always complexity, and when Philip begins to interpret he immediately reads between the lines, looking past the literal meaning of the words of the Hebrew scriptures to how they symbolize the coming of this man Jesus Christ. Philip is thinking critically. First reading, then reading between the lines, then freedom, then commitment.' The implications of this are huge, since it basically indicates that, in this first text about mission into a new land, very critical thinking skills do play an important role.<sup>4</sup>

In analysing the encounter, Justo Gonzalez points out that one has to realize that the Ethiopian eunuch, even though he is a 'God-fearer', cannot become a convert to Judaism, for it is strictly forbidden by the law of Israel (Deut. 23:1): 'Although the law might seem obscure to us today, it must have been well known to the Ethiopian, who was sufficiently interested in Judaism to come to Jerusalem to worship, but who knew that entry to the people of God was forever forbidden for him because he was an eunuch. Is

<sup>1</sup> Stefan Schreiber, 'Verstehst Du den, was du liest?' Beobachtungen zur Begegnung von Philippus und dem äthiopischen Eunuchen (Acts 8:26-40), in *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt*, 21, 1996, 42-72.

<sup>2</sup> See also Owe Boersma, 'Bibelarbeit zur Apostelgeschichte 8, 26-39', in *Gottesdienst. Predigt, Bibelarbeit. Materialheft 2* (Hamburg, Germany: Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland, 2008), 3-6.

<sup>3</sup> Hans Schwarz, *Christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1998), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Chris Anderson, *Teaching as Believing: Faith in the University* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press 2004), 71.

it after hearing the good news of these last days that the eunuch, upon seeing water, asks Philip, 'What is to prevent me from being baptized?' On the basis of the law that has ruled Israel for centuries, the answer should be clear: 'Your condition as a eunuch.' But on the basis of the good news that Philip has just proclaimed to him, that the reign of God has been inaugurated, the answer is different: there is nothing to prevent it! On baptizing the eunuch, Philip is doing much more than we think. He is not just baptizing a new convert, nor is he only opening the way of the gospel to an entire nation or a whole continent.<sup>5</sup>

This shifts the focus to Philip who is the other conversation partner. Philip starts to explain the scripture passage which the Ethiopian reads (Is. 53:7-8) and then tells him of the 'good news about Jesus'. Thomas Menampampil, Archbishop Emeritus of Guwahati in north-east India, stresses the fact that Philip was able to teach and to explain – starting from the point at which he finds the person who poses the question. Menampampil contrasts this with missionaries today whom he characterizes as self-critical, as timid or apathetic.<sup>6</sup>

However, Philip is not the main actor in the story. An angel of the Lord directs him to the Ethiopian, and after his baptism, Philip is taken away by the Spirit, 'and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.' It is not Philip who is finally in control; it is the Spirit.

This was emphasized by Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912), an outstanding scholar, Pan-Africanist and politician in West Africa. In the late 1880s, when African church leaders like the black Anglican bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther were deprived of power by European missionaries, he was one of the leading advocates of African Independent Churches. In his exegesis of Acts 8, he wrote:

Now, this incident I take to be a symbolic one, indicating the instruments and the methods of Africa's evangelization. The method, the simple holding up of Jesus Christ; the instrument, the African himself. This was the Spirit's application and explication of the command: 'Go ye into all the world', etc. – giving the gospel to a man of Ethiopia to take back to the people of Ethiopia.

We are told that after the singular and interesting ceremony, 'The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.' Philip was not to accompany the eunuch, to water the seed he had planted, to cherish and supervise the incipient work. If he desired

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<sup>5</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez, *Acts: The Gospel of the Spirit* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 116-18.

<sup>6</sup> The full text of the Archbishop's reflection was published in the No. 1, 2003 edition of *Omnis Terra*, the periodical of the Pontifical Missionary Union in Rome. It was reprinted by *Mondo e Missione*, the monthly of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions in Milan, in its April 2003 edition: [www.chiesa.espressonline.it/printDettaglio.jsp?id=6937&eng=y](http://www.chiesa.espressonline.it/printDettaglio.jsp?id=6937&eng=y)

to do so – and perhaps he did – the Spirit suffered him not, for he ‘caught him away’.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Power of Interpretation, Teaching Methods and Hegemony of Western Lifestyles**

Blyden’s conclusion in this insightful re-reading of Acts 8 is that the main work was to be done by Africans. This was an important discovery at a time when Africans and other people colonized by Europeans were often regarded and portrayed as mere recipients, as objects, as people who had no history. Blyden drew attention to the role of Africa and Africans; he pointed out that Africa had served the world by providing shelter for the major world religions; Blyden referred to Abraham, Moses, Mary, Joseph and Jesus who had found asylum in Africa;<sup>8</sup> and to Simon of Cyrene who had carried the cross.<sup>9</sup> He often quoted Psalm 68; one of his most famous lectures is entitled ‘Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God, or, Africa’s Service to the World’.<sup>10</sup> Thus, Blyden read the Bible from an African perspective.

Blyden was also interested in the further development of the church in Ethiopia; he was especially impressed by her ability to resist external influences. As early as 1882, he referred to statements of the Ethiopian emperor which demonstrated that African Christianity could develop along its own lines: ‘Only last year the Abyssinian monarch told certain Catholic and Protestant missionaries, who sought to establish themselves in his territory, that he did not want either of them, because the Ethiopians were already Christians, and had held fast their faith under a strain which had destroyed that of more prosperous and civilized peoples. He boasted that his own community was the only African Church which had held fast its Christian faith, century after century, against the successive onslaught of Heathenism and Mohammedanism. Even the Mohammedans believe in the irrepressible and aggressive vigour of the Abyssinian Church.’<sup>11</sup>

Blyden’s studies were not confined to the history of Christianity; in some of his articles and books he also tackled general and religious history – again, with special reference to Africa and to African contributions. An

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<sup>7</sup> Edward Wilmot Blyden, ‘Philip and the Eunuch: Discourse delivered in the United States in 1882’, in E.W. Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press 1887, 1967), 160-61.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Wilmot Blyden, ‘Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God, or, Africa’s Service to the World’, in Edward Wilmot Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, 113-29.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Wilmot Blyden, ‘Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God’, 117.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Wilmot Blyden, ‘Ethiopia stretching out her hands unto God’, 113.

<sup>11</sup> Edward Wilmot Blyden, ‘Philip and the Eunuch: A Discourse delivered in the United States in 1882’, in Edward Wilmot Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (Edinburgh 1967 [1887]), 152-72) 165-66.

important reference model for him was Egypt, a country he had visited in 1866. Blyden was of the opinion that the early high civilization in the Nile valley had developed because of African influence.<sup>12</sup> He also appreciated the educational institutions in Egypt; the selflessness and the devotion of the students of Cairo who came to the African jungle and the plains to improve the conditions of the inhabitants made it difficult for the Europeans to gain influence.<sup>13</sup>

With his re-reading of Scripture and of history, Blyden influenced many later Pan-Africanists. Marcus Garvey, for instance, the famous founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, took up Blyden's argument and sharpened it. In his polemic 'Who and What is a Negro?' of 16th January 1923, he wrote:

The white world has always tried to rob and discredit us of our history. They tell us that Tut-Ankh-Amen, a King of Egypt, who reigned about the year 1350 BC, was not a Negro, and that the ancient civilization of Egypt and the Pharaohs was not of our race, but that does not make the truth unreal. Every student of history, of impartial mind, knows that the Negro once ruled the world, when white men were savages and barbarians living in caves; that thousands of Negro professors at that time taught in the universities in Alexandria, then the seat of learning; that ancient Egypt gave civilization to the world and that Greece and Rome have robbed Egypt of her arts and letters and taken all the credit to themselves. It is not surprising, however, that white men should resort to every means to keep Negroes in ignorance of their history; it would be a great shock to their pride to admit to the world today that 3,000 years ago black men excelled in government and were the founders and teachers of art, science and literature.<sup>14</sup>

Garvey may have been overstating his case, but there is no doubt that in most educational institutions in which Africans, Asians and Latin Americans were trained, there was a clear emphasis on the history of Europe and Europe's global expansion. A small mission school – was established by the North German Mission Society in Westheim in southern Germany where between 1884 and 1900 altogether twenty West Africans were trained – may serve as an example: lessons in history focused on wars in Europe; the course during the spring semester 1900 ended with the Franco-German war in 1870.<sup>15</sup> The instruction in Westheim also included spelling, drawing, writing, arithmetic, natural history, natural sciences,

<sup>12</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness* (Harvard, MA: 1993), 208.

<sup>13</sup> See Edward Wilmot Blyden, 'Mohammedanism in Western Africa', in Edward Wilmot Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, 173-88.

<sup>14</sup> Marcus Garvey, 'Who and What is a Negro?' 16th January 1923:

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/who-and-what-is-a-negro>

<sup>15</sup> Werner Ustorf, *Die Missionsmethode Franz Michael Zahns und der Aufbau kirchlicher Strukturen in Westafrika (1862-1900): eine missionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Erlangen, Germany: Verlag der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Mission 1989), 266-70.

music, Bible studies, religious studies, German language, English language, church history, and geography.

The curricular set-up at mission and colonial educational institutions indicates an asymmetrical relationship; as Michel Foucault pointed out in his concept of 'disciplinary society', the power of dominant storylines is to be internalized as truth by all members of the community, including those the community wishes to control.<sup>16</sup> In education, administering the population could be combined with inculcating the habits and techniques of freedom and self-regulation which individual members of the population would administer themselves.

Applying Foucault's argument (which focuses on Europe) to India, Sanjay Seth draws attention to a decision of the British-Indian government in 1835, by which the small funds it provided for the education of its Indian subjects would henceforth be used only for the dissemination of modern knowledge of the western sort and not for 'Oriental' knowledge. The new knowledge, Seth states, was accompanied by new methods for its dissemination: government-funded or party-funded schools (and later universities) were established, which were to be very different from their indigenous counterparts. The latter were condemned for being simultaneously autocratic and highly disorderly. Lieut. T.B. Jervis of the Statistical Survey complained that, at indigenous schools he had observed in the Bombay Presidency, pupils 'sit without order or distinction into classes and leave their work when called for to assist their young counterparts, thereby occasioning much confusion and hindrance to others'.<sup>17</sup>

The categorization of indigenous systems as disorderly and dysfunctional by colonial governments and by missionaries was not confined to India. Jean and John Comaroff have analysed the sustained interaction between nonconformist missionaries and Tswana communities in nineteenth-century South Africa; many evangelists, the Comaroffs state, portrayed the Tswana economy as a repertoire of illogical, impractical, improvident means and ends and disapproved of the 'disorderly' lifestyles of the Tswana. The indigenous preference, in cultivation and construction, for the 'sinuous and arc-shaped over neat rectangular forms gave them a feeling of dis-ease; they tried to replace these secluded, sinuous lanes with 'clean lines' and direct, accessible thoroughfares. There was, in their effort, an echo of the Gospel of Luke (3:4-5, after Isaiah 40:3-5) among the earliest biblical translations into Setswana: 'Prepare the way of the Lord,

<sup>16</sup> See Michael Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London/New York: Penguin 1977).

<sup>17</sup> Sanjay Seth, 'Foucault in India', in Sophie Fuggle, Yari Langi and Martina Tazzioli, *Foucault and the History of Our Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 43-57. Seth quotes a report dated 8th September 1824 and published in R.V. Parulekar (ed), *Survey of Indigenous Education in the Province of Bombay, 1820-1830* (Mumbai, India: Indian Institute of Education, 1945), 9, 7.

make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight.’<sup>18</sup>

Western concepts of space emphasized squares, straight lines and a rectangular order; they also included specialized areas – rooms for eating, rooms for sleeping, offices and classrooms, doors and locks for privacy, and so on. In a typical classroom, desks were arranged in columns and rows, with a teacher’s desk – sometimes a standing desk – in front; behind him a blackboard. Little colour was used for fear of distracting the children. Another important factor was time – school started and ended at a certain time, which was divided in session and units, and interrupted by breaks.

Sport played an increasingly important role in education. Football emerged in the late nineteenth century and soon acquired a reputation to strengthen will power and self-discipline. This is one reason why mission societies became interested in the game. The soccer field helped to introduce the idea of the straight line; the half-times which were marked by a whistle being blown after 30 or 45 minutes contributed to an understanding of a new concept of time, and the use of the yellow or red card made it clear that rules and regulations had to be respected. Soccer and other sports helped missionaries and colonialists to transport their concepts of civilization and to suppress indigenous, traditional sports in which traditional religions had played a role. The tape, stopwatch, half-times, races and uniform playing fields appeared as a rational antidote, by which the Africans should be educated into a modern worldview. Physical Education (*Leibeserziehung*) or physical exercise (*Leibesertüchtigung*) are German terms that reflect colonial values and help to implement discipline, punctuality, compliance and ethics.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, education helped to implement values and change the consciousness of colonized people; it played a significant role in the colonial system of power and control. Paolo Freire summarized it as follows: ‘There neither is, nor has ever been, an educational practice in zero space-time – neutral in the sense of being committed only to preponderantly abstract, intangible ideas.’<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> John L. and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution. Vol. 2: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press 1997), 281.

<sup>19</sup> Oliver G. Becker, *Voodoo im Strafraum: Fußball und Magie in Afrika* (Munich, Germany: Beck 2010), 43-45; see also Frieder Ludwig, ‘Football, Culture and Religion: Varieties of Interaction’, in *Studies in World Christianity*, 21.3 (2015), 201-22.

<sup>20</sup> Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 67.

### Ambiguities of Power and Education

However, the western educational system in the colonies also contributed to various emancipation processes. In the schools and universities of Africa and Asia, a new elite was being trained; the graduates of colonial and mission schools had acquired knowledge and skills that allowed them to challenge, not only the traditional authorities of their home societies, but in the long run also the colonial and missionary structures. They established their own newspapers and founded organizations and political parties which were structured along western models. In their creative and innovative arguments, they expressed a pride in their own history and culture, while at the same time interacting with concepts emanating from Europe or the USA. The importance of the self-determination of the nations had been emphasized by the Allied Powers in World War I; after the war, it was applied in the emancipation struggle. In a speech at Madison Square Garden, New York, in October 1919, which was attended by an audience of 6,000, Marcus Garvey is reported to have declared: 'They had fought in wars for the white men, and had borne only his scorn... If we fight again, it will be to make the Negro free, and it will be the bloodiest war the world has ever seen,' he went on. 'It will be a terrible day when the blacks draw the sword to fight for their liberty. I call upon you 40 million blacks to give the blood you have shed for the white men to make Africa a republic for the negro.'<sup>21</sup> But even before the war, concepts of human dignity and the principal of the equality of all human beings were mediated through educational institutions. Although many missionaries and other white Christians were alarmed by the idea that the equality of all people before God meant they should be equal in public life, the idea of equality was present and could be applied to other areas of life.<sup>22</sup>

Many African political leaders – like Namdi Azikiwe in Nigeria, Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia, Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, Albert John Luthuli, and later, Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki in South Africa – came out of Christian educational institutions. They were, of course, critical of any connections between mission and colonialism, and slowly mission societies and churches lost influence in the educational systems of those countries. Some of the content of instruction also changed, and in history there were efforts to focus more on Asian or African initiatives and on the importance of nation-building.

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<sup>21</sup> 'Dangerous Talk. Negro War Threats. Black Men "Sharpening Swords" for Race War, New York, October 31, 1919, Enclosure in Memorandum on East and Central Africa', by Captain J.E. Phillips, MC, et al, dating from 1917 to 1920. National Archives, London, WO 106/259, 15th February 1921.

<sup>22</sup> Samuel G. Freedman, 'Mission Schools Opened World to Africans, but Left an Ambiguous Legacy', in *New York Times*, December 28th, 2013: [www.nytimes.com/2013/12/28/us/mission-schools-ambiguous-legacy-in-south-africa.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/28/us/mission-schools-ambiguous-legacy-in-south-africa.html?_r=0)

However, fundamental challenges remain: educational institutions everywhere are chronically under-financed. Moreover, the distribution of financial means between the global North and global South remains uneven and unequal. This indicates a perpetuation of power structures. A degree – from, let us say, Oxford, Cambridge, Paris, Heidelberg or Harvard – still carries more prestige than a degree from universities in Africa, Asia and Latin America. There is also the question of the contribution of and the interaction with religious communities – especially since they sometimes have been and often are suspected of being a source of division. Dietrich Werner summarized it well when he raised these questions:

How to challenge the structural injustices in the allocation of financial means available to higher education institutions? How to challenge governments to recognize (and support) the contribution which churches and institutions of theological education have made historically to the advancement of education in general, and research in religion and vital social ethics issues in particular, in many countries? How to challenge churches and church leaders to give higher education a sufficiently prominent priority in their budget plans and to make available regular support for their institutions of theological education in order to overcome a one-sided dependency on external agencies?<sup>23</sup>

The argument becomes even more pointed in the light of the UNESCO 'Position Paper on Education Post-2015'. Referring to the 'social inequity and unequal participation in development, and the persistence of intra- and international conflict and social unrest', the paper notes 'that increased attention is being paid to the central role of education in promoting peace and social cohesion'. In this perspective, 'global citizenship and civic engagement, as well as learning to live together have come to the fore'. In this regard, 'the socio-cultural dimensions of development, including cultural practices and traditions, ethnic identities and language' are to be taken into consideration: 'Culture is understood as an essential component of human development; it is a source of identity, innovation and creativity, and intercultural dialogue and the recognition of cultural diversity are key for social cohesion. It is recognized that the way people learn and transmit knowledge varies according to their different geographical, historical and linguistic backgrounds and, therefore, education strategies that are responsive to local cultures, contexts and needs are the most likely to be effective in fostering more cohesive societies.'<sup>24</sup>

This raises fundamental questions about teaching and learning methods. It had been often pointed out that traditional western modes of instruction

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<sup>23</sup> Dietrich Werner, Guest Editorial, *International Review of Mission* (Vol. 98/1, 2009), 7.

<sup>24</sup> <http://en.unesco.org/post2015/sites/post2015/files/UNESCO%20Position%20Paper%20ED%202015.pdf>, 1,2.

had been fairly limited in their effectiveness in African, Asian and Latin American contexts.<sup>25</sup>

Focusing on theological education, Andrew Kirk analysed the situation in 1983 as follows: 'Third World Christians are not only challenging the theologically literate of the western world to embark on a theological discussion more engaged with the changing realities of daily life, but they are also questioning the assumptions which have dominated theological education for at least 150 years. The challenge to discover new models of theological thinking implies a change in current patterns of training.'<sup>26</sup>

This, however, is not an easy task to accomplish. Certain standards and results are required from educational institutions, and if these cannot be proven, the respective institution loses its accreditation and status. The standards are set by the rigorousness of the established academic system: examinations are based on individual achievement and documented in written form; students usually complete their studies with a BA, MA or PhD thesis. Since this academic system, with its emphasis on the 'freedom of research and of teaching' and on critical thinking, as well as with its worldwide recognition, also has its strong advantages, only gradual changes will be possible.

Moreover, it is fairly evident that good intentions alone are not sufficient. To put it in the words of Stephen D. Brookfield who writes in his book *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (San Francisco, 1995) 'Our attempts to increase the amount of love and justice in the world are never simple, never unambiguous. What we think are democratic, respectful ways of treating people can be experienced by them as oppressive and constraining. One of the hardest things teachers have to learn is that the sincerity of their intentions does not guarantee the purity of their practice.'<sup>27</sup>

The challenges to a successful intercultural education can be illustrated by an example from Minnesota. While in the West, active student participation is seen as an indicator of a congenial teaching and learning atmosphere, but students from Asian, African or Latin American contexts may have very different experiences and expectations. An Ethiopian pastor in Minneapolis explained: 'Back home, a girl or young woman is admired if she doesn't look into the eye of a person... This is expected of her. It is good.' We say, 'She is wonderful. She can't even look into the eyes of a person.' In the USA, people say, 'She must have a problem. She can't look

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<sup>25</sup> See Bernhard Ott, *Beyond fragmentation: Integrating mission and theological education. A critical assessment of some recent developments in Evangelical Theological Education* (Oxford: Regnum, 2001), 3-6.

<sup>26</sup> Andrew J. Kirk, *Theology and the Third World Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1983), 46.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen D. Brookfield, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass 1995).

into the eyes of the people and talk. It is not a psychological problem. It is cultural.<sup>28</sup>

### New Initiatives in Theological Education

In the following, we will focus especially on theological education, and even more specifically, on Protestant theological education. The challenges for this discipline are huge, since the classical five-part division of theological education into philosophical theology, biblical studies, the history of Christianity, systematic theology and practical theology is a legacy of Friedrich Schleiermacher's (1768-1834) impact that exists today. Schleiermacher envisioned the organization of theology from the goal of serving church leaders to improve the church's practical tasks of preaching and caring for souls. In order to know the situation of the contemporary church that is in need of improvement, one must know the church's past that has shaped its present. Biblical exegesis and church history are the two historical disciplines that produce knowledge about the church's past in order to work out knowledge of the contemporary church, both in its doctrines and its morals, the tasks of dogmatic theology and Christian ethics. Informing the entire historical conception of theology is the discipline of philosophical theology. Schleiermacher thought that history required specific concepts that could facilitate the study of history in the first place. Hence philosophical theology had the task of proposing concepts relevant for Christianity, such as revelation and canon, in order for the historical task to acquire conceptual precision. Finally, practical theology served as a theoretical discipline for conceiving theories for church improvement that could then be applied in concrete ministerial situations by pastors, or in administrative situations by church leaders.<sup>29</sup>

In this way, theological disciplines were shaped by interaction with the European, and perhaps in particular with the German, academia. However, today, at a time at which the 'gravity of Christianity' is shifting southwards

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<sup>28</sup> Pastor Melkamu Negeri, Oromo Evangelical Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, quoted in Dana Nelson, *Mission and Migration: fifty-two Sundays in African and Asian congregations*, Minneapolis 2007, Sunday 15. A similar observation in regard to Southeast Asian immigrants has been made by T. Christopher Thao: 'In the Orient, direct eye contact is offensive, or at least impolite, especially when one confers with someone with high status. Thus, when an Asian talks to her attorney, she will look elsewhere. This can confuse and even mislead the attorney.' See T. Christopher Thao, 'Torn between Cultures: Southeast Asian Immigrants in Minnesota', in *The Bench and Bar of Minnesota* (1987), 21, 24.

<sup>29</sup> This paragraph is based on Christine Helmer, 'Friedrich D. Schleiermacher (1786-1834)', in Matthew Becker (ed), *Nineteenth-Century Lutheran Theologians* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2016), 23-40, esp. 33-34. Helmer summarizes F. Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of Theology as a Field of Study* (1811/1830), trans. Terrence N. Tice (Lewiston, ID:1990).

with a majority of Christians living in Africa, Asia and Latin America,<sup>30</sup> the question of global ecumenical theological education becomes more urgent than ever.<sup>31</sup> At the very least, the new configuration calls for continuous self-critical analysis and mutual reciprocity. Lesslie Newbigin has argued that western Christians need African, Asian, and Hispanic Christians in order to have a rigorous analysis of some of the elements within western culture. He was deeply concerned about the need for a mutual give-and-take structure within ecumenical circles. According to Newbigin, 'we need their witness to correct ours, as indeed they need ours to correct theirs. At this moment, our need is greater, for they have been far more aware of the danger of syncretism, of an illegitimate alliance with the false elements in their culture, than we have been. But... we imperatively need one another if we are to be faithful witnesses to Christ.'<sup>32</sup> Andrew Walls, too, pointed out that it is within the plurality of voices that the gospel displays power.<sup>33</sup> This strongly suggests that the history and theology of Christians in Africa, Asia and Latin America need to be studied in western institutions.<sup>34</sup>

During the past few decades, new ways of doing theology were developed in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The coming of Latin American liberation theology in the 1960s had a profound impact on

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<sup>30</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: the Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 3.

<sup>31</sup> In July 2003, former LWF president Christian Krause pointed out that, in the same period of thirty years, the membership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brunswick, Germany, has dropped nearly 40%, from about 670,000 to 420,000, while in Ethiopia it has multiplied six times, rising from 670,000 to over four million. He concluded: 'Of course, this raises the question of who is changing whom and what it means for the confessional world communion. The great awakening of the charismatic faith movements in the southern hemisphere can only be seen, in my opinion, in the context of the poor and the suffering. The Gospel is the Gospel of the poor, and the cross is the sign of the Church. It is in suffering that hope appears, hope of overcoming sorrow and poverty. Entering into new life through the cross – that is precisely opposed to the pleasure-seeking society.' See LWF News, Interview with LWF President Bishop Emeritus Dr Christian Krause: [www.lutheranworld.org/News/LWI/EN/1259.EN.html](http://www.lutheranworld.org/News/LWI/EN/1259.EN.html) (accessed 2nd June 2007).

<sup>32</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, quoted in Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 69.

<sup>33</sup> Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, 69.

<sup>34</sup> Teaching the history of Christianity from a global perspective still remains a challenge and there are only a few textbooks presenting an overview. See Wilbert R. Shenk (ed), *Enlarging the Story: Perspectives on Writing World Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002); Adrian Hastings, *A World History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); Ogbu U. Kalu, *Interpreting Contemporary Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008); Dale Irvin and Scott Sunquist (eds), *History of the World Christian Movement* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001); Klaus Koschorke, Frieder Ludwig and Mariano Delgado, *A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa and Latin America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007).

theological language and expression; it focused on offering an interpretation of Christian faith out of the experience of the poor and the marginalized and challenged power structures.<sup>35</sup> In India, the United Theological College Bangalore (UTC) has been a pioneering institution. In 1978, a consultation on ‘Hermeneutics in the Indian Context’ took place there and in the 1980s and 1990s, UTC also engineered many contextual theologies and hermeneutical patterns to create a space for the marginalized and subalterns. UTC scholars also engaged in the search for Christian identity in a religiously pluralistic culture like India<sup>36</sup> – an endeavour that had been pioneered by the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society in Bangalore under the inspired leadership of Paul Devanandan and M.M. Thomas in the 1950s.

There has been also a deliberate attempt at restructuring the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST) which was established in 1966 and has its headquarters in Manila (Philippines). SEAGST is operated by the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia. In the SEAGST Advanced Study Centers, the particularities of the Asian context will be considered. Their focus is on ‘particular theological issues and specific concerns in Asia, such as methodology for contextual theologies in Asia, Islamic studies, inter-religious dialogues, feminist studies and ecumenical theologies, etc.’<sup>37</sup>

The School of Religion, Philosophy, and Classics at the University of KwaZulu Natal in South Africa describes institutional forms of community engagement as one of its particular strengths: ‘Among these are the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research (established in 1989, a formally recognized “Research Centre” within the University), the Sinomlando Centre for Oral History and Memory Work (established in 1996), the Centre for Constructive Theology (established in 1996), the Centre for African Ethics (established as the Unilever Ethics Centre in 1998), and the Islamic Centre (in the process of being established with the support of the University)... There is ongoing discussion among these institutional forms of community engagement concerning increased collaboration and integration, with the aim of developing new initiatives that relate community engagement to research and teaching and learning.’<sup>38</sup>

Pietermaritzburg was also one of the institutions spearheading the critical re-reading of Biblical texts. Gerald O. West edited, together with

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<sup>35</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988).

<sup>36</sup> David Joy and Joseph Duggan, *Decolonizing the Body of Christ: Theology and Theory after Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>37</sup> Huang Po Ho, ‘Theological Education for Effective Christian Mission in South East Asia’, in *International Review of Mission* 98, April 2009, 94-104, quote 101-02.

<sup>38</sup> <http://srpc.ukzn.ac.za/Community-Based-Initiatives.aspx> (accessed 10th January 2016).

Musa W. Dube, the massive volume *The Bible in Africa. Transactions, Trajectories and Trends* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 2000) – to mention just one of many publications. Among the other scholars who contributed to a ‘Third World exegesis of Old and New Testaments’ were Teresa Okure, Monica Melanchthon and R.S. Sugirtharajah.<sup>39</sup> As Justin Ukpong points out, contextual approaches ‘involve a variety of ways that link the biblical text to the... context such that the main focus of interpretation is on the communities that receive it rather than on those that produced it, or on the text itself, as in the Western methods’.<sup>40</sup>

Two other faculty members of the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Isabel A. Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, made a significant contribution in rediscovering hidden histories of Women of Faith in Africa.<sup>41</sup> In one of their books, they honoured Mercy Amba Oduyoye, the founder of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians which was established in 1989. The Circle promotes the theological education of women, the employment of African women as lecturers of theological disciplines in permanent positions, and also the teaching of gender issues in the theological curriculum: ‘This means making gender as a concept in theological analysis. A gendered approach to theology refers to exposing the injustices that exist in the church, culture and the Bible in the relationship between men and women. It acknowledges

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<sup>39</sup> Teresa Okure, *The Johannine approach to mission* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr, 1988); Musa W. Dube, *Other ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible* (Geneva: WCC Publications, n.d.); Teresa Okure, *To Cast Fire Upon the Earth: Bible and Mission Collaborating in Today's Multicultural Global Context* (Natal, RSA: Cluster, 2000), R.S. Sugirtharajah, *The Postcolonial Bible* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989); R.S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001); R.S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and Empire* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005); Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000); J.N.K. Mugambi and Johannes A. Smit (eds), *Text and Context in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2004); Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia, *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007). Copyrighted Material

<sup>40</sup> Justin Ukpong, ‘Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa’, in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 108 (2000), 3-18.

<sup>41</sup> Miranda Pillay, Sarojini Nadar and Clint le Bruyns (eds), *Ragbag Theologies: Essays in Honour of Denise M. Ackermann – A Feminist Theologian of Praxis* (Stellenbosch, RSA: SUN Press, 2009); Isabel Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, *African Women, Religion, and Health: Essays in Honour of Mercy Amba Oduyoye* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006); Isabel Phiri and Sarojini Nadar (eds), *On Being Church: African Women's Voices and Visions* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005); Isabel Phiri, Betty Govinden Devakarsham and Sarojini Nadar, *Her-stories: Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, RSA: Cluster, 2002).

that human beings construct culture, therefore cultural practices in the Bible and in our own culture should not be confused with the will of God.<sup>42</sup>

Similarly, Latin American and Asian womanist or feminist theologies emerged which look for new sources, symbols, images and stories that help them to articulate their experiences of God. They re-examine colonial and patriarchal interpretations of the Bible and search for liberating elements for their present struggles. However, with regard to Asia, it has been pointed out that feminist theologians must pay attention to the issue of economic disparity among women: 'The widening gap between the richer and poorer countries in Asia affects women's standard of living and levels of economic independence.'<sup>43</sup>

In Europe and the USA, the need for intercultural ecumenical theological education becomes ever stronger in face of the ever-increasing significance of migration: since sizeable and growing immigrant groups of Asian and African Christians are living in Europe and North America, there has been a profound discussion on the contribution of Asian and African Christian diaspora<sup>44</sup> communities outside Asia or Africa for the advancement of theological education, both in their diaspora situation as well as for their home churches in Africa and Asia.<sup>45</sup> The literature on the African and Asian Christian presence in the West is rapidly proliferating.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Isabel Apawo Phiri, 'Major Challenges for African Women Theologians in Theological Education (1989-2008)', in *International Review of Mission* (98/1, 2009), 105-19.

<sup>43</sup> Kwok Pui-lan, *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 41.

<sup>44</sup> For a critical reflection of the term 'diaspora', see Klaus Hock, 'Discourses on Migration as Migratory Discourses: Diasporic Identities and the Quest for Analytical Categories' in F. Ludwig and K. Asamoah-Gyadu, *The African Christian Presence in the West* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2011), 55-68.

<sup>45</sup> Dietrich Werner, 'Priorities for ecumenical theological education in the 21st century': [www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p5/ete/wocati/WOCATI\\_2008\\_-\\_Introductory\\_speech\\_of\\_ETE\\_Dr\\_Dietrich\\_Werner.pdf](http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p5/ete/wocati/WOCATI_2008_-_Introductory_speech_of_ETE_Dr_Dietrich_Werner.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> See, for instance, Jehu J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008); Fenggang Yang, *Chinese Christians in America: Conversion, Assimilation and Adhesive Identities* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz, *Religion and the new Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2000); Afe Adogame and Cordula Weissköppel, *Religion in the Context of African Migration* (Bayreuth, Germany: Breitinger, 2005); Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* (Cardiff, UK: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998); Jacob K. Olupona and Regina Gemignani, *African Immigrant Religions in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); M. Bergunder and J. Haustein (eds), *Migration und Identität: Pfingstlich-charismatische Migrationsgemeinden in Deutschland* (Frankfurt, Germany: Lembeck, 2006); R. Gerloff, *Das schwarze Lächeln Gottes: Afrikanische Diaspora als Herausforderung*

One of the first initiatives to bring together black-led and white-led churches in the area of theological education had been the Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership in Birmingham, UK. It started in the late 1970s when Roswith Gerloff realized in her research that the black-led churches were moving in their own direction with little or no interconnection with the mainline churches. Bongani Mazibuko, director of the Centre in the 1980s, explained the purpose as follows: ‘People coming from the mainline churches tend to come from academic traditions... whereas the people of the black-led churches are... trained by the congregation, which is a good training. So they also contribute to the dialogue and share their own experiences from oral traditions... The aim of the Centre has been trying to understand that people are different, traditions are different and the manner in which people act – because of their temperaments or their backgrounds – are also quite different. Both sides have the right to exist in the way they want; none of the sides has the right to condemn the other side.’<sup>47</sup>

Since African congregations increased significantly in other parts of Europe, further initiatives followed – as, for instance, the African Theological Training in Germany (ATTIG) programme which was initiated in 2001. To some extent influenced by the Birmingham programme, ATTIG came into being after several consultations and meetings during the 1990s in which African congregation leaders had expressed a strong interest in a more formal theological education. One enquiry came from the Evangelisch-Lutherische Missionswerk in Hermannsburg, where Tasgara Hirpo and Hartwig Harms considered the idea of applying the experiences

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*an Theologie und Kirche. Beiträge aus 30 Jahren reflektierter Praxis* (Frankfurt, Germany: Lembeck, 2003); Marie Griffith and Barbara Dianne Savage, *Women and Religion in the African Diaspora* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2006); Regina Jach, *Migration, Religion und Raum: Ghanaische Kirchen in Accra, Kumasi und Hamburg in Prozessen von Kontinuität und Kulturwandel* (Hamburg/Münster, Germany: LIT, 2005); Frieder Ludwig and Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (eds), *The African Christian Presence in the West* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2011); Afe Adogame, *The African Christian Diaspora: New Currents and Emerging Trends in World Christianity* (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2013); Havey C. Kwiyani, *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in the West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014).

<sup>47</sup> Bongani Mazibuko, ‘The Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership in Birmingham’: interview by Frieder Ludwig, 13th June 1985. A German translation of the interview is published in *der überblick. Zeitschrift für ökumenische Begegnung und internationale Zusammenarbeit*, 3/1986, 86-88. The English original was published much later in Frieder Ludwig and Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (eds), *The African Christian Presence in the West* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2011), 421-26.

of the Theological Education by Extension programme in Ethiopia to the training of African pastors in Germany.<sup>48</sup>

At about the same time, the programme 'Kirche im interkulturellen Kontext' (church in intercultural context) started in Wuppertal which aimed to establish co-operation between African and Asian and German Protestant congregations. The project focuses especially on the Rhine-Ruhr region where there are about 150 congregations with African, and about 120 congregations with Asian, backgrounds.<sup>49</sup>

More recently, in 2009, the MA programme 'Intercultural Theology' has been established at Göttingen University in co-operation with the Fachhochschule für Interkulturelle Theologie Hermannsburg (FIT/University of Applied Science in Intercultural Theology). The explicit aim of FIT is to establish a dialogue of critical Protestantism and Lutheran theologies with Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, to become a place where Protestant theological teaching in Germany meets the different theologies of Africa, Asia and Latin America, and to contribute to cross-cultural understanding and integration.<sup>50</sup>

In the USA, similar initiatives started: City Seminary of New York offers non-degree seminars and lectures in areas of relevance of ministry to the city, using the cultural, social, theological and missiological context of New York as a background: 'A global and cross-cultural diaspora is rebirthing the church of New York from the ground up. Joined by communities of faith historically present in the city, the churches of a globalizing New York represent a dynamic urban and World Christianity... With New York City as a classroom, our research seeks to break boundaries between urban, sociological, theological, religious and other disciplines.'<sup>51</sup> The Multicultural Mission Resource Center of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia emphasizes that with Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13), the church began as a multi-ethnic community called to multicultural ministry. One of the aims of the Center is to reach out to the communities in the neighbourhood and beyond.<sup>52</sup> The African Descent

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<sup>48</sup> See Lothar Engel, 'Zur Entstehung des ATTiG-Programms', in Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland (ed), *Gemeinsam Lernen in der fremden Heimat* (Hamburg, Germany: EMW 2004), 20-27; see also Christoph Dahling-Sander, *Auf dem Wege zur sichtbaren Gemeinschaft? Ökumenische Zusammenarbeit mit Kirchen und Gemeinden anderer Sprache und Herkunft* (Hamburg, Germany: EMW, 2000).

<sup>49</sup> See Gotthard Oblau, '“Kirche mit kikk”. Theologische Fortbildung für fremdsprachige Gemeinden in Deutschland – Bildungsprogramm der vereinten Evangelischen Mission (VEM)', in Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland (ed), *Gemeinsam Lernen in der fremden Heimat* (Hamburg, Germany: EMW, 2004), 108-18.

<sup>50</sup> <http://fh-hermannsburg-eng.landeskirche-hannovers.de/About> (accessed 10th January 2016).

<sup>51</sup> [www.cityseminaryny.org](http://www.cityseminaryny.org) (accessed 1st April 2009).

<sup>52</sup> [www.ltsp.edu/multicultural-mission-resource-center](http://www.ltsp.edu/multicultural-mission-resource-center) (accessed 1st April 2009).

Ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) endeavours to engage, involve and invest ‘in the gifts, interests and capacity of people of African descent in every aspect of the life of this church’: ‘As part of our Ethnic Specific and Multicultural Ministries Team, we seek to strengthen the hands of ELCA for building – with integrity – a multicultural church.’<sup>53</sup>

At the level of the worldwide ecumenical movement, the need to overcome the paternalistic attitude of western theological education was already recognized at the International Missionary Council’s conference in Tambaram, India, in 1938. The meeting drew attention to ‘the shocking neglect of ministerial training in the “younger churches” which were now the growing counterparts of the missions’.<sup>54</sup> The Tambaram recommendations were implemented after World War II: at the IMC Accra Conference in 1958, the Theological Education Fund (TEF) was launched with an initial capital of US\$4 million, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation.<sup>55</sup> While the initial assumption was that the theological education centres should ‘come up to the standards of the best theological faculties of Europe or North America’,<sup>56</sup> the emphasis on contextualization became stronger in the 1970s. In 1972, the Theological Education Fund started to create and develop new models, such as Theological Education by Extension (TEE). TEE aimed at re-evaluating the assumptions of theological educators and church authorities and redirecting their efforts: ‘Theological education by extension has a unique opportunity to recognize and strengthen local congregations and their leaders as the primary agents of mission, unity and renewal.’<sup>57</sup>

In 1977, the TEF was reorganized as The World Council of Churches’ Program on Theological Education (PTE). In June 1989, PTE sponsored a consultation held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, which resulted in the inauguration of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions (WOCATI). WOCATI is committed to the twin goals of

<sup>53</sup> [www.elca.org/Our-Work/Congregations-and-Synods/Ethnic-Specific-and-Multicultural-Ministries/African-Descent](http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Congregations-and-Synods/Ethnic-Specific-and-Multicultural-Ministries/African-Descent) (accessed 10th January 2016).

<sup>54</sup> See Leslie Newbigin, *Theological Education in World Perspective* (1979), 105, quoted in Mark Laing, ‘Recovering Missional Ecclesiology in Theological Education’, in *International Review of Mission* (Vol. 98, 2009), 11-24. About Tambaram, see Frieder Ludwig, *Zwischen Kolonialismuskritik und Kirchenkampf. Interaktionen afrikanischer, indischer und europäischer Christen während der Weltmissionskonferenz in Tambaram 1938* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000).

<sup>55</sup> See Christine Lienemann-Perrin, *Training for a Relevant Ministry: A Study of the Contribution of the Theological Education Fund* (Madras and Geneva: WCC Publications, 1981).

<sup>56</sup> Newbigin, *Theological Education*, 105, quoted in Laing, ‘Recovering Missional Ecclesiology’, 16.

<sup>57</sup> F. Ross Kinsler, *Ministry by the People: Theological Education by Extension* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1983), 3.

contextualization and globalization.<sup>58</sup> PTE – since 1992, Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) – contributed to the contextualization of theology and theological education in the churches of Africa, Asia and Latin America. A major concern was Paulo Freire’s understanding of education as conscientization, which emphasized human and social transformation.<sup>59</sup>

Today, ETE is also committed to enhance the visibility of women in the ecumenical movement through innovative initiatives such as the Pan-African Women’s Ecumenical Empowerment Network (PAWEEN), launched in 2015 and co-operates with organizations providing grants and scholarships for theological education. ETE is a founding member of the Global Digital Library for Theology and Ecumenism (GlobeTheoLib) which provides a large collection of online resources for ecumenical theological research. As part of this collaboration, ETE has also established a working group on Ecumenical Theological Education and Migrant Churches.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, at various levels – local, regional, global – there have been important developments in contextualizing theological education and in overcoming unjust power structures. The Global Digital Library for Theology and Ecumenism is a huge achievement, since it provides access to literature otherwise not available in many regions of the world. During recent years, important reference works and handbooks were also published, giving surveys and providing perspectives on theological development in different contexts.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> P. Vassiliadis (ed), *Challenging Traditional Theological Education: 20 Years of WOCATI* (Neapolis/Thessaloniki, Greece, 2008), 6.

<sup>59</sup> F. Ross Kinsler, ‘Relevance and Importance of TEF/PTE/ETE’: paper given at the WOCATI conference Thessaloniki, June 2008: WOCATI\_2008\_-\_Presentation\_on\_ETE\_Jubilee\_-\_RELEVANCE\_AND\_IMPORTANCE\_OF\_TEF-Ross\_Kinsler.pdf (accessed 11th January 2016).

<sup>60</sup> [www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/ecumenical-theological-education](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/ecumenical-theological-education) (accessed 11th January 2016).

<sup>61</sup> See, for instance, Dietrich Werner (ed), *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives, Ecumenical Trends, Regional Surveys* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010); Dietrich Werner, *Theological Education in World Christianity: Ecumenical Perspectives and Future Priorities* (Tainan, Taiwan: Programme for Theology and Cultures in Asia, 2011); Dietrich Werner (ed), *Training to be Ministers in Asia – Contextualizing Theological Education in Multi-Faith Contexts* (Tainan, Taiwan: Programme for Theology and Cultures in Asia, 2012); Isabel Apawo Phiri and Dietrich Werner, *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, RSA: Cluster, 2013); Hope Antone, Hyjun Bae, Wati Longchar, Huang Po Ho and Dietrich Werner (eds), *Asian Handbook on Theological Education and Ecumenism* (Oxford: Regnum, 2013); Melisande Lorke and Dietrich Werner (eds), *Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century: A Reader for Theological Education* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

However, much still needs to be done. The world study report on theological education from the WCC, which was prepared for the Edinburgh 2010 conference, stated that, despite several cases of significant achievements in certain areas during the past hundred years, 'new and old challenges in the area of theological education continue and persist in hampering the relevance and accessibility of theological education for Christian mission today. Some crucial challenges seem to be even more dramatic than a hundred years ago. Thus, there is an urgency for increased and co-ordinated efforts for international networking and solidarity in promoting theological education in the fellowship of churches. Some would speak of an emerging global crisis in theological education which is becoming obvious and will be marking the next decades of the 21st century, having the potential to endanger the very future and integrity of World Christianity.'<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> World Study Report on Theological Education 2010, WCC-ETE 54, quoted in Dietrich Werner, Editorial, *Training to be Ministers in Asia: Contextualizing Theological Education in Multi-Faith Contexts* (Tainan, Taiwan: Programme for Theology and Cultures in Asia, 2012), vii- xvi, here ix.

# NO MORE FLIGHT: GENDER AND ECO JUSTICE

Meehyun Chung

## Introduction

Christianity brought not only the message of the Bible but also certain aspects of western culture, with its norms and images, to the global South, along with the very well-known image of Jesus at the age of thirty as a good-looking Caucasian man with long blond hair, a familiar painting which has been disseminated widely, delivered western values.

The Korean Church is proud that their first Protestant church was founded by a Korean who himself had received the gospel in China. Koreans already knew a Protestant-like movement before any organized mission activity existed in Korea – but one should acknowledge that Christianity in Korea was spread mainly by American missionaries. They brought the above-mentioned painting of Jesus to Korea after which it was widely distributed in Christian homes, schools and churches. Although this depiction doesn't reflect the historical Jesus, it did very much reflect the Christology of Korean Christianity. The image of Jesus as a pale face with Anglo-Saxon features and blue eyes dominates not only the Christology of Korean Christianity, but also of those in other parts of the global South. And this image served as a substitute for a divine being in the traditional beliefs of many Christians.

It became a kind of symbol of Orientalism. Orientalism is a western way of thinking and it is the expression of the popular ideas that western people hold about eastern culture, as E. Said described them. This kind of thinking dominates much of the world. This Euro-American western image symbolizes wealth and dominant power in general because Christianity brought by western missionaries was identified with wealth and western culture. It remained difficult to distinguish between the core content of the Bible and western culture. Western norms became the norm for everything and therefore they represented dominant power. Local indigenous wisdom and culture were ignored. According to Orientalism, westerners are academic, scientific and reasonable, while Orientals are emotional, unacademic and superstitious. When missionary work started in Korea two or three centuries ago, traditional knowledge and narrative wisdom were usually considered to be pagan, heretical and barbarian. The thinking and traditional values of people in the so-called 'mission field' were to be replaced by western methods and technology. This kind of conventional binary thinking continues to be dominant everywhere – and even in the era of post-colonialism not much has improved.

One can readily argue that Enlightenment Christianity contributed to the destruction of nature and was one cause of the current ecological crisis as

Lynn White Jr. emphasizes in her strong critique of Christian theology as a leading cause of environmental disaster.<sup>1</sup> Lynn White highlights the agricultural revolution and technological development of the early Middle Ages which led to a change of status of human beings towards nature. 'Once man had been part of nature; now he became her exploiter.'<sup>2</sup> Leonard Shlain, who illustrates the conflict between the left-brain and the right-brain, word and image, describes the conflict between maleness and femaleness in many different ways. One point of comparison is the difference between gatherer (collector) and hunter which is associated respectively with female and male:<sup>3</sup> 'The environment, human rights, education, health care, child care and welfare are all concerns of the gatherer/nurturer.'<sup>4</sup>

Modernity which is affected by western Christianity has been used to conquer and to dominate nature and other nations. With this went a lack of environment-friendly thought. Rationality controlling power and domination was stronger and regarded as higher than a contemplative view and understanding of nature. Human beings became not a part of nature, but its exploiter. 'One thing is so certain that it seems stupid to verbalize it: both modern technology and modern science are distinctively Occidental. Our technology has absorbed elements from all over the world, notably from China; yet everywhere today, whether in Japan or in Nigeria, successful technology is western... Today, around the globe, all significant science is western in style and method, whatever the pigmentation or language of the scientists.'<sup>5</sup>

I want to avoid unfair generalizations. However, 'noetic' knowledge and a contemplative, comprehensive understanding of creation persist more often in many non-western cultures and in Eastern Christianity and spirituality. 'Our science and technology have grown out of Christian attitudes towards man's relationship with nature which is almost universally held, not only by Christians and neo-Christians but also by those who fondly regard themselves as post-Christians... We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim.'<sup>6</sup>

The task of restoring a sacred view of nature and creation instead of objectifying and conquering it is urgently needed in westernized Christian theology. It should be distinguished between a fear of nature and a respect

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce V. Foltz, *The Noetics of Nature: Environmental Philosophy and the Holy Beauty of the Visible* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Lynn White, Jr., *Medieval Technology and Social Change* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 56.

<sup>3</sup> Leonard Shlain, *The Alphabet versus the Goddess: The Conflict between Word and Image* (New York: Penguin, 1998), 16.

<sup>4</sup> Shlain, *The Alphabet versus the Goddess*, 426.

<sup>5</sup> Lynn White, Jr., 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis', in *Science*, 155 (1967), 1203-07.

<sup>6</sup> Lynn White, Jr., 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis', 1206.

of nature. It depends on a matrix of relationship. ‘For nearly two millennia, Christian missionaries have been chopping down sacred groves, which are idolatrous because they assume spirit in nature. What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one.’<sup>7</sup>

There are many approaches to investigating whether Christianity did cause the current environmental crisis or not. One thing is probably undeniable even though the reasons for the current crisis are different. The sacred aspect of nature goes into eclipse in western Christendom.<sup>8</sup>

Lynn White suggests pondering the Christian tradition and mentions lost dimensions of Christian tradition like St Francis (1182-1226) that played a kind of role model for Christian axiom. ‘The greatest spiritual revolutionary in western history, Saint Francis, proposed what he thought was an alternative Christian view of nature and man’s relation to it: he tried to substitute the idea of the equality of all creatures, including man, for the idea of man’s limitless rule of creation. He failed. Both our present science and our present technology are so tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance towards nature that no solution for our ecologic crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not. We must rethink and recognise our nature and destiny. The profoundly religious, but heretical, sense of the primitive Franciscans for the spiritual autonomy of all parts of nature may point a direction. I propose Francis as a patron saint for ecologists.’<sup>9</sup> Doubtless St Francis is one of the most important figures. However, before him there was a woman mystic, Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), who was a pioneer and a kind of teacher for St Francis.

Hildegard of Bingen was one of the most influential women in the Mediaeval Ages. She has held many offices and functions. She emphasized the right balance in all things and the harmony between micro- and macro-cosmos. In addition, she emphasized the power of the colour green for life, in which everything is connected with everything. She illustrated healthy relationships with heaven, earth and human-beings.

‘Now in the people

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Those were meant to green,

There is no more life of any kind.

There is only shrivelled barrenness.

The winds are burdened

<sup>7</sup> Lynn White, Jr., ‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis’, 1206.

<sup>8</sup> Annie Dillard, ‘Between Heaven and Earth: Did Christianity Cause Global Warming?’, in Bruce V. Foltz (ed), *The Noetics of Nature: Environmental Philosophy and the Holy Beauty of the Visible* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 203-14.

<sup>9</sup> Lynn White, Jr., ‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis’, 1207.

By the utterly awful stink of evil,  
 Selfish goings-on.  
 Thunderstorms menace.  
 The air belches out  
 The filthy uncleanness of the peoples.  
 There pours forth an unnatural,  
 A loathsome darkness,  
 That withers the green,  
 And wizens the fruit  
 That was to serve as food for the people.  
 Sometimes this layer of air  
 Is full,  
 Full of a fog that is the source  
 Of many destructive and barren creatures,  
 That destroys and damages the earth,  
 Rendering it incapable  
 Of sustaining humanity.  
 God desires  
 That all the world  
 Be pure in his sight.  
 The earth should not be injured.  
 The earth should not be destroyed.<sup>10</sup>

It is a meaningful attempt to identify the roots of the problems in order to correct them.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, it is important to restore the lost value within Christianity. I would like to focus on reinvestigating two kinds of lost traditions as flights.

### Revisiting Christian Tradition: Two Kinds of Flights

#### *The Seventh-Century Flight from the 'Original Blessing'*

Just as women's stories in Christianity were disregarded, many non-Roman Catholic traditions and its spirituality were neglected. As one example, the conflict between Roman Catholic Christianity and Celtic Christianity may be mentioned as it becomes obvious at the Synod of Whitby in 664.

The Church made an important decision at the Synod of Whitby in the British Isles which was to determine the future direction of western Christianity. The Synod decided to follow the Church method and culture for the mission, and established the Church practice as the norm. Thus it became the mainstream of Christianity and culture.

The Synod discussed two kinds of mission. One was the way of the Celtic mission which is rooted in John who was listening to the heartbeat of

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 77-78.

<sup>11</sup> Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological imperialism: the biological expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

God in the arms of Jesus Christ at the Last Supper (John 13:23). This was called ‘Listening for the Heartbeat of God’.<sup>12</sup> The other was the way of the Roman Catholic Church which is based on the outstanding authority of Peter to whom Jesus declared, ‘And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven’ (Matt. 16:18-19). While the former put stress upon the goodness of creation and the image of God rather than on original sin, the latter emphasized the sinfulness of men and the authority of the church. The Celtic mission was derived from Iona which made much account of the Johannine tradition, and was imported through Aidan of Lindisfarne. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic mission, asserting the Petrine authority, derived from Rome and was received through Augustine of Canterbury.

The Synod of Whitby raised the hand of the latter and, as a result, the forthcoming Christian community came to be dominated by the authoritarian pattern of mission of the Roman Catholic Church. The Celtic way of mission was debilitated in history but has not entirely disappeared. In recent times it is being newly spotlighted.

J.P. Newell, a Scottish theologian who has insisted on recovering Celtic spirituality, told us about the tragedy of the Synod of Whitby. ‘The tragic outcome of the synod was not that it chose the Roman mission but that it neither made room within the church for both ways of seeing nor declared that both were firmly rooted in the gospel tradition.’<sup>13</sup> This means that, after the decision of the Synod of Whitby, although both traditions were rooted in the gospel, the history of Christianity afterwards would enforce the Petrine tradition, neglecting the Johannine one.<sup>14</sup>

The most characteristic thing in the Johannine tradition is to look at God from one’s whole life and to stress the inter-relatedness of all creation. The light of life exists among all creation and is not restricted to a certain space or a certain person.<sup>15</sup> Emotions and positive regard of the body and sexuality can be found in the Gospel of John, while in the Gospel of Matthew sinfulness is stressed much more. John and Peter have different ways of their own of listening to God and, accordingly, the Gospels reveal

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<sup>12</sup> J.P. Newell, *Listening for the Heartbeat of God: A Celtic Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Newell, *Listening for the Heartbeat of God*, 94.

<sup>14</sup> Newell, *Listening for the Heartbeat of God*, 95. It is true that it’s difficult to say whether John is the very beloved disciple, because there are many debates among the New Testament scholars about the issue. However, what is important is the fact that he must have been the representative of the Johannine community. Refer to the following books about the relationship between Peter and the beloved disciple: Joonsuk Suh, *Interpretation of the Gospels* (Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1991), 265-88; Deugjoon Kim, *Theology of John* (Concordia, 1994), 189-203.

<sup>15</sup> Newell, *Listening for the Heartbeat of God*, 96.

these tendencies. While John has the contemplative image in which he listens to the heartbeat of God in creation and life, Peter has the extroverted, unifying image in which there are found sincere activities as well as the authority of the established church. Both traditions are rooted in the Bible. However, after only one of these two missions was accepted at the Synod of Whitby, the direction of Christianity has been fatally influenced. If both ways had been taken into consideration, the creative tension existing between these two would have had a more positive influence.

A Johannine community suggests a new community model against the institutionalized and dogmatized church which stresses more its hierarchical order. The ecclesiology of the Johannine community provides an alternative against clericalism and the distortion of the churches. Therefore it symbolically represents the personal relationship between Jesus Christ and the community, just like a shepherd and sheep (John 10:7-16) or a vine tree and its branches (John 15:1-17). There is no distinction by ministries or hierarchy, but the charismatic community emphasizes the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Like this, the Johannine ecclesiology provides an important biblical reference point for an alternative ecclesiology of feminist theology. In addition, the Johannine community gives an opportunity to taste an emotionally juicy spirituality by relating Jesus Christ to the image of water which is the important fountain of life (John 4:14, 7:38).

Not merely sinfulness has been emphasized but the authority of the church has oppressed human beings. Not stressing the dignity of men and women undermined their original goodness. We have to rediscover and to restore what we have lost – in other words, the ‘Original Blessing’.<sup>16</sup> This has to be newly examined, following the reflection that the Petrine tradition with its stress upon the authority of institutions has been excessively highlighted, while the Johannine one has been lost. This reflection is a significant factor that can graft our contextual contemporary theology.

The relationship between church and state faced a totally new phase after the Constantinian turning point. The fact that the church became close to the state authority meant that, above all, the church came to be regarded as the owner of the ruling status.<sup>17</sup> After Christianity became the national religion of Rome proclaimed by the Roman emperor, Theodosius, Christian theology which emphasized sinfulness was abused to make people powerless and dependent, as the Christian church developed in the Roman Empire. So there came into being some political connections between the theology of sinners and the power of the political authorities. However, we must not start from the teachings of the institutionalized church connected with the political authorities, but from the original order Jesus Christ

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing. A Primer in Creation Spirituality* (Santa Fe, NM: Bear & Company, 1983).

<sup>17</sup> Wolfgang Huber, *The Church*, trans. Shingun Lee (Seoul: Korean Theological Institute, 1993), 144.

restored. Jesus Christ has accomplished the work of restoration and reconciliation by transforming the creation into its original state. 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!' (2 Cor. 5:17). The history of men ruling over women and the history of man ruling over nature cannot be the true picture of creation. And now, in addition to the Petrine tradition emphasizing sinfulness and the institutional authorities, we should take into account the Johannine tradition which has been neglected in history, but contains many affirmative factors from the perspective of eco-feminist theology, especially its 'moist' spirituality, in seeking sensitivity for the neighbour, including nature.

These kinds of Christian tradition have not been disseminated properly. So far, it was not considered as mainstream and rather marginalized. Because the voices of women are not given power within church structures, the Christian patriarchy system remains as it was and is still an ongoing phenomenon. This Roman Catholic mainstream Christian tradition dominates the general policy of mission while eco-friendly Celtic Christianity is widely neglected.

### *The Seventeenth-Century Flight from Subjectivity*

Reformation and Counter-Reformation brought many kinds of changes in terms of Christian geography and culture. The threefold relationship – e.g. of God, people and nature – has also been affected. First of all, the understanding of God according to deism demonstrates a paradigm shift of the perception of God. Atheism and religious criticism appeared as well. This means that to think and to talk about God was no more the monopoly of the authorized church. Secondly, the Counter-Reformation Catholic Church started mission in order to attract people's concern differently outside Europe instead of dealing with internal church problems within Europe. It led to a collaboration between mission and imperial colonialism, and hence church mission and colonial power worked hand-in-hand. In that mission, hierarchical relationships in terms of ethnicity, nation, country, etc. were strongly highlighted. People claimed power from God in order to overpower others. Thirdly, due to the development of the sciences, nature lost any sacred power. Nature was considered merely as an object for research and as a field for demonstrating human power. All these distorted relationships had already been criticized by Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670) almost five centuries ago.

Jan Amos Comenius,<sup>18</sup> a contemporary of Descartes (1596-1650), was a Reformed theologian who lived most of his life in exile and focused his

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<sup>18</sup> Meehyun Chung, 'Gender und Entwicklungspolitik', in Heike Walz und David Plüss (eds), *Theologie und Geschlecht: Dialoge querbeet* (Münster, Germany: LIT, 2008), 261-75.

theology on the harmony of the world. Comenius developed peaceful ideas basically out of Trinitarian thinking. Since the Enlightenment, the thinking of René Descartes has had a major influence on modern scientific developments. The Cartesian separation<sup>19</sup> of 'subject-object relationships', stressing the dichotomy between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, has caused many problems in our world. According to Susan R. Bordo, 'For Descartes and Galileo, what one smells, sees, hears, tastes and touches can no longer be taken as a bridge to the world. That naïve connection has snapped, decisively.'<sup>20</sup> She also writes: 'The Cartesian "masculinization of thought"... is one intellectual "moment" of an acute historical flight from the feminine, from the memory of union with the maternal world, and a rejection of all values associated with it.'<sup>21</sup>

Comenius was one of the few theologians in church history to raise a critical voice against imperialism. He opposed in particular the conjunction of Christian mission's policy with the imperialistic, expansionist interests of Europeans towards other nations. To strive for power upon the seas should be sin, he says, because the sea belongs to God.

Everyone who considers the subject essentially will have no doubt whether these excursions of the Europeans into other parts of the world brought more gain or more harm. For what gain is it, that Europe has stuffed itself with gold from Africa, silver from America, pearls and jewels from Asia, if with the immeasurable increase of the metals, the market price so climbs into the immeasurable, so that today owning a ton of gold hardly has value more than the pocket change of a few gold pieces at the time of our grandfathers? So, to what end does the rise of quantity serve, if it accomplishes nothing? What have the jewels, pearls, pure silks, and similar Asian luxuries introduced? In short, we have become not better by a hair, but rather in that hindsight worse.<sup>22</sup>

Comenius mentions the skill of seafaring as an important talent that should not be misused. The gap is large between rich countries where people have all their material needs met and poor countries where their needs are not met. Using biblical words, he makes a plea to stop greed and imperial interests from ruling the seas in the seventeenth century. Instead of exploiting nations in the southern hemisphere, he said, people should spread good news and true Christianity.

... in that in the future not a few private persons might hoard treasures for their own gain, but that all those before God on his hallowed earth who might want to live, eat, drink, clothe themselves, and joyfully praise him as the God

<sup>19</sup> Alison M. Jaggar and Susan R. Bordo (eds), *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 3.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Susan R. Bordo, *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), 45.

<sup>21</sup> Bordo, *The Flight to Objectivity*, 9.

<sup>22</sup> English translations of Comenius quotations, *Ibid.*, 41.

of the whole earth... Each one who has winnings from seafaring should even more give to the poor, the orphan, the sick, etc., and further, pursue 'a higher and more spiritual form of business' and for the people's outer treasures bring them inner, spiritual treasures. The unification of Christ's kingdom is necessary for the sake of the whole world; only so can we expand true Christianity.<sup>23</sup>

Comenius was keenly aware of the problem of expansionist imperialism combined with Christian mission and western Christianity.

Christians seem more forgivable who pursue wars for faith and religion; they yearn indeed, so it appears, for God's honour and the salvation of souls. Since, however, in our case the believers do not call upon this end, but attach themselves to rumours of war purely for the goods of this world, and inflict unrest, destruction and damage not only on themselves but also on neighbouring kingdoms, indeed the whole world – how can that be forgiven? Indeed, even those Christians who pursue war allegedly for God and religion cannot justify their actions, because they undertake a fruitless task not commanded by God and by Christ forbidden. Is it really beautiful when Christians want to be wiser than Christ and against his prohibition root out the weeds with force?<sup>24</sup>

Several differences between Comenius and Descartes stand out. Descartes considers that animals, including human beings, are biological machines. He emphasizes a mechanical dualism between subject and object. Comenius considers all creatures as our co-creatures and as forming a community of fate and hope. Comenius emphasizes their organic relatedness.<sup>25</sup> Descartes describes the world as a machine while Comenius sees the world as an organism. Descartes regards the human being as a subject and nature as an object. For Descartes, every relationship is impersonal ('I – it'), while for Comenius relationships are always personal ('I – thou'). For Comenius, God is not lonely (*Deus non est solitarius*), but God is supremely communicative (*Deus est summe communicativus*).<sup>26</sup> Comenius was sceptical regarding the centrism of pure thought of Descartes, reflected in the phrase *cogito ergo sum*.<sup>27</sup> A thinker should understand what nature means. For Comenius, faith has priority over rationality. The two aspects are connected, not excluded from, each other.

Descartes considered nature as 'it', never as personal 'thou'. At the end of Descartes' 'Discourse on Method' (1637), he mentions the following:

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Milada Blekastad, *Comenius: Versuch eines Umrisses von Leben, Werk und Schicksal des Jan Amos Komensky* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), 651.

<sup>24</sup> Jan Amos Comenius, 'Angelus Paces/Friedensengel', in Blekastad, *Comenius*, 33.

<sup>25</sup> Jan Milic Lochman, 'Der Mensch im Ganzen der Schöpfung. Zur ökumenischen und ökologischen Aktualität von Johann Amos Comenius', in Vladimir J. Dvorak and J.B. Lasek (eds), *Comenius als Theologe* (Prague: Nadace Comenius, 1998), 27.

<sup>26</sup> Jan Milic Lochman, 'Theology and Cultural Contexts', in *Reflections*, 1999.2, 31.

<sup>27</sup> Blekastad, *Comenius*, 640.

‘... one can find a practical one, by which, knowing the force and actions of fire, water, air, stars, the heavens and all the other bodies that surround us, just as we understand the various skills of our craftsmen, we could, in the same way, use these objects for all the purposes for which they are appropriate, and thus make ourselves, as it were, masters and possessors of nature.’<sup>28</sup>

Not only Descartes, but also other major modern thinkers like G. Galileo and T. Hobbes disregard the theme of relatedness. Comenius, however, emphasizes our relatedness to the rest of creation but his voice has not been heard within the mainstream history of theology.<sup>29</sup> All webs of life and creatures are important in his thought. For Comenius, science, research and exploration without reference to the social, political and moral aspects of humanity are meaningless. Knowledge and human action belong together. That Cartesians separate these is one of Comenius’ most significant points.<sup>30</sup> In contrast to Descartes, Comenius captured the dialectical dynamics between world, nature and human beings.<sup>31</sup> The human recognition of truth is central in Descartes’ philosophy. As a result, recognition itself is more important than action or praxis which separates action from knowledge. For Comenius, on the other hand, combining faith and rationality is central. Theory is important for Comenius as long as it is combined with action and oriented to praxis. Cartesians reduce all methods to a quantitative measurement, whether in terms of analytical calculations, efficiency of result, or statistical comparisons. Comenius stresses qualitative processes, ontological heterogeneity, content oriented towards action and the humanization of *res humanae*. The Cartesian pursuit of particular instead of universal goals fosters monopolistic ideas and imperialistic dominance. From these come technological development without a human face, alienation of the human being and disconnectedness among people.<sup>32</sup>

To be interdisciplinary and to foster diversity may cause over-diversification instead of having a particular content and goal. Yet interconnectedness does not imply just making a melting-pot. Each element has to keep its specific meaning and identity, but has to be unified in balance and harmony.

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<sup>28</sup> René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, trans. Donald A. Cress, 3rd edition, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1993), 35.

<sup>29</sup> Lochman, ‘Der Mensch im Ganzen der Schöpfung’, 34.

<sup>30</sup> Klaus Schaller, ‘Komenskys Auseinandersetzung mit dem Cartesianismus’, in Klaus Schaller (ed), *Zwanzig Jahre Comeniusforschung in Bochum* (St Augustin, Germany: Academia Verlag, 1990), 364.

<sup>31</sup> Schaller, ‘Komenskys Auseinandersetzung mit dem Cartesianismus’, 359.

<sup>32</sup> Schaller, ‘Komenskys Auseinandersetzung mit dem Cartesianismus’, 366.

God's goodness gives birth to thanksgiving when he conveys us through the errant ways of our own labyrinths into the secret threads of his wisdom, indeed, finally to himself, to the source and to the sea of all goodness.<sup>33</sup>

Social, religious, political peace is an important aspect of Comenius' thought. He was critical of the anthropocentric idea of Descartes. Its subjectivism has caused many problems nowadays, such as the disaster of the environment, imperialism and the absence of peace in the world.<sup>34</sup>

In Comenius' thought, the human being is a microcosm, comparable with the universe as a macrocosm. Every component of the human being is reflected in the universe. As Comenius stresses, peace in the world is rooted in interconnectedness. Since, in a relational world, everything is in relation, and since everything eventually affects everything else, awareness of interrelatedness is very important also in the information era. We are related to each other throughout time and space. All of us are called to be part of the web of life and love – 'to praise God by helping all God's creatures flourish'.<sup>35</sup>

To sum up: since Enlightenment Christianity was combined more strongly with western norms and technology, Christianity contributed to making others objects and marginalizing them, while western Christianity became the only subject and the centre. Western standards and western culture were reinforced. From this occidental point of view, something oriental and feminine seems dangerous or is of low esteem.<sup>36</sup>

Facing an ongoing imperialistic world system, the availability of everything to everyone, plus the ecological, economical and technological crisis of today, we are compelled to change our attitudes towards our fellow creatures.<sup>37</sup> To develop our world with a human face, we need to explore our forgotten or lost values for radical change because we do not have any time left and nowhere else to flee to.

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<sup>33</sup> Jan Amos Comenius, *Das einzig Notwendige: Unum necessarium*, Ludwig Keller (ed), (Jena, Germany: Eugen Diederichs, 1904), 182.

<sup>34</sup> Schaller, 'E Labyrinthis exitus in planum', in *Zwanzig Jahre Comeniusforschung in Bochum*, 169.

<sup>35</sup> Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 137.

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995); Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

<sup>37</sup> Schaller, 'Komenskys Auseinandersetzung mit dem Cartesianismus', in *Zwanzig Jahre Comeniusforschung in Bochum*, 361.

### **Revaluation of Mission from Gender<sup>38</sup> and Ecological Points of View**

Traditional mission work is an example of gender discrimination and segregation. While ‘inner’ mission – diaconal works and nursing – were considered to be mainly female responsibilities during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ‘outer’ mission and oikoumene were considered male responsibilities. Everything related to ‘inner’ was considered passive, female and mundane, in stark contrast to everything related to ‘outer’, considered active, male, and something special. As a matter of fact, in established Christian tradition, mission was a task for men while lesser yet important tasks were declared women’s duties. Women’s work was not considered, in itself, as independent of men. A quote from inspector J.F. Josenhans of the Basel Mission in the nineteenth century confirms this: ‘Women are but an impediment to mission.’<sup>39</sup>

It was considered self-evident that mission was a male responsibility, while necessary and related ‘minor’ labours were women’s responsibilities.<sup>40</sup> Women were not treated as self-reliant personalities, nor officially involved in decision-making, although at the same time it was taken for granted that they would assume great responsibility and perform demanding jobs – for example, running girls’ schools and orphanages.

Nevertheless, since the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, single women have been sent out from the West to so-called mission fields with distinct autonomous responsibilities. They no longer travelled only as wedded companions (‘mission brides’<sup>41</sup>) and they attained positions they would not have achieved in western society at that time. However, traditional missionary work supported obedient and diligent women rather than a feminist movement. A quote from the director of the Basel Mission, Karl Hartenstein, emphasized this aspect: ‘In any case, female mission work may not be linked with the emancipation movement of the woman. The independence and development of the gifts of the woman must be established in welfare and social work, but not in the female movement, which has an anti-religious root.’<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> This part is based on the following article: Meehyun Chung, ‘Mission possible! Toward a new perception of mission’, in *Madang: International Journal of Contextual Theology in East Asia*, No. 13, 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Waltraud Ch. Haas, *Erlitten und erstritten: Der Befreiungsweg von Frauen in der Basler Mission 1816-1966* (Basel, Switzerland: Basileia, 1994), 31.

<sup>40</sup> Christine Keim, ‘Mission und Menschenbild – eine weibliche Perspektive’, in *Zeitschrift für Mission*, 2006, 1-2, 51.

<sup>41</sup> Dagmar Konrad, *Missionsbräute: Pietistinnen des 19. Jahrhunderts in der Basler Mission* (Berlin: Waxmann, 2001).

<sup>42</sup> Christine Keim, *Frauenmission und Frauenemanzipation: eine Diskussion in der Basler Mission im Kontext der frühen ökumenischen Bewegung (1901-1928)* (Münster, Germany: Lit, 2005), 97.

Western patriarchy travelled with mission and was allowed to intertwine with traditional cultural patriarchy, in which both were strengthened.<sup>43</sup> Thus, in so-called mission areas, two patriarchal traditions exist, mutually self-reinforcing. While some western women, working within the mission field, gained an agency still denied to them in their own countries, this was not the case for women of colour. The ethnocentricity of western Christian mission created an environment where white mission women, as representatives of a superior Christian culture, were symbols of emancipation, while women of colour, along with their respective cultures, were devalued and demeaned. Because emancipation through mission was most often effective within the middle class or the elite, the pressing problems of the common people were neglected. Thus, the small elitist groups of native women actively supported by women missionaries were usually incapable of practising solidarity with the yet more marginalized.

The liberation of women from certain negative traditional bondage was achieved to a certain degree through spreading the gospel. In this sense, the introduction of Christianity assisted the emancipation of women. However, it did not fully achieve its goal because western patriarchal ideas were combined with local patriarchal culture. According to the message of *Imago Dei*, gender justice was considered; it did however remain mainly a theory. Male missionaries brought patriarchal ideology, even if they acted as promoters of the emancipation and liberation of women. In their unconsciousness, male dominant ideas prevailed. After political liberation from colonialism which was intertwined with Christian mission, a colonial system and power remained in countries and continents in a hidden manner. 'Gender' also remained as a tool of control in the former mission fields and colonial countries. It is easy to demonstrate the superior power of the white male against the male of colour. The controlling power of the white Euro-American male, exercised in a paternalistic way against 'the other', remains in this old invisible power structure.

The discussion of gender in mission, however, should not be limited to a discussion of sexual justice; a broader, more formative discussion is required, correlating gender with all aspects of social, economic, cultural and political life. Conceptual categories such as ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, age, religion, etc., along with gender, have inclusive as well as exclusive functions, and an effective analysis of any of them can only be undertaken within a thorough and encompassing critique of power structures. The desired approach to gender and feminism is context-based and inclusive of colour; it is not simply a white ideology exported to the South and East. To strengthen such awareness is to strengthen self-esteem, critical thinking and self-determination.

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<sup>43</sup> Patriarchy doesn't merely mean biological male dominance, but includes, more generally, the ideology of rule and attitudes of dominance.

In modernity, healing, education and evangelism through mission reached a huge dimension worldwide. The contribution of missionary work to the life of millions of people should not be underestimated.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, regarding ecology the following aspects remain as problems. Due to the introduction of the gospel, the fear of nature has disappeared. On the contrary, the destruction of nature began. Before Christianity had been introduced in the global South, most traditional culture and indigenous religions had been linked with pantheism. Therefore there had been a certain respect, even though sometimes it was expressed as fear. The positive aspect of that spirit was respect or fear of nature. People liberated from this fear, however, lost their respect of nature. Nature became an object to investigate, and is no more considered sacred. Traditional healing methods, including herbal medicine, were totally demonized. Medicine became a kind of business because patients were dependent on their western medical treatment instead of finding methods derived from nature and local wisdom.

Western technology and medicine contributed much to cure people in terms of quantity and speed. However, in our contemporary world, the shadow of this progress is revealed. Disparities between rich and poor regarding medical treatment became more serious. Dependency on medicine causes problems in health care and in financial matters. Technology and modernity brought the mass rapid development of science and medicine. However, the destruction of nature and the pollution of the environment also increased through this process.<sup>45</sup> So it is high time to revalue the lost tradition.

Communion in the Christian church is focused on salvation. It is based on the blood of Jesus and hence could be called *red salvation*. This kind of perception neglects creation-centred concepts. Through communion, people could not only participate in the body and blood of Jesus and affirm their belonging to the Christian community, but also experience the beauty and value of nature and labour. In our time of ecological crisis, it is important to restore the sensitivity and awareness of having a proper relationship with nature. Therefore, soteriology should be expressed in different ways even if it continues to deliver the core message of life-oriented resurrection of Jesus within the Triune God. It is important to restore the vision of the cosmic Christ which could be called *green salvation*. God in Trinity could be explored no more as one dimensional but as God in relationship. In our theology, it is time to reflect again on Trinity in general and pneumatology in particular. Like western missionaries who failed to appreciate African and South American spiritual cosmology, western missionaries in Asia had

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<sup>44</sup> Meehyun Chung, 'Mission possible!', 41-60.

<sup>45</sup> As an example, the production of silver mercury is used. It helps to produce silver easily compared with other traditional methods but it causes very serious problems of land pollution. Due to such careless treatment, the area is spoiled and cannot to use for anything.

difficulties with Asian spiritual cosmology. They did not reflect on it theologically because, in their eyes and norms, it looked demonic, pagan or superstitious. So they were not successful in dealing with pneumatology generally, and neglected it to avoid debates.<sup>46</sup>

A kind of spiritual cosmology should not any more be an obstacle to developing pneumatology. It could contribute towards a constructive development of theology regarding the Triune God. The oppression of nature should not any more go hand-in-hand with the oppression of women. We need to restore the 'I – thou' relationship at every level. To use Sallie McFague's conceptual language, we should look at our nature and others with 'a loving eye' instead of 'an arrogant eye.'<sup>47</sup> Not only gender justice, but also 'eco-justice cannot be separated from salvation, and salvation cannot come without a new humility that respects the needs of all life on earth'.<sup>48</sup>

### Conclusion

There is no chance of fleeing due to the serious ecological crisis of our contemporary world. Facing the global challenges, it is very urgent we change dramatically and undergo a new conversion (*metanoia*). Therefore our perception of mission should also be changed to invite a humble attitude with God's spirit in mission and to and practise power with humility. Indeed, we need to have a new humility with regard to the mission of God's Spirit. Humans can participate in communion with all creation in celebrating the work of the Creator.

Who has power: nature over the human beings or human beings over nature? Nature can live without human beings while human beings cannot live without nature. Nature has healing powers over the human heart and body. We cannot restore ourselves without restoring our distorted relationship with nature.

Salvation implies a three-dimensional restoration of the relationship with God, human beings and nature. This is our ongoing mission which is started by God until we will be fulfilled with the creator's, sustainer's and redeemer's joy. To break the bondage of all fear is possible through the power of this gospel until we meet God face-to-face – and he will release us from all fear.

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<sup>46</sup> Allan Anderson, *Moya: The Holy Spirit in an African Context* (Pretoria, RSA: University of South Africa Press, 1991).

<sup>47</sup> Sallie McFague, *Super, Natural Christians: How We Should Love Nature* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1997), 32.

<sup>48</sup> Jooseop Keum (ed), *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 11.

# MISSION AT RISK: STRUCTURES OF CO-OPERATION IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF ‘MISSION AND POWER’

Michael Biehl

This contribution will study the theme of this volume with a focus on discussions about structures for co-operation, partnership and sharing of resources in mission. These are areas in which power aspects have been controversially debated: how have mission organizations attempted to change or have accommodated their structures in dealing with questions of power, legitimacy of authority and assuming equality in sharing? How have these attempts affected and have been affected by the interaction between different participants in co-operation for mission and evangelism?

One could argue that the mission movement in its ecumenical dimension has been driven in the second half of the twentieth century by attempts to formulate a viable, honest answer to these questions as part of their fellowship and of their coping with globally unjust power settings.<sup>1</sup> It may seem safe to study these attempts and developments in a historical perspective. Yet it should be evident that, in any discussion of power aspects, there is no ‘archimedic’ spot, e.g. a standpoint from where debates and decisions taken could be studied without being involved in the debate while studying the issues of power. Any attempt at describing, analyzing and making proposals for a different way of dealing with the issues is tainted by the fact that it is made within the web of power the existing relations constitute. My perspective is largely informed by my experience in partnering with theological institutions and by my work in a mission body:<sup>2</sup> the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW) is the successor of the German Protestant Mission Council (Deutscher Evangelischer Missionstag, DEMT). It was formed forty years ago in the period of transformation of independent mission societies or agencies to mission boards of regional churches in Germany. This took place in the wake of the integration of mission and church on an international level, e.g. the integration of the International Missionary Council (IMC) – where the DEMT was a member – into the World Council

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Jacques Matthey, ‘Milestones in Ecumenical Missionary Thinking from the 1970s to the 1990s’, in *IRM*, 88 (No. 350, 1999), 291-304. And, more recently, Dongsung Kim, ‘Partnership and Resource-Sharing’, in Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi and Roderick R. Hewitt, *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission* (Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, 35), (Oxford: Regnum, 2016), 259-70.

<sup>2</sup> However, in this article I express own opinions and do not speak for this association.

of Churches (WCC) – where the regional German mainline churches had become members.

What follows is first, an attempt to identify the debates on power in the Edinburgh 1910 conference and to relate them to the wider context of Christianity of this period; second to pursue through the ecumenical and missiological debate the attempts of adapting the structures to a sharing of power and resources; third, to place these events in the context of today's World Christianity and various approaches to mission and evangelism, and fourth, offer a tentative conclusion in an ongoing debate.

### Mission and Power – Edinburgh 1910

In the Edinburgh 1910 deliberations, aspects of power relations were most explicitly addressed as a question of the relationship of mission – and, more specifically, of missionaries – to the political authorities in the countries they work in. The report of Commission 7: 'Mission and Governments' gives ample evidence of how, in various 'mission countries', the double allegiance of missionaries – and hence, of their agencies – to the political powers is dealt with. A telling example how complex these relations could be within a colonial matrix of power is taken from the discussion on the political relations when working in China:

Some of our correspondents in China have expressed regret at the existence of these treaties (e.g. those forcing the Chinese Emperor to allow for western presence, for mission and for the trade of opium); considering that, as they were extorted by force, the mission work protected by them was continually liable to be discredited, as apparently an example of foreign aggression. It would be better, they believe, that missions work solely under the protection of God, unaided by the arm of flesh. The greater number, however, regard the treaties, in some form or another, as a necessity, not for the sake of missionaries as such, but for the security of all foreigners, including missionaries.<sup>3</sup>

Such a variety of opinions on political power constellations as found in China has been discussed in Edinburgh against the background of a basic distinction which is well expressed in the title of the report of the Commission 1: 'Carrying the Gospel to the Non-Christian World'. The ensuing assumption is outlined thus:

One of the most significant and hopeful facts with reference to world evangelization is that the vast majority of the people of non-Christian nations and races are under the sway, either of Christian governments or of those not

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<sup>3</sup> *World Missionary Conference 1910. Report of Commission 7: Mission and Government* (London: Oliphant, 1910), 8 (in the passage on China, 7-22). For a review of this theme see Tinyiko Maluleke, 'Christian Mission and Political Power: Commission Seven Revisited', in David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross (eds), *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now* (Regnum Studies in Mission), (Oxford: Regnum, 2009), 201-16.

antagonistic to Christian missions. This should greatly facilitate the carrying out of a comprehensive campaign to make Christ known.<sup>4</sup>

The structures of mission societies in the northern hemisphere seemed to have been deemed adequately corresponding to these political settings and to enable them to work across the ‘frontiers’ between the so-called ‘home base’ – in what was characterized as the ‘Christian world’ – and the various mission fields which were lumped together as the ‘Non-Christian world’.<sup>5</sup>

Edinburgh 1910 was a conference of delegates from mission agencies and boards. It is well known that, with the exception of nineteen participants from Asia and Africa, all delegates in Edinburgh were representing western-based bodies working abroad.<sup>6</sup> Stanley highlights in his seminal study on Edinburgh that this small number of non-western participants was in part a result of decisions of the missionary societies. Some seem to have been of the opinion that the churches in the mission fields were not able to send appropriate representatives, while others simply decided that such delegates would have to come entirely at the expense of their churches, and did not consider reducing the number of their own delegates.<sup>7</sup> In the end, an absolute majority of western delegates led a discussion about the need and legitimacy of their work and their own understanding of their role as intermediary agencies between the home base (see the report of Commission 6) and the mission fields (see the report of Commission 2).

In this debate, the Christians and emerging congregations in the mission fields were assigned an important role. Some of their representatives (see below) were even invited to speak in Edinburgh but their arguments obviously did not convince the delegates. In the Edinburgh files, there is evidence of a discussion – of whether the congregations and churches initiated through the mission work of the northern societies could be judged as mature enough to make their own decisions. Already the fact that the delegates were discussing it basically among themselves was a hint as to who ultimately had the power to settle the matter. The very few Christians from the then so-called ‘non-Christian world’ voiced a different opinion.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *World Missionary Conference 1910. Report of Commission 1: Carrying the Gospel to all the Non-Christian World* (London: Oliphant, 1910), 6.

<sup>5</sup> See the revealing assessment of Stanley, that the actual location of this ‘Non-Christian World’ on a map of the globe was not a geographical question but was the result of a compromise, revealing different interests in mission and church politics: Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Studies in the History of Christian Missions), (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2009), 49-58.

<sup>6</sup> Stanley, *World Missionary Conference 1910*, 91-02.

<sup>7</sup> Stanley, *World Missionary Conference 1910*, 102-07.

<sup>8</sup> Stanley emphasizes that John Mott, the chairman of the conference, exercised a kind of positive discrimination in making sure that the South and East Asia delegates were visible: ‘Each East Asian was given at least one opportunity to

Robert E. Speer, a well-known missionary and writer of the time and a representative of the conference leaders, obviously did not hear what the delegates from the churches in the 'non-Christian world' told the conference participants. Given his summary of the conference, the answer to the question in how far the delegates listened to the representatives of the younger churches seems to be negative. After having heard all the contributions from non-western participants – and more would have to be said on others from India, Japan and Korea – he concluded:

For the present, if there are any grounds for anxiety, it is not because the native Churches are making innovations, for all their innovations of doctrines or of polity are reproductions of incidents in the Church history of the West, but because they have as yet contributed nothing new to our understanding of the truth of God in Christ. It is evident that to such an end Christianity must lay deeper and wider hold upon the national and racial life of Asia.<sup>9</sup>

Speer's statement assesses that the West still had much impact to make on Asia before Asian Christians would bring something new to World Christianity. That is a different way of saying that they needed to be under western control for a long time until they were able to do what was expected of them.

Speer made his judgement after the late Bishop Azariah from South India had made his famous plea: 'Give us friends' – not masters. And he made it also after Cheng Jingyi, a young pastor from Beijing, had challenged the delegates in the discussion of the report of Commission 2: 'The Church in the Mission Field' to allow the self-government of indigenous churches.<sup>10</sup>

One dimension of the discourse of power at Edinburgh was formed by a theological legitimization of the missionaries and their need to stay and control newly-founded congregations: 'He [i.e. God] has entrusted enormous powers to Christian nations. His providence has opened the approach to non-Christian countries, determined the order of their occupation, and developed agencies and influences which facilitate the spread of the Christianity.'<sup>11</sup>

Speer and the delegates were obviously of the conviction that the existing power relations in mission were the result of divine providence: all 'have been absolutely united in the expressed conviction that the world's

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participate in the debates, whereas only four of the nine South Asians did so': Stanley, *World Missionary Conference 1910*, 94-95.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted from Stanley, *World Missionary Conference 1910*, 130.

<sup>10</sup> Stanley, *World Missionary Conference 1910*, 107-08, 110. Cheng had worked in London on a revision of a Mandarin translation of the New Testament and spoke English fluently. He was a Manchu, and Stanley emphasizes that it was surprising that a Manchu was able to assume such important positions on Christian committees and churches, given that, after the Republican revolution from 1912-(ed), the long Manchu reign in the Chinese Empire had been brought to an end.

<sup>11</sup> *World Missionary Conference 1910. Report of Commission 1*, 352.

evangelization is a Divine enterprise, that the Spirit of God is the great Missioner, and that only as He dominates the work and workers can we hope for success in the undertaking to carry the knowledge of Christ to all people'.<sup>12</sup>

### Going East

For many, Edinburgh 1910 was by and large the closing point of the 'long nineteenth-century' missionary period and the starting point for the forming of the International Missionary Council (IMC). What is less obvious is that the Edinburgh continuation committee quickly travelled east to the region Edinburgh had highlighted as the most promising for evangelization. The continuation committee led by John Mott organized 21 conferences in Asian countries in the years 1912-13. 'In each case the debates led to the founding of National *Missionary* Councils, which about ten years later were transformed into National *Christian* Councils (first in India, Japan and Korea).'<sup>13</sup> Not only in India but also in Japan and China there were clear indications that local Christians were not against co-operation with foreign missionaries but at that time were already requesting different relationships. In the Japanese case, for instance, these claimed that every foreign missionary should work under a Japanese pastor for one or two years before starting their own ministry work.<sup>14</sup> The formation of indigenous national churches and a strong role for indigenous local leadership was claimed and brought forward as an important move towards a truly contextualized church. In India, Azariah and, in China, Cheng were eventually elected to leading roles in their respective churches.

The nineteenth century had also seen the emergence of indigenous local Christian elites which played an often underestimated role for the emergence of Protestant churches and transdenominational structures in their countries.<sup>15</sup> Their theme, especially in India, was the overcoming of the confessional fragmentation of the churches. In 1905, in Madras, a *National Missionary Society* had been founded by Indian Christians which identified an intrinsic relation between the movements towards nationalization, towards unifying the churches and of their own missionary endeavours in India and adjacent countries.<sup>16</sup> Mott had been in contact with some of the leading figures of that movement before the Edinburgh

<sup>12</sup> *World Missionary Conference, 1910. Report of Commission 1*, 351.

<sup>13</sup> Klaus Koschorke, 'The World Missionary Conference Edinburgh 1910 and the Rise of National Church Movements in Asia and Africa', in Klaus Koschorke (ed), *Transkontinentale Beziehungen in der Geschichte des Außereuropäischen Christentums* (Studien zur Außereuropäischen Christentumsgeschichte, 6), (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2002), 203-18, here 211-12.

<sup>14</sup> Koschorke, 'The World Missionary Conference', 212.

<sup>15</sup> Koschorke, 'The World Missionary Conference', 203.

<sup>16</sup> Koschorke, 'The World Missionary Conference', 206.

conference and, from among them, he had proposed Azariah as a delegate to Edinburgh.

Debates about power and structures took place on the ground between foreign missions and indigenous elites. At the same time, the global network of mission was an instrument of enabling communication between the regions. Koschorke draws attention to the fact that very early there were already links between the Christian indigenous elites in various countries. The case of Bishop Crowther was commented on in West Africa, India and Sri Lanka, and in turn Azariah's installation as the first Indian bishop of a mission-born church was discussed in West Africa.<sup>17</sup>

An aspect which only recently came to light more clearly is that Edinburgh 1910 has been commented on in the then very young Pentecostal circles, and that already at the time of the conference and shortly after it, there were Pentecostal missionaries in Asia, especially in India and China. With these an alternative reading of power in mission was present in the areas where mainline mission was also active. Theologically, it was understood as empowerment by the Spirit. With that came also a different reading of power in the relation between western missionaries in Asia and its Christians. Pentecostal missionaries were often working alone and came with weak resources. Therefore, because of their understanding of the role of the Spirit in mission, they were seemingly more inclined to accept that the Spirit empowered others, e.g. locals, at his own choosing. If one looks at the years of these 'Pentecostal' revivals – Azusa Street 1906, the Mukti revival in India 1905-07, Chile 1909, etc. – it is obvious that the speed with which these new movements developed was not only through spreading out from one starting point. It also gathered pace with like-minded people being ready to recognize in events elsewhere that the same Spirit had been active there, even before a missionary of the Azusa event had arrived. This willingness to 'read' mission in a variety of ways may be one of the reasons why power relations occurred in Pentecostal missions in a different way.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Koschorke quotes the example of a seven-week visit of a Christian Japanese delegation to India. The Japanese 'pointed to the significance of Christianity for its resurgence in their country and recommended to their hosts autonomy and the reduction of dependency on foreign missionary forces': Koschorke, 'The World Missionary Conference', 215.

<sup>18</sup> For this paragraph, see Allan Anderson, 'The Emergence of a Multidimensional Global Missionary Movement: A Historical Review', in Wonsuk Ma, Veli-Matti Kärkäinen, Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (eds), *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity* (Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, 20), (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 10-25. One example he mentions is the case of American Minnie Abrams who worked with Pandita Ramabai in the Mukti Revival. Her report of these events inspired in turn a befriended woman missionary in Chile.

### Interlude

If one thus widens the focus, it becomes evident that, when the Edinburgh conference convened, there were already more voices and alternatives structures in the contested area of power present than those voiced at the conference. The delegates chose among possible arguments (see the debate on politics and China) those which the discursive field on ‘mission and power’ of their time provided.<sup>19</sup> So a call for partnership like Azariah’s or requests for a sharing of power were not mere claims – the look to the East reveals that they were voicing experiences and speaking of a variety of existing power settings. It is difficult to establish how strong these alternative structures were, yet this reflection should caution us that, in the matrix of mission and power, the debates about structures were already at that time more complex than we usually find it expressed in our textbooks.

In a sociological perspective,<sup>20</sup> the main participants on that stage were organizations whose objective was to communicate their goal – Christianizing the non-Christians – between the home base and the missionaries in the field. They acted as intermediate agencies, and raised funds and support by writing about ‘pagans’ and the success of their missionaries among them.<sup>21</sup> They provided the theological legitimization and formed the backbone of the enterprise by recruiting personnel, and

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<sup>19</sup> Discourses are ‘to be treated as exercises that systematically shape the subjects/matters of which they have spoken’. Thus they form the frame of reference as to whether arguments are reasonable or not: Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Random House, 1982).

<sup>20</sup> Hartmann Tyrell, “‘Organisierte Mission’-Protestantische Missionsgesellschaften des ‘langen 19. Jh.’”, in Klaus Koschorke (Hg.), *Etappen der Globalisierung in christentumsgeschichtlicher Perspektive [Phases of Globalization in the History of Christianity]*, (Studien zur Außereuropäischen Christentumsgeschichte, 19), (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), 255-72.

<sup>21</sup> See, for instance, the rather sober observations in the report on the home base on the reasons why people give financial support: ‘There is no question that a large proportion of the funds given to foreign missions is given from the highest and best motives. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that in every congregation there are men and women who give because they suppose they ought to give to foreign missions’, or because they are asked, and who certainly would not offer the gift if it were not applied for. Seventy per cent of the answers received place the religious motive first, while the remainder place emphasis on the philanthropic or humanitarian motive, or upon motives of a more incidental and indirect kind. One secretary of a society states that the appeal to humanitarian instincts frequently secured the best results financially. Among the more casual motives mentioned are an intellectual interest in foreign countries, the belief that missions promote commerce and are a “paying investment”, and a general feeling that supporting work undertaken by the Church is the right thing to do.’ See *World Missionary Conference 1910: Report of Commission 6: The Home Base of Missions* (Edinburgh, London: Oliphant, 1910), 159-60.

educating and sending them as missionaries. The specific structure of the agencies ensured their control over mission congregations and churches. They functioned through the decisions they made: whom to choose, where to send, where to build a station, how much resources were available, etc. An often overlooked aspect of the power of the mission societies was that the home base or the support circles were not also involved in their decisions.<sup>22</sup> One of the modern aspects of these societies was precisely that they were free associations, responsible only to themselves.<sup>23</sup>

In short, only part of the activity of such a society or agency consisted of doing mission or evangelism, while a larger part was organizing the agency: missionary agencies were *organizing* mission and evangelism. Another modern aspect of these organizations is that they managed transnational and transcultural relations: they sent missionaries cross-culturally, and they raised, collected and communicated knowledge.<sup>24</sup> They needed to stabilize their cross-cultural networks of exchange and communication between at least two different kinds of ‘indigenous’ peoples: those who formed the home base and the new Christians.<sup>25</sup> In that discourse they controlled the information and ‘facts’ which made their arguments meaningful in the first place.

### **New Models of Power and Power Structures?**

When, in the wake of the Edinburgh conference, the International Missionary Council (IMC) was eventually founded in 1921, its members were mission societies and mission councils which had sent their delegates to Edinburgh. Before its integration with the World Council of Churches in 1961, the IMC had significantly changed: it had been enlarged by Christian councils from India, China, Pakistan, etc., some of which had come into life through the above-mentioned continuation committee’s work. So, structurally, the former mission fields were represented by national Christian Councils, whereas the Global North was represented through mission structures, some of them departments of churches, some of them still independent societies or the councils of such societies.<sup>26</sup> These had

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<sup>22</sup> See, for an attempt to change precisely this point, Hardwick, ‘Mission and Power. A Response from the Center’ in this volume.

<sup>23</sup> Tyrell, ‘Organisierte Mission’, 261-62.

<sup>24</sup> The Edinburgh reports are a good example of that!

<sup>25</sup> Tyrell, ‘Organisierte Mission’, 263.

<sup>26</sup> See the list in *IRM* 49 (1961), 126-27. Compare *Minutes of the Joint Committee of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council, meeting at New Haven, Connecticut, 23rd-27th July 1957, 78-80*, for a draft plan for integration. The problem of these intermediate structures has already been discussed in Edinburgh: that mission ‘has been carried on to a large extent by Societies within the Church rather than by the Church itself acting through its official machinery. Even where foreign missionary work has been conducted by a Committee appointed

continued to be intermediate structures between churches in their own countries and those in other regions. The majority of the resources over which the IMC had oversight – like the important Theological Education Fund – still came from the northern hemisphere.

The changing political landscape after World War II, the movements of independence and the de-colonization process are some of the changes in the midst of which the structural integration of church and mission took place.<sup>27</sup> Edinburgh 1910's division of the world into Christian and non-Christian sectors – broadly co-extensive with the colonial order – had, theologically, been replaced in the aftermath of World War I by a different understanding of the relationship of the churches' mission to worldly powers. Sundkler, on the occasion of the integration of the IMC, quoted the Whitby conference: citizenship in the heavenly kingdom means that 'we are no more able unreservedly to identify ourselves with our nation, its self-willed destiny and aspirations'.<sup>28</sup> That called for an *international* organization as a forum for the voices of church and mission in the various regions.

The newly-created Division of World Mission and Evangelism – as the executive branch of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) – reported to the WCC, renewed through the integration, at the Delhi assembly:

Our temptation will be to think of the Division simply as the continuation of the interests of the International Missionary Council with an emphasis on Asia, Africa, and South America. We must resist this temptation. This is the Division of World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches. We are concerned not with three continents but with six. In co-operation with every department of the World Council and with the full resources of the Christian community in every land, we must help the churches to confront men and women with the claims of Jesus Christ wherever they live.<sup>29</sup>

It is not mentioned but safe to assume that this was not the temptation of the national or regional Christian Councils in Asia or Africa.

The arenas for the ensuing debate on power in the new relationships and structures were the World Missionary Conferences which the CWME

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by the recognised ecclesiastical authorities, as in Scotland, interest in the work has been confined to a comparatively limited circle of people and has not characterised the Church as a whole': *World Missionary Conference, 1910: Report of Commission 6*, 146.

<sup>27</sup> See Lesslie Newbigin, 'Mission to Six Continents', in Harold E. Fey, *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Vol. 2. 1948-1968* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1970), 171-98.

<sup>28</sup> Bengt Sundkler, 'Daring, in order to know', in *IRM*, 51 (1961), 4-11, here 7.

<sup>29</sup> Report of the Committee of the Assembly on the Commission and Division of World Mission and Evangelism, in the New Delhi Report. *The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches 1961* (London: SCM, 1962), 249-57, here 250.

continued to organize. Matthey, a former deputy director of the CWME, interprets the two world missionary conferences in Bangkok and Melbourne as proposing two different ways of looking at power.<sup>30</sup>

In Bangkok 1972-73, many of the western mission bodies and churches felt they were being put in the dock. The misuse of power, an unwillingness to share resources, and racism – these were some of the accusations.

‘2. “Partnership in mission” remains an empty slogan. Even where autonomy and equal partnership have been achieved in a formal sense, the actual dynamics are such as to perpetuate relationships of domination and dependence.

‘3. The power relations between mission agencies in Europe, North America and Australasia, and the churches in other areas to which they relate, reflect the economic inequalities between the nations concerned. This is one reason – though not the primary one – why mission agencies must see the struggle for international economic justice as one of their urgent tasks today.’<sup>31</sup>

One concept put forward in Bangkok to change that setting was the moratorium, the suspending of funding, from North to South: ‘The whole debate on the moratorium springs from our failure to relate to one another in a way which does not dehumanize. The moratorium would enable the receiving church to find its identity, set its own priorities and discover within its own fellowship the resources to carry out its authentic mission. It would also enable the sending church to rediscover its identity in the context of the contemporary situation.’<sup>32</sup>

The Bangkok conference stated: ‘The very idea of power – conceived of as the authority to administer funds and deploy personnel – is alien to a true understanding of the Church.’<sup>33</sup> To dissociate in order to humanize givers and receivers – this radical step was never taken. That hints at the power of the underlying imbalance of structures, especially of financial resources: those who claimed a moratorium seem to have been unable to realize it.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Jacques Matthey, ‘Mission und Macht – damals und heute’, in *Wege nach Edinburgh: Standortbestimmungen im Dialog mit der ersten Weltmissionskonferenz 1910* (Weltmission heute: Studienheft 68), (Hamburg, Germany: EMW, 2010), 70-83. The quotes in the following passages are proposed by Matthey and quoted here from the original sources since Matthey used the German edition.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Section III: Churches renewed in Mission’, in *Minutes and Report of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, 31st December 1972 and 9th-12th January 1973* (Geneva: WCC Publications, n.d.), 99-113, here 104.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Section III: Churches renewed in Mission’, 106.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Section III: Churches renewed in Mission’, 104.

<sup>34</sup> It was, however, one of the impulses to begin a process of the sharing of resources which led to the El Escorial meeting in 1987, where sharing in inter-church aid and development was intensively discussed and ‘Guidelines on sharing’ were accepted. See *Sharing life: Official report of the WCC World Consultation on Koinonia: Sharing Life in a World Community*, El Escorial, Spain, October 1987, in

Instead, the model of the Community of Churches in Missions (CEVAA) around the former Paris Evangelical Missionary Society is greeted in such a way as to effectively transform the sharing of funds and personnel.<sup>35</sup>

Matthey argues that in Melbourne (1980) this negative image of power gives way to an understanding of power as a creative force. Melbourne continued to identify the main conflict to be the rich against the poor and that the churches in the West are part of these oppressive structures. But with Christ a different power came into this world, Melbourne argued, which fights demonic powers and liberates and can forgive sins and overcome dehumanized structures. Through the worldly powers, the churches are challenged to be on the side of the oppressed and through God's 'creative, liberating and serving power' they are empowered to be 'creative minorities' which follow the call to lead a radically transformed life.<sup>36</sup>

Almost twenty years after Bangkok, the World Missionary Conference in San Antonio speaks (Section 2) of power which comes to life in the midst of suffering and fighting for the liberation of the poor. This 'creative power' is considered as an important aspect of a humanizing process: 'For though the church was founded through the creative power of the cross, it was Pentecost which provided the creative power for building the community and organizing it through a common faith and understanding, suffering and struggle.'<sup>37</sup>

Matthey thinks that this understanding was influenced through the experiences of the Urban Rural Mission (URM). In the midst of unjust global structures, URM – like other movements – experienced that faith could bring change to the lives of people locally and empower marginalized groups in slums or people without land.<sup>38</sup>

Since the Uppsala assembly, justice as a focus for an engagement of churches had been emphasized and, along with it, development had been placed on the agenda of the churches and also of most of the mainline mission bodies. A focus on mission as participation in liberation struggles was still present at the time of Melbourne and San Antonio. But in these years, and even more in the 1990s, a critical view of development reigned. Yet, both in mission and development, concrete actions were identified as being able to transform the lives of people and of local congregations, even if at a global level the system remained unchallenged. A power discourse

Huibert van Beek (ed), (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989), 106. The guidelines are found on 27-33.

<sup>35</sup> 'Section III: Churches renewed in Mission', 105.

<sup>36</sup> Matthey, 'Mission und Macht', 75-76. Martin Lehmann-Harbeck (ed), *Dein Reich komme: Weltmissionskonferenz in Melbourne 1980* (Frankfurt, Germany: Lembeck, 1980), 167-69 (in Section IV).

<sup>37</sup> Frederick R. Wilson (ed), *The San Antonio Report. Your Will be done: Mission in Christ's Way* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 39.

<sup>38</sup> Matthey, 'Mission und Macht', 76.

based on the dichotomy of rich and poor opened up to include more differentiated analyses of micro-power constellations and put a greater emphasis on concrete action: how does a multitude of small steps contribute towards achieving the big goal of liberation, and how do many missionary endeavours promote the big aim of proclaiming the good news to everyone?

In all these intense debates, reinterpretations of power and in the search for adequate structures for partnership, CEVAA (already in Bangkok), the Council for World Mission (CWM) and, later, the United Evangelical Mission (UEM), are quoted as prime examples of how to overcome the imbalance in power: viz. by forming a community of partners in mission.<sup>39</sup> Theologically conceptualized as *koinonia* – as in the book of Acts, they organize the sharing of resources – personnel, ideas, finances – in such a way that the distinction between giving and receiving churches is transcended by implementing structures of participation in decision-making and of mutual accountability.<sup>40</sup>

### Mission, Power, World Christianity

So far, this contribution followed one trajectory formed in the historical ecumenical movement which can be traced back to Edinburgh.<sup>41</sup> In a long and often painful conversation and in difficult processes, the churches and mission bodies of the movement have learned that there is more to share than money, but that sharing challenges all those participating in the process. On the basis of intending to continue ‘to move together’ (Busan 2013), criteria have been proposed to evaluate whether sharing is a

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<sup>39</sup> So also at the World Missionary Conference at Salvador de Bahia, where CEVAA/CWM/UEM are quoted under Mutuality in Mission. Christopher Duraisingh (ed), *Called to one Hope: The Gospel in Diverse Cultures* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 72.

<sup>40</sup> See Kai Funkschmidt, ‘New Models of Mission Relationship and Partnership’, in *IRM* 91 (No. 363, October) 2002, 558-76. For CWM, see Desmond van der Water (ed), *Postcolonial Mission. Power and Partnership in World Christianity* (Upland, CA: Sopher Press, 2011). See also, on CEVAA and CWM, Kim, ‘Partnership and Resource-Sharing’, 264-66.

<sup>41</sup> This article will not touch on the Lausanne movement. For Lausanne and Mission, see in the Centenary Series Margunn Serigstad Dahle, Lars Dahle and Knud Jørgenson (eds), *The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives* (Edinburgh Centenary Series, 22), (Oxford: Regnum, 2014). One contribution addresses similar questions: see Roy Peterson and Gilles Gravelle, ‘Strategy in Mission – Twenty-First Century Style’, in Dahle, Dahle and Jørgenson (eds), *The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives*, 207-19. They focus on co-operation in strategizing but quote Hwa Yung who looks critically at the unbalanced funding between western and non-western churches and agencies: ‘How can this be done without giving rise to a dependency mentality on the one hand, and the perpetuation of missionary control on the other?’, 212.

'humanizing' activity: the sharing of life (the WCC conference at El Escorial) and liberation from unjust structures<sup>42</sup> or, in the terminology of the development discourse, reducing poverty and injustice through rights-based approaches.<sup>43</sup> The sharing of life, of spirituality, of ideas and reflections, of financial resources in mutual accountability, participative structures, and with the representation of all, should help to transcend the distinction between giving and receiving and establish a communion of sharing.<sup>44</sup> One important achievement of that history was the transformation of sending missionaries from the North to the South into a sharing of personnel *from everywhere to everywhere*.

Within the realm of the historical ecumenical movement, the communities (*koinonia*) of CEVAA, CWM, and UEM could establish structures and procedures to implement the above principles.<sup>45</sup> Funkschmidt's seminal study of these three examples,<sup>46</sup> and the presentations on these communities at the occasion of an evaluation conference in 2002,<sup>47</sup> identify the following conditions for their success: they are committed communities in mission with a common history; their respective members share comparable confessional convictions, while even newly admitted members had historical or confessional links with an existing member; and the communities, to a large extent, used the same language.<sup>48</sup>

These qualifications hint at the fact that the implementation of participative and power-sensitive structures obviously calls for fully

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<sup>42</sup> *Sharing Life* (El Escorial), 27-33. El Escorial still focuses mainly on a sharing between North and South.

<sup>43</sup> There is no space here to look to the ACT Alliance: [www.actalliance.org](http://www.actalliance.org). For aspects of power in development co-operation, see, for instance, 'Paternalism and Power in Official Development Assistance: Øyvind Eggen interviewed by Knud Jørgenson', in Knut Edvard Larsen and Knud Jørgensen (eds), *Power and Partnership* (Regnum Studies in Mission), (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 102-03; and Kenneth Mtata, *Religion: Help or Hindrance to development?* (LWF Documentation, 58), (Leipzig, Germany: Evang. Verlagsanstalt, 2013).

<sup>44</sup> To understand how difficult and almost depressing this consultation was actually perceived in Germany, see a consultation of church-based development agencies in the early 1990s. AG KED (ed) *Ökumenisches Teilen: Texte aus zwei Tagungen in der Evangelischen Akademie Bad Boll* (Bad Boll, Stuttgart, Germany: Evangelische Akademie, AG KED, 1994).

<sup>45</sup> Kai Funkschmidt, 'Partnership between Unequals – Mission Impossible? Mission Structures Revisited', in *IRM*, 91 (No. 363, October) 2002, 395-413.

<sup>46</sup> Kai Funkschmidt, *Earthing the Vision: Strukturereformen in der Mission untersucht am Beispiel von CEVAA (Paris), CWM (London) und UEM (Wuppertal)* (Frankfurt, Germany: Lembeck, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> 'Towards the Fullness of Life: Intercontextual Relationships in Mission. Report from a Missiological Consultation, London, England, 14-19 April, 2002', in *IRM*, 91 (No. 363, October) 2002, 589-603.

<sup>48</sup> See other contributions in issue 363 of *IRM* 91 (No. 363, October) 2002.

committed co-operation. And it definitely calls also for large investments of resources and of time into structures, committees, policies, consulting processes and expertise of responsible people – a costly strategy which other mainline bodies also and at the same time attempted to pursue in their bilateral relations.

The communities mentioned above were formed with the former partners of European-based mission societies, including their supporting churches in Europe. The majority of the member churches of these communities are located in the Global South. If one is willing to consider their attempts to share power differently and their South-South exchanges as a part of the southward movement of World Christianity, still, the main thrust of the so-called ‘shift of gravity’ to the South is formed by the growth of charismatic-Pentecostal movements and of evangelicals.

Most of that growth takes place outside the structures of the historical ecumenical movement.<sup>49</sup> A large sector of these latter churches, movements and mission structures have come into being in the second half of the nineteenth century and are thus affected in a different way by the repercussions of the shift from colonial to post-colonial power settings. Among them, the emphasis is largely on evangelism and they are concerned not so much with church relations as with putting resources and co-operation into reaching out to the unevangelized. Evaluating the model of the three named communities in mission, Funkschmidt asks: ‘Why should a structure that furthers equal sharing of resources and power between North and South be particularly favorable to evangelistic activity?’<sup>50</sup> A bird’s-eye view of evangelism seems to confirm that the structures chosen for evangelistic purposes in worldwide Christianity are different from these models. One indicator of that is that, in the ecumenical movement, the sharing of personnel among churches – North-South, South-North, South-South – has largely replaced the sending of missionaries to work in foreign countries. In World Christianity, however, the number of missionaries working in foreign countries has increased considerably since 1910. Some of them are sent by congregations to other countries or people-groups in their own country,<sup>51</sup> some are individual tent-makers, while others are supported by large bodies or mission organizations, and again others are sent as part of a sharing of personnel or in the context of one

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<sup>49</sup> Todd M. Johnson, and Kenneth R. Ross (eds), *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010* (Edinburgh, UK: University Press, 2009) map this shift.

<sup>50</sup> Funkschmidt, ‘Partnership Between Unequals – Mission Impossible?’, 405.

<sup>51</sup> For one instructive example, see Sung-wook Hong, ‘Mission Engagement of a Local church: The Case of Anyang City, Korea’, in Wonsuk Ma and Kyo Seong Ahn (eds), *Korean Church, God’s Mission, Global Christianity* (Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, 26), (Oxford: Regnum, 2015), 242-53. This church sends missionaries transnationally (e.g. Brazil, North Korea) as well as within Korea, to city or island or mountain communities where ‘the evangelization rate is low’, 249.

church spreading internationally – as with some of the new African and Asian churches: the variety is immense and impossible to map.

A study<sup>52</sup> calculated the number of transcultural missionaries as being approximately 440,000 in 2010. While in absolute numbers, the United States still tops the chart by sending 127,000, ‘of the ten countries sending the most missionaries in 2010, three were in the global South: Brazil, South Korea and India’. Large numbers of missionaries are also sent out by churches and mission organizations in South Africa, the Philippines, Mexico, China, Colombia and Nigeria.<sup>53</sup>

‘The ten countries that sent the most international missionaries in 2010 were home to 32% of the world’s church members but sent almost 73% of all international missionaries.’ Yet, if one looks at the global picture, a surprising fact emerges: the majority of these missionaries is sent to majority Christian countries. ‘The “top nine” receiving countries were home to only 3.5% of the world’s non-Christians but received more than 34% of all international missionaries.’<sup>54</sup> All these countries have Christian majorities. By contrast, the ‘ten countries with the most non-Christians in 2010 were home to 73% of all non-Christians globally. Because many of them restrict or deny missionary access, however, they received only 9% of all international missionaries’.<sup>55</sup> The *Atlas of Global Christianity* even concludes that ultimately only 0.3 % of all financial resources go to mission among ‘unevangelized non-Christians’.<sup>56</sup>

The way the above study collated and presented data and constructed relations between factors and results indicates that the ongoing mission and evangelistic movements which put the emphasis on sending missionaries are driven by a motto reminiscent of Edinburgh 1910: ‘Finishing the task.’ The structures chosen to achieve the aim of evangelizing the world – as far as one can survey the activities through their internet presentation – are purpose-driven organizations<sup>57</sup> such as those networking in the *Global*

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<sup>52</sup> *Christianity in its Global Context, 1970-2020: Society, Religion, and Mission* (June 2013). Edited by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary

([www.gordonconwell.com/netcommunity/CSGCResources/ChristianityinitsGlobalContext.pdf](http://www.gordonconwell.com/netcommunity/CSGCResources/ChristianityinitsGlobalContext.pdf)). The following quotes and numbers all are taken from this publication, 76-77. More elaborate graphs and regional surveys of this Center are to be found in *Atlas of Global Christianity*, 258-89.

<sup>53</sup> *Christianity in its Global Context, 1970-2020*, 76.

<sup>54</sup> *Christianity in its Global Context, 1970-2020*, 76.

<sup>55</sup> *Christianity in its Global Context, 1970-2020*, 77. The largest numbers work in China, India and Nigeria, where ‘large numbers of home missionaries also work among non-Christians’.

<sup>56</sup> *Atlas of Global Christianity*, 296.

<sup>57</sup> See, for instance Allen Yeh, ‘Tokyo 2010 and Edinburgh 2010: A comparison of two centenary Conferences’, in *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, 27 (Fall 2010), 117-25, which compares two of the four large conferences held in 2010

*Network of Mission Structures* related to Yonggi Cho.<sup>58</sup> This platform makes explicit reference to Edinburgh and understands the obligation of its member organizations to fulfil the unfinished task of reaching the unreached. On its website it asks: ‘Could this be the generation to cross the finishing line in reaching all peoples?’<sup>59</sup>

Tokyo 2010 – one conference which took place in the jubilee year and linked back to Edinburgh 1910 – is another example of such an approach. It was the deliberate attempt to work strategically and co-ordinate forces by aligning and scaling the goals of independent organizations. Tokyo focused clearly on the aspect of unreached peoples and on ‘finishing the task’ of evangelizing the whole world.<sup>60</sup>

In the section of World Christianity with its emphasis on evangelism,<sup>61</sup> the legitimacy of the organizations is based on Matthew 28 with the understanding that the *ethné* mentioned are socio-linguistic and ethnic groups, not modern nations. Less concerned with national groups or politics, power aspects can be identified in these movements in the authority assumed to be received by a call of God and the experience of empowerment for service through the Spirit. The structures created for the purposes of evangelism and mission are platforms for strategizing, and networks of organizations pursuing the same objectives, not decision-making structures. In many of these organizations – and this can certainly be studied at the Tokyo conference – one outstanding aspect of power is that they revolve round charismatic leader personalities. It is their vision, their ideas, which are put into practice and organizations are free to join. That affects the power aspects in established relationships in a specific way but does not suspend other related questions discussed so far.<sup>62</sup>

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in terms of assisting completion of the task, 119. Not surprisingly, Tokyo comes top in that category, and hence for him is the more important conference.

<sup>58</sup> Myung Soo Park, ‘Globalization of the Korean Pentecostal Movement: The International Ministry of Dr Yonggi Cho’, in Ma and Ahn (eds), *Korean Church, God’s Mission, Global Christianity*, 228-41.

<sup>59</sup> [www.gnms.net/index.html](http://www.gnms.net/index.html) (accessed 13th March 2016).

<sup>60</sup> [www.gnms.net/tokyo\\_report.html](http://www.gnms.net/tokyo_report.html) (accessed 13th March 2016).

<sup>61</sup> In the volume of the Edinburgh Centenary Series on Pentecostal Mission, there is ample evidence of mission and evangelism work done but not much about the structures and hence the power relations: Ma, Kärkäinen and Asamoah-Gyadu (eds), *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity*. In Julie Ma’s study in that volume, it is noticeable that many of the missionaries and evangelists mentioned for Asia are Asians themselves. Julie Ma, ‘Pentecostal Evangelism, Church Planting, and Church Growth’, in Ma, Kärkäinen and Asamoah-Gyadu (eds), *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity*, 87-106, here 92-93. For a study of Pentecostalism and politics, see Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* (Sacra Doctrina), (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2010).

<sup>62</sup> See, for instance, Yeh’s reflection on ‘mission heroes’: Yeh, ‘Tokyo 2010 and Edinburgh 2010’, 117-25; Myung Soo Park on David Yonggi Cho: ‘There has been no precedent for such an influential Christian leader in the non-Western World’

## Conclusion

This contribution has concentrated on the mainline Protestant thread of mission and ecumenical history. This province of World Christianity has produced a distinct discourse on sharing and its respective structures. Many of the problems and most of the arguments dealt with in that discourse are related to the fact that the actors in that drama are linked through a common but conflictive history. Through their entangled history they were challenged in their structures and decision-making instruments to cope with external factors – e.g. the shift from a colonial setting to a post-colonial globalized world – and, at the same time, to overcome the replications of these external settings in their internal power relations. With all the changes of landscape, with mission from everywhere to everywhere, and with strong and growing mission movements from Africa, Asia and Latin America, the *Atlas of Global Christianity* assumes that the majority of the financial resources for mission is still located in the Global North.<sup>63</sup>

It seems to me that, after a period of heated and robust debates on power and the sharing of resources, a shift can be identified. One could argue that, in the earlier debates about mission and power, the structures were measured against the optimism and the challenge that mission and development should eventually change the global setting. Unbalanced resources were primarily interpreted as a result of and symbolically for still-prevailing unjust structures. The ensuing priorities on justice and dignity for the poor and on a ‘life in fullness for all’<sup>64</sup> continue to be followed today. Yet, to simplify it, the emphasis in the last decades has shifted to the question of how the available resources can be put to use to change the local settings. Today, it is also largely accepted that power is a permanent dimension of relationships. Hence, emphasis is put on developing adequate decision-making processes which ensure participation not only in activities and projects, but also in agenda-setting and in defining priorities for the allocation of resources, both material (funds, personnel) and non-material (ideas, spirituality, knowledge, reflection). In that, some progress could be made, but there is definitely more to do.

Churches and mission organizations related to the ecumenical movement share development-related goals and engage with processes like the Millennium Development Goals and the new Sustainable Development

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(228): Myung Soo Park, ‘Globalisation of the Korean Pentecostal Movement: The International Ministry of David Yonggi Cho’, in Ma and Ahn (eds), *Korean Church, God’s Mission, Global Christianity*, 228-41: ‘His international ministry is carried out by well-structured organisations such as CGI’, 240.

<sup>63</sup> ‘Christian Finance, 1910-2010’, in *Atlas of Global Christianity*, 294-97, especially the table on 296.

<sup>64</sup> Jooseop Keum (ed), ‘Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes’: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes> (accessed 13th March 2016).

Goals. Among them there is awareness that they are one voice among many and that, to pursue these goals, many more participants are needed, governmental as well as among the so-called faith-based organizations. The way they relate to these organizations in these areas affects their activity in mission and evangelism.

These are insights from one sector of World Christianity and the costly experiences – in the double sense of the word – are not shared by all, so that the reference frame for power-related questions is not the same in the various provinces of World Christianity. The view on other sectors of World Christianity in this contribution is definitely too short-sighted but the following aspects could be taken for further consideration.

The Spirit calls and moves whoever s/he wants and, globally, there is more movement than co-operation structures in mission and evangelism, and this multitude and variety is a gift from God. This includes a more positive appreciation of power but understanding power coming from God or the Spirit calls for a clear distinction between his activity and human activity in mission and its implications for power aspects in mission relations.<sup>65</sup>

However, in our globalized world, mission from everywhere to everywhere implies that, wherever mission is actively carried out, there are (almost everywhere) other churches and missions around. The question of where someone feels they are called should not only be discussed by sending churches/congregations or agencies and their interpretation of Matthew 28, but also with people, councils and churches in the identified 'mission field'. The document 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World' is a call for at least consultation, if not co-operation, because what the mission and evangelism of one member of World Christianity is doing affects many other members and their work.<sup>66</sup>

Mission takes place today from everywhere to everywhere but to a large extent still follows, structurally, the classical 'star-like' structure which has been so characteristic of the early missionary movement. Hence, the critical question lingers on as to where the power resides – whether in a web of relationships of participating partners or in thousands of 'centres' of which each is related to different places and fields or partners in mission – and in which these partners do not always know each other. Thus, it is not only a critical question of where the material and non-material resources are located,<sup>67</sup> and who commands them, but also who has the capacity to research and collect knowledge which is then invested in the centres and,

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<sup>65</sup> A point Matthey makes, in 'Mission und Macht', 76-77.

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world> (accessed 13th March 2016).

<sup>67</sup> See the quote from Yung, a bishop from Malaysia, footnote 41.

with it, the ability to interpret this knowledge,<sup>68</sup> and hence form the discourse which makes the proposed goals reasonable and the used arguments meaningful.

The most fundamental lessons to be learned from the presentation of the studied attempts to form adequate and responsible structures are probably that all attempts are embedded in dramatically unequal, asymmetrical and unjust settings, and that they are costly: it needs willingness, energy, time and resources to co-operate with others – and a self-critical attitude while engaging with them because that includes the risk of becoming trapped in power.

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<sup>68</sup> See, in this volume, Klaus Hock, 'Mission and Power: Theoretical Fragments from Transcultural Perspectives: An Exploratory Essay on the Power of Interpretation in Mission Studies'.

# WHEN STRANGERS BECOME FRIENDS: MISSION AND POWER IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL MIGRATION

Gemma Tulud Cruz

## Migration in the Age of Globalization

Human mobility is an indispensable part of the human story. People have moved for centuries and generations for various reasons. What is clear is that every wave of migration brings with it immense possibilities and challenges, just as every wave of migration is often the result of an opportunity or crisis.

The twentieth century saw the considerable rise of the movement of peoples largely due to the structures and processes of globalization. As a social phenomenon, globalization has primarily been associated with the flexibility and extension of the forms of production, the rapid mobility of capital, information and goods, the denationalizing of capital, the deterritorialization of culture, the interpenetration of local communities by global media networks, and the dispersal of socio-economic power. With globalization came also advances in, and the wider availability of, transport as well as the explosion of and wider access to information and communication technology, such as the internet and mobile phones. All these developments, combined with the various conflicts raging and intermittently erupting in various parts of the world, largely account for the unprecedented increase of people moving across borders, making the 21st century the age of migration. A July 2014 UN report notes that, globally, there were 232 million international migrants.<sup>1</sup> More disturbingly, a June 2014 UN refugee agency reports that there were then 51.2 million refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people worldwide, the highest since World War II.<sup>2</sup>

The challenges and gifts associated with the massive flow of peoples desperate to move, almost half of whom are Christians,<sup>3</sup> constitute a locus

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<sup>1</sup> See 'International Migration and Development Report', Report of the Secretary General at the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 20th July 2014: [www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/207](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/207) (accessed 10th January 2015).

<sup>2</sup> UNCHR: 'World Refugee Day: Global forced displacement tops 50 million for first time since post-World War II era': [www.unhcr.org/53a155bc6.html](http://www.unhcr.org/53a155bc6.html) (accessed 15th January 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Todd Johnson and Gina Bellofatto, 'Migration, Religious Diasporas and Religious Diversity', in *Mission Studies*, 29 (2012), 8-9.

for re-imagining missionary theology and practice.<sup>4</sup> While there are many types of globalization-facilitated movements that relate to the exercise of power in mission,<sup>5</sup> this essay will focus on vulnerable people on the move since they constitute the majority and give us glimpses of possibly new(er) ways of thinking and doing mission in the age of migration.

### Mission and Power in the Context of Global Migration

Mission has always involved an invitation to be imaginative, creative, flexible and agile in adapting evangelization to changing times. Heeding such an invitation requires an understanding of how the terrain for preaching the gospel is being transformed. The massive flow of peoples fuelled by globalization, which is transforming the identities and subjectivities of individuals and societies, makes migration, in the words of Stephen Bevans, not only a major *theme* in missiological thinking today but also a major *source* of missiological thinking, as well.<sup>6</sup> Traditionally, mission in the context of people on the move has largely been understood and practised as a mission to/among migrants. In more recent times, there is increasing attention to migrants as not simply objects or recipients of mission but as missionaries themselves. It is to these two facets of missionary practice in the context of global migration that this essay now turns.

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<sup>4</sup> On the theological challenges of migration in the context of globalisation in general, see Gemma Tulud Cruz, 'Between Identity and Security: Theological Implications of Migration in the Context of Globalization', in *Theological Studies*, 69 (2008), 357-75.

<sup>5</sup> One example is short-term volunteer missionaries, particularly from developed countries. Their missionary projects which proselytize through 'secular' efforts like economic development and education are among the untold back-stories of neo-liberal globalisation and transnational religious movements today. See J.H.J. Han, "'If you don't work, you don't eat": evangelising development in Africa', in J. Song (ed), *New Millennium South Korea: Neoliberal and Transnational Movements* (London: Routledge, 2011), 143. Another example is the tourist evangelists or Christian missionaries, particularly from the US, who engage in healing sessions or miracle crusades in the global South which do not necessarily lift the miserable condition of the oppressed but, in some cases, take advantage of it. See J.N.K. Mugambi, 'Some Reflections on Tourist Evangelism in Tropical Africa', in *Theologies and Cultures*, Vol. V, No. 2 (December 2008), 151-80. A broader survey of missionaries on the move in contemporary times could be seen in Claire Brickell, 'Geographies of Contemporary Christian Mission(aries)', in *Geography Compass*, 6/12 (2012), 725-39.

<sup>6</sup> Italics in original. Stephen Bevans, 'Migration and Mission: Pastoral Challenges, Theological Insights', in Elaine Padilla and Peter Phan (ed), *Contemporary Issues of Migration and Theology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 157-77.

### Mission among Migrants

To be sure, globalization can be life-affirming and, at the same time, disastrously dehumanizing as some of its structures make it a form of imperialism that carries a contemptible account of what it means to be human, destroys our sense of being at home in the world, and threatens the ecosystem.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, taking our cue from the author of Ephesians who writes: ‘Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms’ (Eph. 6:12), a general Christian mission in the context of global migration is being witness to an understanding and exercise of power where structures are seen as created, fallen, and in need of redemption.<sup>8</sup> This understanding and exercise of power should be applied to the structures of world trade, multinational companies and global migration systems, as well as to the spirituality and worldview behind them which create dehumanizing conditions that adversely affect people, not only before their migration but also during and long after they move, regardless of the reason for their migration.

As an integral part of globalization, the migration of people, particularly those that are unauthorized, signals a challenge to the sovereignty, autonomy and viability of the modern nation-state. Not surprisingly, migrants in general and unauthorized migrants in particular experience discrimination.<sup>9</sup> In Korea, for example, locals earn 40% more than a Burmese UN Convention refugee who works the same hours and in a similar job because the Koreans are considered to be full-time workers.<sup>9</sup> Mission, in the face of the discrimination generally experienced by people on the move, could be expressed in the exercise of transformative power by the international community and, in particular, the citizens of destination countries by revealing, decrying and dismantling the racism that corrodes societies and profoundly distorts the lenses through which the realities of global migration are perceived.<sup>10</sup> To be sure, such xenophobic attitudes are not confined to the West or developed countries, which receive the majority of migrants. Take, for example, the mass expulsion of Ugandan Asians of

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<sup>7</sup> Timothy Gorrige, ‘The Principalities and Powers’, in Peter Heslam (ed), *Globalisation and the Good* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 80.

<sup>8</sup> For a substantive treatment of this theological perspective on power, see Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1984); *Unmasking the Powers* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1986); and *Engaging the Powers* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> Lian Hang Do, ‘Life as a Refugee was Not a Choice: The Burmese Refugees’ Plight’, in *CTC Bulletin*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1 (December 2012), 78.

<sup>10</sup> Marie Friedmann Marquardt, ‘Double Threat?: Unauthorized Migration as a Global Phenomenon’, in Elizabeth Collier and Charles Strain (eds), *Religious and Ethical Perspectives on Migration* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 27.

Indian and Pakistani origin by Idi Amin in 1972 or Tanzania's forced expulsion of some 25,000 forced migrants from Burundi in 2013.<sup>11</sup>

Missiologists working on the intersection of mission and migration agree that one of the most important forms of witness among individual Christians and the Christian community in general in the context of migration is that of providing hospitality.<sup>12</sup> Bevans, for example, notes that such hospitality could be practised by (1) offering a temporary home for newly-arrived migrants or refugees, regardless of their religious affiliation; (2) making special efforts to invite members of migrant communities to join a neighbourhood parish or congregation at church on Sunday; (3) making the facilities of the parish or congregation available to migrant groups for their own liturgical or social celebrations; (4) inviting diverse groups to participate in a common liturgy on the church's major feasts such as Easter; (5) including hymns or prayers in the language of migrants in the Sunday liturgies; and (6) including prayers for migrants, particularly those who are vulnerable, and on migrant-related issues at all liturgies.<sup>13</sup> Bevans also argues that efforts towards inculturation, which could be shown by taking into account the cultures of migrants in liturgy and in the life of the parish or congregation as a whole, is important, together with inter-religious dialogue. Indeed, mission among migrants entails crossing not just physical borders but also cultural and religious borders and, Gioacchino Campese adds, 'the borders of our established ways of thinking about God, church and human beings, of our prejudices about who belongs and who does not, borders between centre and margins'.<sup>14</sup> As Campese rightly notes, the hardest borders to cross are those within our minds and hearts, hence cross-cultural and cross-religious friendship is an essential component of mission as hospitality in a world in which human mobility plays a central role.<sup>15</sup>

Care must be taken, however, that acts of hospitality towards people on the move do not end up being paternalistic or used with vested interests. This is a real possibility, given the position of weakness occupied by migrants and the position of power occupied by those who receive them –

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<sup>11</sup> Ogenza Otunnu, 'Root Causes of Forced Migration in Africa', in *Religious and Ethical Perspectives on Migration*, 56.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Amos Yong, *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices and the Neighbor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008); Gemma Tulud Cruz, 'A Church for all Peoples: Missiological Implications of Contemporary Migration', in Tobias Keßler (ed), *Migration Als Ort Der Theologie*, Weltkirche Und Mission Band 4 (Regensburg, Germany: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2014), 146-66; and Emma Wildwood, 'Common Witness "in Christ": Peregrinations through Mission and Migration', in *Mission Studies*, 30 (2013), 51-58.

<sup>13</sup> Bevans, 'Migration and Mission', 163-64.

<sup>14</sup> Gioacchino Campese, 'Mission and Migration', in Stephen Bevans (ed), *A Century of Catholic Mission* (Oxford: Regnum, 2013), 256.

<sup>15</sup> Campese, 'Mission and Migration', 256, 260.

and what I regard as the problematic practice of referring to peoples and faith communities in destination countries as ‘hosts’ and, consequently, migrants as ‘guests’. Erin Wilson, for example, points out that Australian FBO (faith-based organizations) workers ‘are conscious of the position of power they hold in relation to the vulnerable asylum-seekers they work with as a result of providing them with accommodation, financial assistance and other services, and do not seek to abuse that power by forcing their system of beliefs on them’.<sup>16</sup>

Elsewhere I argued that such categories of ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’ reflect and reinforce an unbalanced order of relationships, and proposed using the term ‘host’ to refer to God instead. God as a host presents both the migrant and the citizen as guests and, consequently, both as strangers, thereby putting them both on an equal footing. It is a more egalitarian way of looking at the experience of hospitality.<sup>17</sup> In fact, it is very Christian as exemplified in our experience of creation, grace, healing, forgiveness, etc. as God’s gifts. This means that, whenever the local population practises hospitality towards migrants, they are actually sharing in God’s hospitality. This, therefore, challenges missiology to go beyond the notion of partnership *with* strangers to the partnership *of* strangers and from hospitality *to* strangers to the hospitality *of* strangers.

Authentic hospitality means that migrants are considered and treated as part of the family. For as long as 11:00 am on Sunday morning remains the most segregated hour of the week (as Martin Luther King observed), and for as long as migrants and their faith communities use the parish or congregation facilities at the pleasure or mercy of the dominant group, and for as long as migrants are simply tolerated or appreciated for their ‘unique’ or ‘exotic’ culture and do not have a voice or representation in key areas of parish or congregational life, such as the pastoral council, hospitality tends to be paternalistic and half-baked.

As people of faith, mission in the context of contemporary migration also means seeking and working for justice for people on the move. Hence, hospitality in the context of migration also needs to be what Christine Pohl regards as hospitality in its ‘subversive counter-cultural dimension’,<sup>18</sup> or ‘radical hospitality’,<sup>19</sup> as Dana Robert puts it, or what New Sanctuary

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<sup>16</sup> Erin Wilson, ‘Much to be Proud of, Much to be Done: Faith-Based Organizations and the Politics of Asylum in Australia’, in *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24:3 (2011), 554.

<sup>17</sup> Gemma Tulud Cruz, *An Intercultural Theology of Migration: Pilgrims in the Wilderness* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 2010), 127-28.

<sup>18</sup> Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 61-62.

<sup>19</sup> Dana Robert, ‘Mission in the Global Context’, in James Kroeger (ed), *The Gift of Mission: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), 102.

Movement<sup>20</sup> leader and Evangelical Lutheran church pastor the Rev. Alexia Salvatierra calls ‘prophetic hospitality’.<sup>21</sup> This risky hospitality is the opposite of cruelty. It entails welcoming socially undervalued persons, like migrants. It means challenging ‘other-ing’ and paving the way towards respect for and the visibility of strangers. Hospitality, in this way, becomes resistance for, or towards, humanization rooted in the power of recognition. Matthew 25:31-46, where Jesus says, ‘Come... inherit the kingdom prepared for you... for I was hungry and you gave me food... thirsty and you gave me drink... a stranger and you welcomed me,’ offers a very good basis for this. It goes to show that the hospitality that recognizes the stranger is a *kindom*<sup>22</sup> value that is actualized in the recognition of a neighbour in the stranger and, most especially, in the recognition of Jesus in every stranger.

What is needed, therefore, is a justice ministry which is carried out by lobbying for the just treatment of immigrants, and organizing workshops to conscientize people about government abuses and migrant humanity.<sup>23</sup> To be sure, God’s admonition to remember the stranger is not a passive but an active call, and it is important to work not only for concrete big-picture solutions but also for community solutions.<sup>24</sup> Meaningful and fruitful justice ministry, however, does not happen overnight. It must begin with a

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<sup>20</sup> The Sanctuary Movement dates back to the 1980s when American Christians from various denominations, together with Americans with other beliefs such as Jews, transported Central American refugees to safety and sheltered them in churches along the way. Some of the movement’s leaders were indicted by the Reagan administration for their actions, which were construed as civil disobedience. The work and witness of the movement, to a certain extent, eventually helped put an end to the Central American crisis and the oppression of immigrants at that time.

<sup>21</sup> See Alexia Salvatierra, “Do Not Neglect to Show Hospitality”: Sanctuary and Immigrant Justice’, in L. Dykstra and C. Myers (eds), *Liberating Biblical Study: Scholarship, Art and Action in Honor of the Center and Library for the Bible and Social Justice* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 213-20. See also Ched Myers, ‘Our God is Undocumented: Sanctuary and Prophetic Hospitality’, in Ched Myers and Matthew Colwell (eds), *Our God is Undocumented: Biblical Faith and Immigrant Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 53-72.

<sup>22</sup> I take ‘*kindom*’ from the late Cuban-American theologian Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz who uses it instead of the usual word ‘kingdom’ for two reasons: first, she argues that ‘kingdom’ is a sexist word. Second, she reckons that, today, the concept of kingdom – as is the word ‘reign’ – is both hierarchical and elitist. *Kindom*, on the other hand, makes it clear that when the fullness of God becomes a day-to-day reality in the world at large, we will be sisters and brothers – kin to each other – and will, indeed, be the family of God. See endnote no. 8 in Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, ‘Solidarity: Love of Neighbor in the 21st Century’, in Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel (eds), *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 306.

<sup>23</sup> Bevans, ‘Migration and Mission’, 165.

<sup>24</sup> See Kim Bobo, ‘On the Just Treatment of Immigrant Workers’, in *Religious and Ethical Perspectives on Migration*, 297-305.

personal encounter with a migrant. To be sure, a sense of mission begins with awareness of the issue. While awareness of the issue of migrants could be fostered by reading or watching the news, actually engaging with migrants is often the most effective way of raising awareness. Robert regards this 'relational mission' as essential in the age of globalization.<sup>25</sup> Mary Jo Leddy points to the vital role of encounter in 'When the Stranger Summons: Spiritual and Theological Considerations for Ministry'. Leddy, a Canadian who is widely recognized for her work with refugees in Toronto, notes:

As I have listened to frontline church workers, refugee advocates and immigration lawyers, two realities seem to emerge as constants in their experience: the first is that many of them are rooted in some church tradition; and the second, that most of them got involved in 'refugee work' through a personal encounter with a refugee or a refugee family.<sup>26</sup>

One could call this 'the power of encounter'. Emmanuel Lévinas calls it 'the ethical moment'. Ethics, for Lévinas, is primarily based on the experience of the encounter with the Other. It is about the ethics of the face. In Lévinas' thinking, the irreducible relation, the epiphany of the face-to-face, the encounter with another, is a privileged phenomenon in which the other person's proximity and distance are both strongly felt.<sup>27</sup> Leddy, who traces her work for refugees to an encounter with a refugee in great need, describes this ethical moment as conversion – the change of mind and heart and moral imagination – through a personal relationship.

The Rev. Hans Lutz, a long-term Swiss missionary in Hong Kong, gives voice to the relevance of personal encounter based on the plight of refugees and asylum-seekers from South Asia and Africa who do not go to Chinese churches because of the discrimination they experience on account of their colour, lack of legal status, and the stereotype that holds that those who have been in detention are criminals. Hong Kong churches themselves, by and large, seem to be reluctant to extend hospitality to these refugees and asylum-seekers who end up in international English-speaking congregations<sup>28</sup> since these are the churches that tend to welcome them and respond to their plight.<sup>29</sup> Lutz says, 'Once you see people and get to know

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<sup>25</sup> Robert, 'Mission in the Global Context', 101.

<sup>26</sup> Mary Jo Leddy, 'When the Stranger Summons: Spiritual and Theological Considerations for Ministry', in *New Theology Review*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (August 2007), 6.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

<sup>28</sup> These congregations also have members who are local Hong Kong Chinese.

<sup>29</sup> Elsewhere, I have discussed the vital role of churches in embodying hospitality to people on the move. See 'I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me: Hospitality in the Context of Migration', in *CTC Bulletin*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1 (December 2012), 62-70.

them, it's a different story.<sup>30</sup> This was precisely what happened when Kowloon Union Church created a Peacemaking Ministry Team composed of African refugees and asylum-seekers and arranged a visit to local schools, churches and community centres. In the words of an asylum-seeker:

What this ministry does is create an awareness of the life of refugees, to show we are human beings and promote acceptance... There's a lot of ignorance about Africa. Some young person asked me, 'Do you sleep with lions?' A Hong Kong teenager asked me, 'Is your blood black?' But I can see the changes, the impact on Hong Kong society. It's changing the minds of Hong Kong people.<sup>31</sup>

The story is similar with The Vine, an international evangelical English-speaking church which has the biggest direct ministry to refugees and asylum-seekers among the churches in Hong Kong. The ministry started after Pastor Tony Reid responded to a letter sent to the church office by a detained asylum-seeker pleading for a pastor to visit him.<sup>32</sup> What is clear and powerful about mission among migrants that is forged in encounter is that it also transforms the missionary and, consequently, the community.<sup>33</sup> Leddy suggests that this ethical moment – that is, the encounter – is the moment when we are 'summoned, addressed and commanded. This is the time of annunciation and visitation... For many, the encounter with a real person called "refugee" evokes feelings of profound compassion that lead to practical forms of kindness. It is within this reach of mercy that the necessity (and near impossibility) of justice begins to emerge'.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, sometimes all it takes is to meet and talk to a migrant for the issue to become clearer and the person behind the issue more real. It is what Henri Nouwen regards as the movement from 'hostility to hospitality' – with hospitality understood as the 'creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy'.<sup>35</sup>

Ultimately, it is still personal contact and friendship that are key to mission – for 'the gift of mission is, in fact, the opportunity of being able to give of oneself in friendship'.<sup>36</sup> At the above-mentioned Kowloon Union Church, for example, where there were, initially, racist attitudes among the

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<sup>30</sup> As quoted in Judy Chan, 'Welcoming the Stranger: Christian Hospitality to Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Hong Kong', in *CTC Bulletin*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1 (December 2012), 51.

<sup>31</sup> As quoted in Chan, 'Welcoming the Stranger', 52.

<sup>32</sup> Chan, 'Welcoming the Stranger', 53.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Daniel Groody, 'The Church on the Move: Mission in an Age of Migration', in *Mission Studies*, 30 (2013), 30-32.

<sup>34</sup> Leddy, 'When the Stranger Summons', 6-7.

<sup>35</sup> Henri Nouwen, *The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Image Books, 1975), 71.

<sup>36</sup> Albino Barrera, OP, 'Mission in a Globalized Economy', in *The Gift of Mission*, 161.

members towards the African churchgoers, there has been growth in the congregation and changes in attitude to the point where African brothers are now serving as worship leaders, Sunday School teachers and Church Council members. The church, in effect, has served as a bridge-builder in the community on behalf of refugees and asylum-seekers.<sup>37</sup> Thus, for Judy Chan, a mission co-worker at the Hong Kong Christian Council, having face-to-face encounters is key to generating involvement among churches towards establishing and maintaining ministry for migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers.<sup>38</sup> What is clear is that the roles and, consequently, missionary work for the clergy or religious leaders, particularly towards non-Christian peoples on the move, also need to change. In traditional societies, where immigrants mostly come from, the clergy are usually experts in religious rituals and scriptures. In the context of migration, however, they are sought for various kinds of help, particularly for what is normally defined as pastoral work.

### The Mission of Migrants

The structures and processes of globalization, as well as policies and political rhetoric in many destination countries, clearly put the majority of people on the move in a weaker position, making them primarily in need of missionary activity, as illustrated in the previous section. Mission in the context of migration, however, is not one-dimensional. Migrants themselves are missionaries in various ways.

In their new 'home' or destination country, religious assembly and affiliation constitute the most powerful means available to migrants in their search for self-identity, communal acceptance and social integration. Consequently, Jehu Hanciles suggests, in *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration and the Transformation of the West*, that immigrant congregations potentially have a missionary function, not only because they represent the most effective instruments through which immigrants can make impact on the wider society but also because immigrant churches model religious commitment, apply the message of the gospel directly to daily needs, and consist of communities that interact on a daily basis with other marginalized segments of society.<sup>39</sup> Churches built or established by migrants themselves often become veritable centres of social and religious life. Take the case of the Chinese Gospel Church in Houston, Texas. It created various social services which include language classes, welcome parties for new Chinese students, charity as well as special crisis funds to help members during emergencies, scholarship funds and a

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<sup>37</sup> Chan, 'Welcoming the Stranger', 56.

<sup>38</sup> See recommendations in Chan, 'Welcoming the Stranger', 59.

<sup>39</sup> Jehu Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 277-78.

bulletin board which displays important ads and information, e.g. used cars for sale, real estate and insurance agents, jobs like baby-sitting, food donations, etc. Moreover, classes on critical issues such as applying for a job and how to get various kinds of insurance are conducted. They also formed fellowships, made up of fifty people, which hold religious meetings with activities that include regular training workshops and Sunday school classes for doing one-to-one evangelism, singing, praying, Bible studies and religious lectures on topics such as married life, children's education and workplace relationships. The fellowships met, as well, for pot-luck dinners, picnics and camping trips, thereby becoming a formidable source of intimacy and mutual support.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, the missionary power of immigrant churches and congregations could be primarily seen in their ability to serve as a powerhouse for serving the religious needs of their fellow believers while, at the same time, attending to their psycho-social needs. Janet Mancini Billson sheds light on this close link between migrant missionary activity and ethnic identity in the case of Ukrainian immigrants in Saskatchewan, Canada. In the 1920s, every Ukrainian community in Saskatchewan has the so-called Ukrainian National House which was actually a church and a hall where people could get together. Today, churches, whether Orthodox or Catholic, have relatively reliably remained as a source of well-being, security and meaning. They also serve as a conduit into Ukrainian heritage and a bridge across the generations as youth choirs, women's associations and summer camps generate endless opportunities for learning the culture.<sup>41</sup>

Migrants as missionaries in the age of globalization are also arguably ushering in some paradigm shifts in the exercise of mission. For example, whereas (migrant) missionaries in the more recent past, particularly during European expansion, came with colonial power and privilege the (migrant) missionaries we are talking about here have less power. Moreover, their missionary activities are more multi-faceted and simultaneously straddle multiple borders when compared with their predecessors. This is reflected in the Chinese church in Texas mentioned earlier. The church developed an evangelistic ministry that not only created a daughter church and actively supported missionary work in China (with a US\$50,000 annual donation) but which also sends missionaries to South and Central America, to various Asian nations, and to Britain and other European countries. It also works at the Houston Port with Chinese seamen.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Fenggang Yang, 'Chinese Gospel Church: The Sinization of Christianity', in Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Chafetz (eds), *Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2000), 89, 97-98, 101-02.

<sup>41</sup> Janet Mancini Billson, *Keepers of the Culture: The Power of Tradition in Women's Lives* (New York: Lexington Books, 1995), 345, 368.

<sup>42</sup> Yang, 'Chinese Gospel Church', 90-92, 101-03.

Perhaps the starkest example of what I regard as the missionary power of vulnerable migrants is that of the Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong as described by the Hong Kong church:

Our churches are very alive on Sundays because of their presence. The Filipinos have brought their religiosity and faith to the Church of Hong Kong – they enhance the faith of our local people with their presence, witnessing hospitality, joy, and a love for music. The diocese is truly blessed in many ways because of the Filipinos, and their dynamism will keep the faith alive in the territory... In short, **the Filipinos are to be called missionaries first, before they are labelled as domestic helpers** (emphasis mine).<sup>43</sup>

Indeed, this missionary power of the powerless in the context of migration is eloquently illustrated in the experience of migrant women who traditionally occupy marginal(ized) positions in churches and congregations. Gertrud Hüwelmeier sheds some light on this in ‘Female Believers on the Move: Vietnamese Pentecostal Networks in Germany’<sup>44</sup> where she talked about how a small group of women within a Pentecostal church formed their own ‘prayer circle’ under the leadership of a woman whose house became the group’s spiritual place.<sup>45</sup> Their routine during their meetings offers a window into some of the unique activities that are woven into migrants’ witness to faith, particularly by women. These include reading the Bible, chatting, cooking, and sharing news about problems in their workplace, finances, health issues, relatives in Vietnam, and about visas and marriage documents. Within the experience of these Vietnamese women and, in particular, among Pentecostal migrants, one could discern some shift in the *locus* and *modus operandi* of mission from a specially built place of worship to a private house, shop unit, etc., and from largely or purely religious activity to one that is very much embedded in *lo cotidiano* or life’s daily realities.

Today, indeed, even vulnerable migrants are strongly described as missionary on account of the dynamism they bring to the faith communities of their destination countries. This dynamism is also expressed in an

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<sup>43</sup> ‘Filipino Migrant Workers in Hong Kong’, in *Asian Migrant*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (January-March 1994), 6-7. Such missionary effect is often felt more strongly in receiving countries where churches are experiencing significant losses in membership as well as decline in religious practice, making migrants important for the survival or flourishing of the Christian faith. As Philip Jenkins contends, southern-derived immigrant communities play a critical role in the future face of Christianity, especially in western countries. See Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 2003).

<sup>44</sup> Gertrud Hüwelmeier, ‘Female Believers on the Move: Vietnamese Pentecostal Networks in Germany’, in Glenda Tibe Bonifacio and Vivienne S.M. Angeles (eds), *Gender, Religion and Migration: Pathways to Integration* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 115-31.

<sup>45</sup> Nearly all the women members are non-permanent residents, most of whom are single mothers who are dependent on German welfare: Hüwelmeier ‘Female Believers on the Move’, 115-16.

evangelism that has ushered in a shift in the mission field from the developing to the developed world, or from the rest to the West, as compared with the old mission paradigm of 'from the West to the rest'. Gerrie ter Haar sheds light on this phenomenon in the case of Europe and its African immigrants:

Just as European missionaries once believed in their divine task of evangelizing what they called 'the dark continent', African church leaders in Europe today are convinced of Africa's mission to bring the gospel back to those who originally provided it. Thus, many African Christians who have recently migrated to Europe, generally to find work, consider that God has given them a unique opportunity to spread the good news among those who have gone astray.<sup>46</sup>

Power *vis-à-vis* missionary activity among migrants could also be seen in terms of how many new religious people's movements are emanating from migrant groups or congregations. These movements such as the Black Oneness Apostolic movement in Britain are groups of both survival and resistance in human dignity, who build themselves from the bottom up and not from the top down; they are people-centred, future-oriented and perceive human development as a theological (not just social) task... and are life-creating, life-preserving and life-transmitting churches of 'power and faith' against an abstract, computerized, segregative and disjointed world... people of the 'modern world', industrial workers, engineers and labourers made alive by the power of Christ, or God's living Spirit who always works from within human beings.<sup>47</sup>

Because they often attend to and share in people's daily struggles as well as their deepest hopes and aspirations, there are a growing number of migrant congregations whose membership transcend race and ethnicity. Some of these congregations' overriding concern in mission is not simply to provide a place for people to feel at home in, but to make disciples of all nations, making them, in the words of J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, the 'new champions of mission'. Asamoah-Gyadu illustrates his point through two mega-size African-led churches in Europe. The first, the Church of the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for all Nations, is based in Eastern Europe (Kiev, Ukraine) and has 25,000 adult members, while the other, the Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC), is based in Western Europe (London, UK), and has a membership of 10,000 adults.

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<sup>46</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe* (Cardiff, UK: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998), 92. A more recent study in Germany pushes this argument further as emphasis is placed by immigrant religious leaders on their missionary role and motivation, not so much on their search for a better life or struggle for integration. See Claudia Währisch-Oblau, *The missionary self-perception of Pentecostal/charismatic churches leaders in Europe: Bringing back the gospel* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 2009), 39.

<sup>47</sup> Roswith Gerloff, 'Theology en Route: The Inner Dynamics of the Black Church Movement in Britain', in *Mission Studies*, Vol. X, Nos. 1-2 (1993), 147.

The latter, Asamoah-Gyadu notes, has even taken over the Church of England as the church with the single largest *active* congregation in Western Europe. While KICC is already notable for its appeal to Africans from various backgrounds and various African countries, the Embassy of God is even more notable in the sense that it is not a typical African immigrant church filled with Africans but is constituted mostly of Eastern Europeans who have dramatic conversion stories of having turned away from drugs, alcoholism, prostitution and gangs towards Jesus Christ. The church grew by leaps and bounds within the first decade of its establishment because grateful family members of converted alcoholics and other such miscreants joined the church in gratitude for what the Lord, through Sunday Adelaja's ministry, has done in the lives of former victims of negative social behaviour.<sup>48</sup>

The missionary activity of some migrants also takes on a powerful character not just because they are intercultural in nature but also, at times, ecumenical in their scope. This is exemplified in the story of Amalia, an El Salvadoran woman thrown into a US detention centre in the 1990s. In the midst of harsh treatment as well as the difficulties of being detained in an overcrowded and often dangerous environment, Amalia believed that part of her role in the detention centre would be helping the other prisoners to overcome their fear, strengthen their faith, and find God's love in detention. Thus, she invited and organized other cellmates to form groups to pray the rosary and join a Bible study that met every afternoon at 6pm, bringing together Catholics and Protestants to sing, study scripture and share their stories.<sup>49</sup>

To be sure, missionary power among people on the move today is significantly aided by transnationalism that is facilitated by the structures and processes of globalization. 'Mission's scope in an earlier time was centred on the less developed countries. Now it is the whole world because of the 'death of distance'. 'The whole world is a mission field.'<sup>50</sup> There is a relationship, for instance, between the emergence of neo-Pentecostal movements and the upsurge in migration as new charismatic churches are often linked with international or global networks that facilitate migration.<sup>51</sup> Hanciles notes, in particular, how migrant Pentecostal churches make use of their transnational networks to facilitate migrant movement and recruitment so much so that churches initiated by them often become

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<sup>48</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "'To The Ends of the Earth": Mission, Migration and Impact of African-led Pentecostal Churches in the European Diaspora', in *Mission Studies*, 29 (2012), 24-25.

<sup>49</sup> As quoted in Matthew Colwell, 'Proclaiming Liberty to the Captives: Amalia Molina', in *Our God is Undocumented*, 115.

<sup>50</sup> Albino Barrera, OP, 'Mission in a Globalized Economy', in *The Gift of Mission*, 161.

<sup>51</sup> See Donald M. Lewis (ed), *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

veritable centres of transmigration and transnationalism.<sup>52</sup> Hanciles also contends that contemporary processes associated with globalization has made possible some actions by migrants which are missionary in nature. Many transmigrants and/or migrants with dual citizenship, for example, maintain close connections and are very invested in the socio-economic and political issues in their countries of origin. African immigrants in the US even actively participate in the political process in their countries of origin by lobbying political leaders in the US to call attention to particular issues at home and to co-ordinate action.<sup>53</sup> Because they are relatively well-off and quite organized, their voice does carry some weight in the political establishment in their countries of origin. This has missiologial significance. Because a diaspora never loses contact with 'home', owing to the network effect, there is constant traffic between those at home and those in exile, so to speak. The gospel can be part of that traffic.<sup>54</sup>

Steven Ybarolla, however, puts the spotlight on the impact immigrant churches' transnationalism has on power dynamics apart from those already raised by Hanciles and other missiologists. Ybarolla asks, for example, to what extent diaspora Christian churches, especially those practising 'reverse mission', are still governed and directed by the churches or organizations back 'home'. Ybarolla also notes the need to ask how power is distributed in the networks in the churches in the destination countries that diaspora churches participate in, and how much autonomy these local congregations have. The reverse – that is, the impact Christian diaspora communities have on existing local churches – also needs to be examined in order to understand the power dynamics.<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

Human mobility has always been an indispensable element of mission. According to the Acts of the Apostles, Christian mission and, indeed, the emergence of the church itself, has its origins in the dispersal of the Greek-speaking disciples after the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1). The most

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<sup>52</sup> Jehu Hanciles, 'Migration and Mission: Some Implications for the Twenty-first Century Church', in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 27, No. 4, 150, 152.

<sup>53</sup> Jehu Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 204. Not surprisingly, in her analysis of North American diasporas in mission, Miriam Adeney uses the concepts of liminality, cultural identity and power relations. See Miriam Adeney, 'Colorful Initiatives: North American Diasporas in Mission', in *Missiology*, Vol. XXXIX No. 1 (January 2011), 5-23.

<sup>54</sup> Jonathan Ingleby, 'Postcolonialism, globalisation, migration and diaspora: some implications for mission', in *Encounters Mission Ezine*, Issue 20 (October 2007), 3.

<sup>55</sup> Steven Ybarolla, 'Anthropology, Diaspora and Mission', in *Mission Studies*, Vol. 29 (2012), 88.

extensive missionary movement in Christianity's history even corresponded with one of the great migrations in human history – that is, European expansion, especially between 1800 and 1925.

One can conclude that mission in the age of global migration remains a matter of crossing borders. The only difference is that it is made more pronounced, diverse and complex in the age of globalization when shrinking spaces, intensified social injustices, and a heightened sense of dislocation drive home the point that the Christian mission to witness 'to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8) entails crossing ever-increasing borders and building spaces<sup>56</sup> in which Christian witness can breathe and flourish.

There are a few conclusions on mission in relation to power that can be drawn from the preceding discussion. The first is that, whereas in the more recent past, it was generally those with power and privilege who moved across borders to serve as missionaries, it is now the power-less, who share and witness to the gospel in various ways, who are moving in greater numbers these days. Moreover, while the former mission fields used to be the developing countries and missionaries from the rich and developed countries in Europe and North America sent their army of missionaries to the lands of the so-called 'heathens' and 'savages', mission today is everywhere and missionaries from the former mission fields, whether by choice or by their very presence, are fanning out everywhere, including such former bastions of Christianity as Europe. Ultimately, every Christian migrant is a missionary and the missionary potential and power of marginal(ized) people on the move are clearly significant so that we can speak of 'the missionary power of the power-less'.

A second conclusion that can be made is that, whereas those who have traditionally been associated with power and privilege continue to wield significant influence on mission by serving as missionaries and/or financial supporters of missionary activity everywhere (this time including their own back yard), immigrant congregations are increasingly taking on such a role.

A third conclusion is that, whether it is the powerful or the power-less taking on the role of missionaries, mission and power in the context of global migration are expressed in particular ways. The first is relationality expressed in hospitality. The second is incarnational evangelization expressed in terms of witness as *witness*. Last but not least, mission and power in the context of global migration is about vulnerability, expressed especially in friendship and companionship. It is, therefore, not about 'power over' but 'power with'. As Jesus himself said, 'No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have

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<sup>56</sup> I have discussed this elsewhere. See Gemma Tulud Cruz, 'Expanding the Boundaries, Turning Borders into Spaces: Mission in the Context of Migration', in O. Kalu, P. Vethanayagamon and E. Chia (eds), *Mission after Christendom: Emergent Themes in Contemporary Mission* (Louisville, KY: WJK Press, 2010), 71-83.

called you friends, for all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you' (John 15:15).

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# MISSION AND POWER: RITUALS, HEALTH, HEALING

Isabel A. Phiri and Chammah J. Kaunda

The health and healing ministry of the church is rooted in the ministry of Jesus Christ. In the recent mission affirmation of WCC, *Together Towards Life*, it is stated that:

‘Healing was not only a central feature of Jesus’ ministry but also a feature of his call to his followers to continue his work (Matt. 10:1). Healing is also one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:9; Acts 3). The Spirit empowers the church for a life-nurturing mission, which includes prayer, pastoral care and professional health care, on the one hand, and prophetic denunciation of the root causes of suffering, transforming structures that dispense injustice and the pursuit of scientific research, on the other.<sup>1</sup>

This healing tradition has survived the onslaught of modern medicine and its absolute claim to healing through the scientific approach.<sup>2</sup> Scholars argued that a positivistic scientific approach to medicine has given medical practitioners power to actively intervene in the course of disease, preventing illness or bringing about the cure, and eradicating disease.<sup>3</sup> In the wake of such medical advances, cure, not care, became the chief preoccupation in medical practice, and the practitioners’ role was narrowly defined as ‘the only curer of disease’, thereby downplaying the broader role as ‘healer of the sick’.<sup>4</sup> Health and healing seen as holistic issues – including the spiritual, mental and physical dimensions, and involving the human struggle for justice, peace, reconciliation, the healing of memories and the integrity of creation – was not given attention in medicine and rarely engaged in literature. While acknowledging that the scope of some African churches’ understanding of health and healing seemed rather

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<sup>1</sup> Jooseop Keum (ed), *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), §§ 19-21. This is a WCC document which was prepared by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and approved by the Central Committee in 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Willard Swartley, *Health, Healing and the Church’s Mission: Biblical Perspectives and Moral Priorities* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012); Thomas R. Egnew, ‘The Meaning of Healing: Transcending Suffering’, in *Annals of Family Medicine*, 3, No. 3 (2005), 255-62.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth M. Ludmerer, *Learning to Heal: The Development of American Medical Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> Eric J. Cassell, *The Healer’s Art: A New Approach to the Doctor-Patient Relationship* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), 51 and 200. Stanley Hauerwas makes a similar observation, arguing that ‘cure, not care, has become medicine’s primary purpose’: see his *Naming the Silences: God, Medicine, and the Problem of Suffering* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 101.

restricted to miracles and physical healing, most churches nevertheless display a strong belief in healing through prayer and various rituals. Believers are invited to pray for good health and for relief from illness and pain. Healing is perceived as central to what it means to be a church in the context of the human struggle for just access to health care. There is healing through prayer/intercession, through religious rituals, healing pilgrimages to some renowned prophets such as T.B. Joshua in Nigeria, and also through some related forms of religious intervention.<sup>5</sup> Healing in some churches in Africa seems to 'fulfil certain functions not met by modern medicine', but to some extent also to resonate with the Old and New Testaments, which sometimes have more in common with 'African traditional practices than with modern medicine'.<sup>6</sup> The pertinent question for African Christianity is – how can reconceptualized traditional healing practices be broadened in scope in contemporary Africa amidst unjust access to health care, and amidst socio-political, economic and ecological struggles?

### Health and Healing in a Global Context

In recent times, most scholars acknowledge that health and healing are not merely physiological pathology or medical issues, but rather embrace political, social, economic, cultural and spiritual dimensions. The World Council of Churches' document on 'Healing and Wholeness, the Churches' role in Health' affirms:

Although the 'health industry' is producing and using progressively sophisticated and expensive technology, the increasingly obvious fact is that most of the world's health problems cannot be best addressed in this way. The churches are called to recognize that the causes of disease in the world are social, economic and spiritual, as well as bio-medical. Health is most often an issue of justice, of peace, of integrity of creation, and of spirituality.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the recent explorations of health and healing involve placing the two notions within the context of wholeness, and this is related to the scientific and non-religious, the unscientific and religious, the technological

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<sup>5</sup> Sheila S. Walker, 'Witchcraft and Healing in an African Christian Church', in *Journal of Religion in Africa* (1979), 127-38; Willem Berends, 'African Traditional Healing Practices and the Christian Community', in *Missiology*, 21, No. 3 (1993), 275-88.

<sup>6</sup> Berends, 'African Traditional Healing', 275.

<sup>7</sup> World Council of Churches, 'Healing and Wholeness: The Churches' Role in Health' (Geneva: CMC, 1990), i-iv, 1-40. Here 2.  
[http://difaem.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Publikationen/Dokumente\\_AErztliche\\_Mission/healing](http://difaem.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Publikationen/Dokumente_AErztliche_Mission/healing) (accessed 15th December 2015).

and non-technological, and the western and non-western.<sup>8</sup> Healing is currently defined as ‘the process of bringing together aspects of one’s self, body–mind–spirit, at deeper levels of inner knowing, leading towards integration and balance, with each aspect having equal importance and value’.<sup>9</sup> In a similar way, health is conceived of as ‘the state or process in which the individual/community experiences a sense of well-being, harmony, unity where subjective experiences about health, health beliefs, and values are honoured’.<sup>10</sup>

The above discussions on resonate very well with the work of the WCC’s Christian Medical Commission (CMC) who provided the foundation for the health and healing mission of the church today. Health is conceived of as not merely the absence of disease, and caused not merely by the likes of parasites or bacteria, but as something that emerges from the complex interaction of social, economic, political, ecological and spiritual contexts. CMC underpinned health and healing on issues of ‘justice, peace, the integrity of creation, and of spirituality’,<sup>11</sup> arguing that ‘health is a dynamic state of well-being of the individual and society – of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political, and social well-being – of being in harmony with one other, with the material environment and with God’.<sup>12</sup> It can be argued that, according to these broad definitions, health and healing are related to the individual and society as a whole.

This is also affirmed in *Together Towards Life*, arguing that ‘actions towards healing and wholeness of life of persons and communities are an important expression of mission’.<sup>13</sup> They are not static concepts but a ‘dynamic state’ influenced by the intersectionality of various contextual factors. The emphasis alongside social, medical and economic factors is also on spirituality as one vital category. These conceptions associate health and healing with complexities of meaning and social understanding that may be related to health care and the process of healing, and have an affinity with the traditional African conception of health and healing.

### Health and Healing in Traditional Africa

It is not possible to discuss health and healing in African Christianity without considering the traditional African conception of health and healing. In fact, some scholars see more features in common between

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas J. Csordas and Arthur Kleinman, ‘The therapeutic process’, in Carolyn Fishel Sargent and Thomas Malcolm Johnson (eds), *Medical Anthropology: Contemporary Theory and Method* (New York: Praeger, 1990), 11-25.

<sup>9</sup> Barbara Montgomery Dossey, Lynn Keegan, Cathie E. Guzzetta, *Pocket Guide for Holistic Nursing* (Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett, 2005), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Montgomery et al, *Pocket Guide for Holistic Nursing*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Keum, *Together Towards Life*, 19.

<sup>12</sup> Keum, *Together Towards Life*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Keum, *Together Towards Life*, 19.

African traditional healing practices and African Christianity than with modern medicine.<sup>14</sup> In traditional African society, the search for health and healing is deeply entrenched in religious beliefs and practices, and is seen in greetings, in the kind of food people eat, and in every aspect of life. African traditional religions have been termed by Laurent Magasa as religious traditions of wholeness of health or abundant life.<sup>15</sup> The search for health and healing is not merely the action of an individual, but one of the whole community. In African thought, an individual alone cannot achieve health, because health is embedded in cosmic relationships and can only be achieved through restoring harmony in vital relationships. In actual fact, the sickness of an individual is an indication of a deeper communal *malaise*.

The community knows that dealing with the symptom is just a temporal solution. True healing requires the re-establishment of right relationships.<sup>16</sup> This is the concern of African traditional religions. Health and healing in this system of thought is more than a physical cure but a process of re-aligning the patient with the origin of the influences so as to re-balance the disorder (sickness). It is about restoring the patient's balance in the universe which makes the process of healing a course of growth for the whole community 'towards ever greater and more complex wholeness'.<sup>17</sup> Thus, health and healing have to do with growth in just social ordering, equality in political participation, fair economic access, and religious inclusion. This is a framework within which traditional Africa approached health and healing on the premise of bondedness.

The African religious conception of health and healing is steeped in tradition; it comes from and flows from God through the ancestors to the whole community. Sickness was understood as a breach in spiritual and social harmony, either internal or external.<sup>18</sup> There was a belief in some African societies that human beings were multi-dimensional beings (they are more than just their physical bodies) with different levels which function together as a whole – communal/social, moral, physical and spiritual, and if any of these aspects are out of balance, the person is said to be sick or physically/spiritually ill.<sup>19</sup> Every individual in the community has a moral responsibility to keep these aspects balanced so as to ensure the uninterrupted flow of life in God in the community. It was imperative for

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<sup>14</sup> Berends, 'African Traditional Healing', 275.

<sup>15</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1997), 65.

<sup>16</sup> Newell S. Booth, 'Tradition and Community in African Religion', in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 9, No. 2 (1978), 81-94, here 91.

<sup>17</sup> Rosemary Gordon, *Bridges: Metaphor for Psychic Processes* (London: Karnac Books, 1993), 158.

<sup>18</sup> Magesa, *African Religion*, 65.

<sup>19</sup> Shana Davis, 'Traditional African Healing: Medicine & Africa', in *African Code*: [www.africanholocaust.net/news\\_ah/traditionalhealing.html](http://www.africanholocaust.net/news_ah/traditionalhealing.html) (accessed 15th December 2015).

members of the community to avoid altering these rhythms and patterns as their actions have direct implications for the well-being of the whole community.<sup>20</sup> Bondedness is the key to understanding traditional African community of life, that 'whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual'.<sup>21</sup> In this worldview, where interconnectedness and interdependence are central guiding principles of the symbiotic community, *everyone* is responsible for the health and healing of the whole community.<sup>22</sup>

The African sense of community refers to the critical linkage of human beings (living, dead and unborn), the natural environment and the spiritual world in an essential way so that unity is indissoluble.<sup>23</sup> This means that an individual could not regard even her/his 'own life as a purely personal piece of property or concern. It is the group which is the owner of life, a person being just a link in the chain uniting present and future generations. For that reason, one's health is a concern for the community, and a person is expected to preserve this life for the good of the group'.<sup>24</sup> In this worldview, being healthy means that sound and harmonious relationships among human beings, between the natural and the spiritual worlds, have been kept in intricate balance. The individual and the community must always be conscious of the symbiotic chain of relationships that constitute the category which is defined as 'life'. In short, to be in good health is to be at one and in peace with all dimensions of life in the cosmos, to be within it and to interiorise the universe in its fullness within one being. The universe and an individual are indivisible. The fullness of the universe is within an individual inasmuch as an individual is within the universe. Sickness involves the entire system of cosmic relationships within which the individual is but a tiny bond in the chain of life. There is no such thing as a solitary adventurer; the individual's action 'vibrates to the rhythm of the power of the universe and of the generations'.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Harvey J. Sindima, 'Community of Life: Ecological Theology in African Perspective', (1990): [www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2327](http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2327) (accessed 15th December 2015).

<sup>21</sup> John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London, Ibadan, Nairobi: Heinemann, 1969), 109.

<sup>22</sup> Chammah J. Kaunda, 'Towards an African Theological Education for Gender Justice and Peace: An African Theological Reflection on the Concept of Just-Peace', in *Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa*, 18, No. 1 (2012), 137-53.

<sup>23</sup> See Munyaradzi F. Murove (ed), *African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics* (Scottsville, RSA: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2009). See especially the articles by Munyaradzi F. Murove.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Kasenene, 'African ethical theory and the four principles', in Robert Veatch (ed), *Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Medical Ethics*, 2nd edition (Sudbury, MA: Jones & Bartlett, 2000), 347-57, here 349.

<sup>25</sup> Alassane Ndaw, 'Unity and Value in African Thought', in M.C. Doerer and J.N. Kraay (eds), *Facts and Values: Philosophical Reflections from Western and Non-*

The implications are that failure to maintain harmonious relationships within oneself and every member of the community of life, which extends to the non-human creation, and to do what is necessary to live in reconciliation in order to strengthen community bonds, especially through justice and peace, results in disorder and sickness.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the African sense of health and healing is based on sound relationships which should be kept in harmony because, without harmonious relationships, health and healing cannot flow in the community. Harmonious living which includes ultimate community values such as justice, peace, hospitality, love, equality, respect and so on, is a precondition for health and healing which are prerequisites for progress and human development. The function of religion is perceived as that of enabling human beings to align their actions and understand their position in the universe, thereby continuing to enjoy health and wellness which are essential characteristics of God. All moral values are based on an understanding that the good is that which promotes the well-being and wholeness of an individual and the community. Thus, the traditional African quest for health and healing is based on enabling an individual's and the community members' recognition of their complex interconnectedness and their place on the earth, and serves to bring their actions into equilibrium with the cosmos. Since the African concept of health and healing was holistic – as the reintegration of cosmic relationships through nurturing harmonious relationships – it remains quite difficult to understand fully the extent to which some African churches have integrated this worldview into their healing traditions. In what follows, we look at missional implications for health and healing ministry for churches in Africa today.

### **Towards a Missional Theology of Health and Healing in African Church**

From our analysis above, it becomes clear that health and healing are socio-relational issues rather than merely individual physical processes. This means that health and healing must be perceived within a socio-relational framework rather than as merely physical wholeness. Recent health issues have demonstrated the socio-relational nature of health and healing. HIV and AIDS, and the more recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa, are clear examples of the socio-relational nature of diseases that affect individuals, lovers, couples, families and entire communities around the world with profound political and economic implications. These diseases affect not just individuals but the entire universe. The Ebola tragedy demonstrated how interdependent and vulnerable human beings have become. The virus

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*Western Perspectives* (Leiden, Netherlands: Martinus Nihoff, 1986), 173-74, here 171-75.

<sup>26</sup> Magesa, *African Religion*, 65.

started spreading from West Africa to other countries through those who came into contact with it and crossed borders to other countries. Airports in some countries were closed and others imposed travel bans to Ebola-affected countries. Given the socio-relational nature of health and healing, the ministry of the church is intrinsically communal in which both the community of believers are called alongside (*paraclete*) those suffering into mutual transformation through justice and reconciliation.

This is what Jesus accomplished through his life, ministry, death and resurrection in which he transformed the world of the human understanding of suffering. On the cross Jesus became the symbol of human suffering because of sin (the breach in cosmic harmony). The effect of the broken human-divine relationship was re-enacted by Jesus on the cross as demonstrated in his loud cry, 'Why have you forsaken me?' (Matt. 27:46). The fall of humanity in Genesis 3 caused an imbalance in cosmic relational equilibrium. Jesus re-enacted this experience of brokenness in a cosmic relational balance. Thus, his resurrection was the re-establishment of cosmic relational harmony, and it was inevitable it took place in the Trinitarian socio-community of the Father and the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup> The argument here is that the resurrection was wrought through relationship, and this serves as the paradigm of authentic healing and thus provides the archetype of the human search for health and wholeness. Similar to the African worldview, health and healing within a Trinitarian perspective confronts any narrow definition and application of Christian health and healing as being a merely physical cure. It underpins health and healing in cosmic reconciliation so that all recognize God's vision for universal wholeness and justice. This means that, while 'healing processes could include praying with and for the sick, confession and forgiveness, the laying-on of hands, anointing with oil, and the use of charismatic spiritual gifts' (1 Cor. 12), it cannot be reduced to such miraculous interventions. Healing demonstrates Trinitarian *shalom* – the God who is whole. This wholeness is a result of the Trinitarian pilgrimage of love.

The process of healing entails a gradual reintegration through grace into a more perfect image of God through fellowship with Christ; the human being becomes *imago Christi* and, as such, participates in Trinitarian wholeness. God's vision of health and healing is based on abundant life (John 10:10) which has to do with a well-being that encompasses the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and natural environment. Trinitarian wholeness directs the individual towards the holistic transfiguration of an individual and the community as an indissoluble whole. Rather than turning the individual away from the community, from the natural world, the Spirit infuses an individual with a radical love of all life and the recognition of

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<sup>27</sup> God the Father raised Jesus (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30, 33-34, 37; Rom. 4:24; 6:4; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; Gal. 1:1; Col. 2:12). God the Holy Spirit also raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 4:1; 8:11).

their place within the cosmos. God's vision of *shalom* includes health and justice for the entire community, especially for the exploited and marginalized, as was demonstrated in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. This also vindicates the African religious tradition that the function of religion is to promote cosmic health and wholeness.

The function of the earthly ministry of Jesus was promoting health and healing for the cosmic community in which humanity was the centre of missional activities. Everywhere Jesus went, he taught and preached the gospel, while on some occasions he multiplied food, healed the sick and cast out demons.<sup>28</sup> These ministerial imperatives were unified by the messianic search for the restoration of human and cosmic health and wholeness. In contemporary society, these aspects of messianic ministry cannot be interpreted merely literally but also metaphorically because Jesus' central function in the world had everything to do with cosmic healing and reconciliation.

The first imperative was teaching and preaching which was directed mostly at those on the margins. This methodology was meant to conscientize them about the link between religious beliefs and practices, and health and wholeness. The teaching sought to introduce 'a new lifestyle' – an alternative way of living in the world based on just actions. Just actions are those actions which are based on the search to restore balance in the equilibrium of creation through Jesus' work of at-one-ment – making creation and God at one (reconciliation). Making changes in the way people lived was equivalent to the creation of healthy and sustainable communities for humankind as well as for the rest of the natural world.<sup>29</sup> This is the ministry to which the church is called to conscientize the people on healthy lifestyle. Abundant life has everything to do with that.

This leads to the second aspect of Jesus' ministry, the multiplication of food. This was significant in the peasant society where most people undoubtedly went hungry much of the time, or barely had enough food to eat. Feeding the hungry demonstrates two things for us today: a) food security. Food security is a state in which all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active healthy life.<sup>30</sup> The Ebola outbreak mentioned earlier was one result of a lack of access to proper food, forcing rural dwellers to eat anything available for survival. The root cause of food insecurity in most countries in Africa is the inability

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<sup>28</sup> Matthew 4:23-24 gives a kind of a summary of the key elements of Jesus' messianic earthly ministry.

<sup>29</sup> Jesse N.K. Mugambi and Mika Vähäkangas, *Christian Theology and Environmental Responsibility* (Nairobi: Acton, 2001).

<sup>30</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute, 'Reaching sustainable food security for all by 2020: Getting the priorities and responsibilities right', Washington, DC: IFPRI, 2002: [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/Pnacp487.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnacp487.pdf) (accessed 18th December 2015).

of people to gain access to proper food, let alone nutritious and healthy food, due to their severe poverty. In feeding the hungry, Jesus demonstrates not only the interplay between health and food security but also links *missio Dei* to advocacy for food justice. This comes even more radically in the teaching of the Lord's Prayer in which Jesus teaches his disciples to request first and foremost their daily bread. The prayer emphasizes food (bread) as key object of human request to God and the very reason to praise him. The prayer entails creating economic environments that enable all to work fairly for their food.<sup>31</sup> This challenges the church, in whatever context it functions, whether rich or poor, to address economic structures that bless some and curse many, as well as promoting international and national systems that search for ways promoting food security.<sup>32</sup> The church as an agent of God's mission is called to promote food justice – an aspect desperately needed in Africa today. b) Feeding the hungry has also to do with proper nutrition. Don Colbert, in his book, *What Would Jesus Eat?* argues that, despite being a peasant, Jesus ate and promoted healthy foods – something which cannot be ignored in promoting health and wholeness. The health of most people is deteriorating due largely to bad food choices.<sup>33</sup> The focus is on eating healthy food and being active. He fed them with bread and fish – the staple diet of a Mediterranean peasant like Jesus (Luke 24:42). While Jesus did not follow a clearly defined aerobics workout programme, his long walks acted as such exercise. In that way, health benefits followed naturally. Thus, the church has the responsibility of engaging in educating the community about exercise, changing eating habits and foods.

Third, healing the sick – which included various methods such as the laying-on of hands, touching the sick or providing medical remedies, as in the case of making 'some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes' (John 9:6; Mark 8:23). In healing the sick – mostly the people of the lower classes who could not afford the health care of the time – Jesus promoted universal access to health care. For Jesus, health is not just the prerogative of the powerful and rich in society but a human right for all. By healing the marginalized and poor, Jesus critiqued the Roman health care system for sidelining certain people and demonstrated that all had the right to live their lives with dignity. Every human society has a moral obligation to meet the basic needs of all its members, whether rich or poor – all must have access to proper health care. The growing problem of access to health care is a timely reminder that the church must rise to the task of promoting fair access to health care, and also calling upon governments to invest in

<sup>31</sup> Musa W.S. Dube, 'Praying the Lord's Prayer in a global economic era', in *Ecumenical Review*, 49, No. 4 (1997), 439-50, here 446.

<sup>32</sup> Dube, 'Praying the Lord's Prayer', 446.

<sup>33</sup> For a detailed discussion of the diet of Jesus, see Don Colbert, *What Would Jesus Eat? The Ultimate Program for Eating Well, Feeling Great, and Living Longer* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005).

developing proper infrastructure and facilities for adequate health care. This means that, when some people or environments are denied the means to *shalom*, all suffer – as was the case with Ebola. As Willard Swartley rightly argues, ‘when some people are deprived of health care, communal *Shalom* is threatened’.<sup>34</sup> It can be argued that the World Health Organisation’s goal for universal health coverage is a church’s missional imperative.

The fourth aspect of messianic earthly ministerial imperative was casting out demons. Exorcism in the public ministry of Jesus indicates a messianic confrontation with official Roman political ideology which was ‘devastating the social fabric of Israel’.<sup>35</sup> The experiences of individuals possessed by demonic forces represented the ideological colonization of the collective experience of the community of Israel as having lost status and dignity because of the collective demonic presence which had taken possession of Israel. The Roman political ideology had rendered them docile and subservient in opposing the powers. The people lacked sovereignty in choosing their destiny and ways of expressing their identities and subjectivities. They were locked with mental fetters forcing them into hopeless resignation. Jesus knew that people cannot experience abundant life while remaining shackled economically and politically. Through exorcism, Jesus confronted the collective ideological bondage and freed people’s collective agency so that they were able to defy the reigning ideology by wrenching themselves free from their mental fetters, transforming their entire being, their very sense of themselves – relationally, emotionally and rationally. This is the meaning of his words: ‘You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’ (John 8:32). Health and healing require the confronting of the power dynamics in society by giving the masses more freedom to choose their own political destiny as well as to exercise control over that destiny. Jesus sought to empower people to seek to open up political spaces. This means that channels and avenues of expression and participation in the functions of governance are made available and operative.<sup>36</sup> This call for the church’s renewed commitment to the welfare of all in the community. The church’s commitment entails becoming concerned that all members of the community have access to basic health care.

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<sup>34</sup> Swartley, *Health, Healing, and the Church’s Mission*, 21.

<sup>35</sup> Obery M. Hendricks, *The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus’ Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted* (New York: Three Leaves, 2006), 146.

<sup>36</sup> Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People’s Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), xi.

## Conclusion

This chapter argues that the church has been a healing instrument since its inception. Given this tradition, contemporary mission cannot be done effectively without engaging in the ministry of health and healing. The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above:

- a) The mission of God in the world is a healing mission. God is in the world to bring about cosmic healing and reconciliation.
- b) Health is an attribute of God. The Trinitarian God exists in radical health and wholeness which he seeks to share within cosmic relationships. Thus, health and healing are deeply entrenched in the concept of salvation.
- c) Healing is a process of relational growth. It is a dynamic holistic process rather than merely physical cure.
- d) The church is an agent of God's mission of healing in the world. The church is called to be a healing community through which the power of God's healing can be mediated in the world. This means the role of the church is twofold: first, healing through religious ritual; and second, promoting a proper health care system that includes the struggle for infrastructure development, adequately equipped medical personnel, justice, fairness, accountability and accessibility.

The church must become an instrument in searching for innovative ways of promoting access to quality health care for all. Its members can be encouraged to live a healthy lifestyle and consider ways in which mutual access to medical aid can be secured together.

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# MISSION AND POWER: SOME DIMENSIONS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

Henry Mbaya

## Introduction

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 1996 by an Act of Parliament – the National Healing and Reconciliation Act of 1995 – with the mandate of establishing politically motivated gross human right violations during the period March 1960 to December 1994. Its mandate was to focus mainly on three issues, namely to (a) establish as complete a picture as possible of past human rights violations committed across the political spectrum, (b) give victims of human rights abuses a chance to speak publicly about abuses they had suffered in the past, and (c) grant amnesty to perpetrators of human rights abuses on the condition that they gave a full disclosure of acts that they committed and proved that these acts could be characterized as having a political motive.<sup>1</sup>

This study does not intend to discuss the merits or otherwise of the TRC or how far it has been successful or not, nor to discuss whether the motives of the confessors of human rights violations or those who offered forgiveness were genuine or not. This case has been well presented by Tinyiko Maluleke and others.<sup>2</sup> Rather, the objective of this study is to argue that the TRC had missional dimensions where issues of power were an integral part of the process. It will argue that the processes of the hearings entailed power implications of history and memory, and healing and mission.

## The Missional Dimensions of the TRC

In outlining the significance of the TRC, Maluleke cautioned that:

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<sup>1</sup> Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, 'Remorse, Forgiveness and Rehumanization', in Mamadou Diawara, Bernard Latagan and Jörn Rüsen (eds), *Historical Memory in Africa* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2010), 208.

<sup>2</sup> See Tinyiko Maluleke, 'Truth, National Unity and Reconciliation in South Africa: Aspects of the Merging Theological Agenda', in *Missionalia*, 25:1 (April 1997), 59-86; 'Dealing Lightly with the Wound of My people?: The TRC Process in Theological Perspective', in *Missionalia*, 25:3 (November 1997); Dirk Smit, 'The Truth and Reconciliation – Tentative Religious and Theological Perspectives', in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 90 (March 1995), 3-15.

We must never forget that the TRC was a juridical entity with a political rather than a spiritual or theological agenda. To that end, all those appointed to it are appointed not by churches, nor to serve the cause of the churches; they are all appointed to it by the President of South Africa in accordance with the provisions of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act. It is therefore erroneous to assume that the presence of churchy people in the commission means that the church is represented in it or that its objectives are spiritual and theological.<sup>3</sup>

Hence Maluleke further cautions us not to ‘spiritualise’ the results of the TRC. Nonetheless, I argue that the TRC had missional dimensions, a missional agenda, with power implications that cannot be lightly dismissed. To what extent was the TRC missional?

David Bosch defined *missio Dei* as ‘God’s activity, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church may be privileged to participate’.<sup>4</sup> He further asserted that ‘it takes place in ordinary human history, not exclusively in and through the church’.<sup>5</sup> ‘Mission has its origin in the heart of God.’<sup>6</sup> The source of mission is therefore God; hence ‘God is a missionary God’.<sup>7</sup> Bosch reiterated: ‘It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world’, rather that ‘it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church...’<sup>8</sup> Mission is about God’s movement in the world.<sup>9</sup>

### A Shared History – One Destiny

The TRC hearings took place at the crossroads of South African history. Looking back into the dark past of apartheid – trying to redeem the past, to move the country from where it stood into the future. The TRC presided like a midwife trying to help the mother (South Africa) deliver a baby, a new nation. And that is where its ‘missional’ significance lay.<sup>10</sup> The government mandate put the TRC in the position of a ‘missionary’ commissioned to conduct ‘mission’; the mission of reconciliation of the nation wounded by the scars of apartheid for 47 years, to participate in God’s mission in South Africa with implications far beyond its borders.

At the core of the TRC’s mission was the victims’ of apartheid quest for justice. Bosch argues that, as a dimension of mission, one of the church’s

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<sup>3</sup> Maluleke, ‘Truth, National Unity and Reconciliation in South Africa’, 69.

<sup>4</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 401.

<sup>5</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 401.

<sup>6</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 402.

<sup>7</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 400.

<sup>8</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 400.

<sup>9</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 400.

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Catherine M. Cole, *Performing South Africa’s Truth Commission* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 124.

critical concerns of evangelism is social justice.<sup>11</sup> However, for Bosch it is precisely because love is the bedrock of evangelism that justice becomes a critical dimension of mission. However, in his view, 'love demands more than justice'.<sup>12</sup> In other words, for Bosch, justice is a critical dimension of love. Even though the TRC did not stipulate Biblical principles for its audiences, nevertheless the issues of love and justice lay at the surface of its mission and vision. It was in this context that the Chairman of the TRC, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, asserted the missional dimension of the Commission in the following words:

We were destined for perdition and were plucked out of total annihilation. We were a hopeless case if ever there was one. God wants to point to us as a possible beacon of hope, a possible paradigm... Our experiment is going to succeed because God wants us to succeed, not for our glory and aggrandizement but for the sake of God's world. God wants to show that there is life after conflict and repression – that, because of forgiveness, there is a future.<sup>13</sup>

Tutu emphasized the significance of the TRC in terms of national destiny, an act in response to God's very mission taking place in South Africa. He discerned the work of the TRC as part of what God was doing in South African history. Central to the TRC was the issue of memory and history; how memory and history constituted a framework within which truth could be told. However, as Flora Keshgegian noted, memories and history are about power. She asserted: 'For memories do not only shape who we are – there is a way in which we have no identity if we have no memory. The act of remembering is constitutive of identity and the content of the memories shapes the character of the identity.'<sup>14</sup> Therefore 'identity-formation takes shape within these relational settings of contested but patterned relations among narratives, people and institutions'.<sup>15</sup>

### **Power as the Quest for the Truth as 'Truth-Telling'**

Cole asserted that the TRC 'operated on the assumption that narrative/personal truth held tremendous powers, including the ability to recover memory – either for the person giving testimony, who may have had to suppress such painful memories in order to survive, or for the nation, which suffered from decades-long, state-promulgated amnesia'.<sup>16</sup> 'Truth-telling' – drawing from personal experiences of the past – became critical. In this respect, the power of 'memory' constituted a prerequisite for

<sup>11</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 410.

<sup>12</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 412.

<sup>13</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (London: Rider 1999), 229-30.

<sup>14</sup> Flora Keshgegian, *Redeeming Memories: A Theology of Healing and Transformation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 201.

<sup>15</sup> Keshgegian, *Redeeming Memories*, 157.

<sup>16</sup> Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, 164.

forgiveness with a view to initiating reconciliation between the victim and the perpetrators of human rights violations.<sup>17</sup> In other words, the TRC put 'knowing' or 'knowledge' of the past at the centre of its mission of reconciliation. Both victim and perpetrator were required to tell the truth about their experiences.<sup>18</sup> Full disclosure of their past atrocities by the perpetrators was necessary for the granting of amnesty.<sup>19</sup>

Michel Foucault argues that one important dimension of power is 'knowledge', *episteme*; 'discourse' constitutes 'power'; the one who holds power is the one who defines it.<sup>20</sup> 'Knowledge is power', for it entails understanding, the ability to represent others and define what knowledge is and truth for others.<sup>21</sup> Power is embedded in language, modes of communication, 'discourse', hence knowledge entails power. More significantly, it is relational, for it involves transactions in relationships, how people communicate and engage with one another. 'In reality, power means relations, a more-or-less organized, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations.'<sup>22</sup> In this case, power is inseparably linked with 'truth'. Pursuit for truth is at the same time pursuit for knowledge.

The fundamental objective of the TRC was the quest to uncover the truth about the apartheid past, 'knowledge' about the past. In this respect, it sought to provide a relatively 'safe' environment which could generate conditions for both the perpetrators and the victims to speak 'truthfully'. Cole has outlined two paradigms of truths with which the TRC operated: personal/narrative truth and factual/forensic truth.<sup>23</sup> According to Cole, personal/narrative truth entailed telling a personal story: 'It captured individual perceptions, stories, myths and experiences, especially from those who had largely been ignored or were voiceless in official discourse.'<sup>24</sup>

### Power at the Centre and on the Peripheries of the Hearings

Foucault argued that 'power' is not a 'substance, (but is) fluid or something that derives from a particular source'; nonetheless, there are no relations without power and no power without relations... 'Mechanisms of power,'

<sup>17</sup> Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, 164-65.

<sup>18</sup> Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, 164-65.

<sup>19</sup> Nico Koopman, 'Towards Reconciliation and Justice in South Africa: Can Church Unity Make a Difference?' in Sebastian C.H. Kim, Pauline Kollontai and Greg Hoyland (eds), *Peace and Reconciliation: In Search of Shared Identity* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 99.

<sup>20</sup> Jørgen Skov Sørensen, *Missiological Mutilations – Prospective Paralogies* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2007), 94.

<sup>21</sup> Sørensen, *Missiological Mutilations – Prospective Paralogies*, 94.

<sup>22</sup> Sørensen, *Missiological Mutilations – Prospective Paralogies*, 95.

<sup>23</sup> Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, 163-64.

<sup>24</sup> Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, 164.

so he argued, 'are an intrinsic part of these relations and, in a circular way, are both their effect and cause.'<sup>25</sup> But then more critical, according to Wilson Niwagila, is the question: 'What kind of power is allowed in the relationship and how is it used by the partners?'<sup>26</sup> For Niwagila, 'Structural power rests in the value given to different desired commodities...'<sup>27</sup>

However, Niwagila cautions that there are also issues of motive involved in power relations: where people interact, 'each partner should also be aware of one's motives for partnership. There are no "pure" motives; instead, motives are either recognized or they remain unrecognized. If our operations are motivated and guided by unrecognized motives, which may not be in line with the ethos of partnership, they can cause problems for co-operation and, at worst, ruin the whole relationship'.<sup>28</sup>

The issue of 'dimensions of power' appeared at the centre and at the peripheries of the TRC hearings. Maluleke rightly noted the TRC was a 'national' ritual<sup>29</sup> and, I dare add, for that matter, a powerful one. That the TRC was a 'ritual' shows that it was a 'performance'; it was dramatic, and an enactment. In her book, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, Catherine M. Cole wrote about its performativity.<sup>30</sup> What made the TRC power 'powerful' is the fact that the language of communication entailed not only symbols but signs and signifiers.

### Space and Metaphors of Power

The TRC organized a 'special' space for its hearings. It was designed specifically to embody its three objectives, ideals and vision in the metaphors 'dealing with the past', 'coming to terms with the past', and 'the healing of the nation'.<sup>31</sup> These spaces were configured with power embodied in metaphors. In the designed space of the hearings in the halls, banners and posters bore the phrase: 'Truth: The Road to Reconciliation... [thus] the TRC promoted the metaphor of a journey'<sup>32</sup> very much akin to the idea of a spiritual journey of a *pilgrimage*. The 'space' was designed to initiate reconciliation in the form of the 'repairing' of lives as a process on a continued journey. Truth-telling constituted a fundamental prerequisite

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<sup>25</sup> Jonathan Tran, *Foucault and Theology* (New York: T. & T. Clark International, 2011), 33.

<sup>26</sup> Wilson B. Niwagila, 'Partnership in Participation – A Theological Quest', in Eila Helander and Wilson B. Niwagila, *The Partnership and Power* (Usa River, Tanzania: Makumira Publications, 7, 1996), 143.

<sup>27</sup> Niwagila, 'Partnership in Participation – A Theological Quest', 143.

<sup>28</sup> Niwagila, 'Partnership in Participation – A Theological Quest', 143.

<sup>29</sup> Maluleke, 'Truth, National Unity and Reconciliation in South Africa', 61.

<sup>30</sup> Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*.

<sup>31</sup> Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, 136.

<sup>32</sup> Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, 136.

for reconciliation.<sup>33</sup> The TRC considered the testimonies, confessions, as the 'living memorials', 'commemorations' comparable with monumental structures such as Robben Island and others. These narratives gave voice to those formerly disfranchised.<sup>34</sup> The space enabled prayers to be said, hymns and choruses to be sung, tears to be regularly shed by Archbishop Tutu and others.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps it was this dramatic context, this embodiment, that prompted a Muslim scholar to refer to the TRC as a 'secular sacrament'.<sup>36</sup>

Whether it was the shedding of tears or the telling of the personal/narratives, the TRC created a 'presence of encounter', 'a connection', a 'linking' of parties on the emotional and intellectual level caught up in past history. Perhaps that was its secular sacramental dimension. 'There were sober moments of confession and declarations of forgiveness',<sup>37</sup> so Israel Selvanayagam commented: 'The whole experience was healing too in a remarkable way. For instance, one who had been blinded could declare after the confession of his perpetrator, 'It feels like I have got my sight back'.<sup>38</sup> It was part of telling the 'truth' in retrospection of the past. Yet, as Cole asserted, it was also subjective knowledge validated as knowledge and truth.<sup>39</sup> So she concludes:

Testimony was the truth as the deponent saw, remembered or experienced it. Personal/narrative truth conveyed through physicalization as well as the conventions of orality so central to African cultures. The ideal medium of personal/narrative truth for the TRC was a live encounter between the person giving testimony and multiple secondary witnesses. Thus this type of truth demands, implicitly, an audience...<sup>40</sup>

This set the scene in which the individuals or groups sought to relate their narratives. It set the stage where the individuals sought to encounter 'the other'. One of the Commissioners, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, beautifully portrayed the power associated with the 'space' at the TRC thus:

Unlike in a court of law, where victims are brought into the picture only in relation to the perpetrator's deed, the TRC put victims at the centre of the process, allowing them to tell their stories in the way that they chose before a

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<sup>33</sup> Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, 136.

<sup>34</sup> Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, 138.

<sup>35</sup> Tinyiko Maluleke 'Dealing Lightly with the Wound of my People?', 324-43.

<sup>36</sup> Anthony Egan, 'Christianity as an Intellectual Tradition in SA', in Peter Vale et al, *Intellectual Traditions in South Africa* (Scottsville, RSA: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2014), 261.

<sup>37</sup> Israel Selvanayagam, 'Truth and Reconciliation: An Interfaith Perspective from India', in Kim, Kollontai and Hoyland (eds), *Peace and Reconciliation*, 36.

<sup>38</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (London: Rider, 1999), 129.

<sup>39</sup> Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, 164.

<sup>40</sup> Cole, *Performing South Africa's Truth Commission*, 164.

listening audience, validating experiences that were denied by the apartheid state for many years.<sup>41</sup>

The space in the TRC hearings allowed some flexibility, usually not a feature of the court of law. Whereas in a court of law, if found guilty, most likely the accused expected to go to jail, in this respect, the perpetrator of human rights violation stood a very good chance of amnesty merely on the basis of complete disclosure. Cole noted that ‘while the TRC did check facts and verify statements, by the time a case was chosen to receive public hearing, the testimony had become a performative act with its own veracity...’<sup>42</sup> With this portrait we now turn to reflect on the three scenes associated with the TRC.

## The Scenes

### 7.1 Scene 1: Mrs Cynthia Ngewu

The story of Mrs Cynthia Ngewu, one of the mothers of the Guguletu Seven, illustrates power relations between herself and the killers of her son. She testified about the discovery of her son’s body and her encounters with the authorities and the police afterwards:

I personally feel what the Commission can do for me is that these people should be brought to justice. The whole nation must see these people and they must say they shot our children. They must account for the death of our children. Why would they drag my son? Was he a dog? Were their hands better than mine? Better than my sons? Were their hands so clean that they couldn’t even touch my son? Why did they have to drag him? Barnard would come in and out of my house and he would be telling me that ‘Your dog, Christopher, is dead’.<sup>43</sup>

The forum gave Mrs Ngewu some power to vent her anger about the killers of her son, but also relating to the nation. It was an empowering experience for her. In telling her story, Mrs Ngewu was liberating herself in the context of the nation.<sup>44</sup> Robert Schreier asserted: ‘Personal or narrative truth situates the truth within the identity of those who tell the story. In so doing, it re-situates the truth of the event in the larger web of truth and meaning of individual lives.’<sup>45</sup> Dialogical truth is what emerges as the different parties probe the story together in order to explore the meaning of

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<sup>41</sup> Gobodo-Madikizela, ‘Remorse, Forgiveness and Rehumanization’, 209.

<sup>42</sup> Cole, *Performing South Africa’s Truth Commission*, 164.

<sup>43</sup> Cole, *Performing South African’s Truth Commission*, 86. This is just a very brief excerpt. Cole gives a very detailed account of the testimony, 81-86.

<sup>44</sup> Cole, *Performing South African’s Truth Commission*, 81-86.

their respective narratives.<sup>45</sup> However, Mrs Ngewu was also trying to re-negotiate her new-found identity – as a mother to whom the TRC had given recognition for her story, her dignity. But it is a re-negotiated identity that is embedded in a framework of power. ‘Yet power, as Foucault has shown, is not inherently moral, good or bad. It is energy and force that is used for regulatory regimes, but is available for resistance. Power is necessary for living, even if it used to delimit the possibilities of life. It may be made inaccessible by social arrangements. People within social systems may be made to feel they cannot do anything and are powerless.’<sup>46</sup>

### 7.2 Scene 2: Mrs Konile

However, power can also overwhelm or even paralyse. Cole records that, almost at the end of the hearing, the mothers of the Guguletu Seven attempted to say what they hoped to achieve at the TRC and how they would respond. Mrs Konile said:

I wouldn't be able to talk to them; it is their fault that I am now in this misery; now I wouldn't know what to do them – with them. I wouldn't know; I would never be able to say what – I can never tell them what to do. I have just given up everything; I don't know. I don't know everything; I don't know. I will be just – be grateful if I can just get anything, but I personally cannot do anything.<sup>47</sup>

There is almost a note of resignation, with Mrs Konile almost accommodating herself to the existing power relations. Apartheid state security apparatus and ideology overwhelmed black people. The apartheid regime (the perpetrators of atrocities) had taken away her sense of identity and dignity. However, in her state of ‘powerlessness’, she was in a position to articulate her feelings. In the aftermath of the appearance at the TRC, asked by one of the Commissioners, Gobodo-Madikizela, how she felt about her testifying, Mrs Konile is reported to have said: ‘No, nothing is better about the whole thing. I don't know. I cannot tell you how I feel.’<sup>48</sup> Mrs Konile seemed caught up in a situation where she didn't actually know what to do. She experienced power as a force which had transformed her identity. It was almost as though she was in a state of liminality – in between accommodating her personal circumstances to some power, and at the same time seeking to challenge this hegemony of power but then not knowing how to handle it.

Though somehow reacting in different ways, in both cases, Mrs Ngewu's and Mrs Konile's quest was a re-negotiation of their identity,

<sup>45</sup> Robert Schreier, ‘Establishing a Shared Identity: The Role of the Healing of Memories and of Narrative’ in Kim, Kollontai and Hoyland (eds), *Peace and Reconciliation*, 16.

<sup>46</sup> Flora Keshgegian, *Redeeming Memories*, 155-156.

<sup>47</sup> Cole, *Performing South African's Truth Commission*, 86.

<sup>48</sup> Cole, *Performing South African's Truth Commission*, 86.

seeking a new identity. Cecelia Clegg argued that ‘a pivotal task in a process of societal reconciliation is a re-negotiation of group identities in order to move towards a situation where peaceful co-existence can be sustained. If we look at the nature of group identities in conflict, it is clear that identity is often distorted into what conflict theorist Marc Gopin calls “negative identity”’.<sup>49</sup> Yet the significance of the personal narratives of these two victims lay in their quest for human dignity, an attempt to reclaim the humanity that they had lost through victimization. The significance of this has been beautifully captured by Gobodo-Madikizela. She asserted:

In the South African context, the restoration of human dignity constituted the key and obvious principle which rested on an equally unarticulated and underlying value of *ubuntu*. Promoting communal rather than individual responsibility, behind *ubuntu* lay the issue of the power of the community to know the truth and therefore be part of the process of initiating reconciliation. Therefore the restoration of human dignity was an issue of power. It was embedded in communal culture and identity. They suggest that connection to cultural roots and supports (such as church, neighbourhood and family) are an essential part of healing for people who have suffered irreparable loss. Without a sense of continuity with a community of others, regaining one’s sense of self may itself be a traumatic process.<sup>50</sup>

In Southern Africa, there is no gift that can one receive that is greater than regaining one’s sense of human dignity, humanity – *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* is about the affirmation of one’s humanity. It is about the healing and transformation of the personal image and identity of a wronged person. ‘There is something transformative and cathartic about the moment of public testimony’ – so Gobodo-Madikizela proclaims. She asserted: ‘Many victims who appeared before the TRC spoke about their witnessing as an experience that gave them a degree of control over their trauma.’<sup>51</sup> Quoting Brison, she argued: ‘... that, in the case of human-inflicted trauma, the act of bearing witness moves the victim from being the object of the perpetrator’s speech or behaviour “to being the subject of one’s own”’.<sup>52</sup> Yet the impact of the TRC was such that it also transcended the four-wall boundaries of halls. It took another dimension outside its walls, and so communication also took on another mode. The case of Mr Adrian Vlok, the former Minister of Safety and Security, illustrates this.

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<sup>49</sup> Cecelia Clegg, ‘Embracing a Threatening Other: Identity and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland’ in Sebastian C.H. Kim, Pauline Kollontai and Greg Hoyland (eds), *Peace and Reconciliation* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 86.

<sup>50</sup> Gobodo-Madikizela, ‘Remorse, Forgiveness and Rehumanization’, 212.

<sup>51</sup> Gobodo-Madikizela, ‘Remorse, Forgiveness and Rehumanization’, 210.

<sup>52</sup> Gobodo-Madikizela, ‘Remorse, Forgiveness and Rehumanization’, 210.

### 7.3 Scene 3: Mr Adrian Vlok/Reverend Frank Chikane

Koopman noted that Mr Vlok washed the feet of the Reverend Frank Chikane, former Secretary General of the South African Council of Churches.<sup>53</sup> It was during his tenure of office as a minister that, trying to kill Chikane, his clothes were laced with poison. Koopman also noted that Vlok also washed the feet of a few black women to ‘express remorse and contrition’.<sup>54</sup> Whatever the motives his action entailed, in relation to the victims, ‘space’ created by the TRC made it possible for Vlok to put himself in a position of vulnerability and ‘powerlessness’ with a view to carving a new identity for himself in the new South Africa. Through his actions, symbolically, it was as if his victims were put at the centre while Vlok allowed himself to be marginalized. Cole commented on the significance of the act thus:

Vlok’s performed gesture is remarkable and, one suspects, somehow deeply indebted to the TRC, both through its overt performance and embodiment of reconciliation and its inherent opacity of meaning. Viewed as an expression of the TRC’s repertoire, Vlok’s foot-washing apology exceeds the TRC brief, for perpetrators were not required to express remorse in order to receive amnesty.<sup>55</sup>

The preceding case is significant. It suggests that the context of openness and accountability created by the TRC, perhaps also coupled with a troubled conscience, prompted Mr Vlok to seek forgiveness from the Reverend Chikane. He tried to demonstrate his remorse publicly by using the highly symbolic Biblical imagery of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. The circumstances themselves compelled Mr Vlok to come forward to seek forgiveness from the Reverend Chikane. Gobodo-Madikizela portrayed the ‘power relations’ between the victim and the perpetrator thus:

Even after they had been granted amnesty – political pardon – some perpetrators seemed anxious to hear the words of forgiveness from their victims. It was as if they wanted something more – the cleansing power of the victim’s forgiveness – to ‘free’ them, even if symbolically, from the burden of their dark past.<sup>56</sup>

What is striking here is the possible transformation of relationships that occurs following an encounter of truth-telling between the perpetrator and the victim. The perpetrator goes through a moment of cleansing – a sort of liberation from a past laden with guilt. The TRC report gives insight into the transforming experiences and impact of the confessions on the witnesses and national audiences. It asserted: ‘By telling their stories, both victims and perpetrators gave meaning to the multi-layered experiences of

<sup>53</sup> Nico Koopman, ‘Towards Reconciliation and Justice in South Africa’, 97.

<sup>54</sup> Nico Koopman, ‘Towards Reconciliation and Justice in South Africa’, 97.

<sup>55</sup> Cole, *Performing South African’s Truth Commission*, 129.

<sup>56</sup> Gobodo-Madikizela, ‘Remorse, Forgiveness and Rehumanization’, 211.

the South African story... they provided unique sights into the pain of South Africa's past, often touching the hearts of all that heard them.<sup>57</sup>

### Conclusion

This paper has argued that the hearings of the TRC and the manner in which they were conducted had missional dimensions. It has shown that its missional dimensions lay in the efforts made to bring about healing and reconciliation through the narration of truth-telling/narratives. Similarly, I have also argued that the metaphoric language used in the TRC and the space thus created configured power relations. In other words, this paper has argued that, underlying the missional dimensions of the TRC, lay power relations which enabled a transformative encounter between victim and perpetrator.

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<sup>57</sup> TRC, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, 1:112.

# MONEY AS POWER IN MISSION

Jonathan Bonk

## The Nature of Power

*Power* comes in numerous forms. The many kinds of disequilibrium that we have come to associate with power are inescapable. The struggle for survival permeates the planet and all its species, including its human beings, manifesting itself in their social and economic relations. To succeed in this relentless struggle, an individual or a species must have *power*.

Power is a relative, dyadic concept: one person, one family, one clan, one tribe, one nation powerful enough to survive and thrive in one context discovers itself to be weak and vulnerable in another. This is the sad story of conquests, displacements and genocides over the course of human time and across the world's continents. The same is true of all species, across the spectra of life. The survival of microbes, cells, viruses, germs, insects, fishes or animals is contingent upon a relative advantage in power.

Even ardent devotees of the most peaceful religions cannot – simply by virtue of their belief systems or by supreme exercise of the will – escape entanglement with power and its attendant ethical compromises. Synonyms for 'power' – advantage, control, influence, authority, supremacy, rule, command, clout, muscle and the like – are helpfully illuminating, freeing us from the delusional notion that exemption from either the advantages or disadvantages of power is possible. Understanding the ranges and relativity of power can preserve us from the personally debilitating notion that we are *merely* powerless, whilst others are *powerful*. Contrarily, it can remind us that our relative power can be a force for good or ill. We are all *relatively* powerful, and we are all *relatively* powerless.

The chain of existence requires that the weak be dominated by the strong. Power dyads characterize all that is living, each expression of life sandwiched between levels either more or less powerful. Large nations dominate small nations; large economies swamp small economies; powerful armies defeat weak armies; large corporations swallow up small businesses; powerful people exploit weaker people; people eat animals; large animals eat smaller animals; large fish swallow smaller fish; and so on.

The aphorism 'Science red in tooth and claw' is the very essence of the short continuum of existence that we call 'life'.<sup>1</sup> All creatures, including us humans, are located somewhere on the life-death continuum known as the 'food chain'. 'Food chain' is the gauzy euphemism we employ to mask the

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Ruse, *The Darwinian Revolution: Science Red in Tooth and Claw*, 2nd edition, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999 [1979]).

harsh reality that every living creature must destroy other living creatures in order to sustain its own life. We eat what we can, and we ourselves are eaten unless we can prevent it. In the end, we're all dead.

As Jack London describes the mortal battle between the mother wolf and the mother lynx in *White Fang*, his epic novel about life in Canada's Yukon Territory during the Klondike Gold Rush during the 1890s, the wolf cub begins to learn the 'law of the meat':

He began to accompany his mother on the meat trail, and he saw much of the killing of meat and began to play his part in it. And in his own dim way he learned the law of meat. There were two kinds of life – his own kind and the other kind. His own kind included his mother and himself. The other kind included all live things that moved. But the other kind was divided. One portion was what his own kind killed and ate. This portion was composed of the non-killers and the small killers. The other portion killed and ate his own kind, or was killed and eaten by his own kind. And out of this classification arose the law. The aim of life was meat. Life itself was meat. Life lived on life. There were the eaters and the eaten. The law was: EAT OR BE EATEN. He did not formulate the law in clear, set terms and moralise about it. He did not even think the law; he merely lived the law without thinking about it at all.

He saw the law operating around him on every side. He had eaten the ptarmigan chicks. The hawk had eaten the ptarmigan mother. The hawk would also have eaten him. Later, when he had grown more formidable, he wanted to eat the hawk. He had eaten the lynx kitten. The lynx mother would have eaten him had she not herself been killed and eaten. And so it went. The law was being lived about him by all live things, and he himself was part and parcel of the law. He was a killer. His only food was meat, live meat, that ran away swiftly before him, or flew into the air, or climbed trees, or hid in the ground, or faced him and fought with him, or turned the tables and ran after him.<sup>2</sup>

### Missionaries and Power

But must this 'law of meat' – the exercise of personal advantage for the sake of survival – apply to the social power of monetary advantage? And if so, must it be appropriated, used and rationalized by *Christians*, including *missionaries*, to sustain life as they have been taught to live it, and to further personal, family or strategic advantage?

As I observed elsewhere in this series:

Christian mission has always been associated with *power*. The promise of the risen Christ was that his followers would receive *power* when the Holy Spirit came on them, and that this power would infuse and animate their proclamation of the Good News in Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and

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<sup>2</sup> Jack London, *The Call of the Wild and White Fang*, with Notes and an Introduction by Lionel Kelly (Ware, UK: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1992), 121.

throughout the entire world (Acts 1:8). In the calculus of Roman *realpolitik*, the laughably parochial audience for these words represented the lowest social strata of a thoroughly subjugated populace inhabiting one of the empire's back eddies. Powerless, even against the slack measure of their nation's own powerlessness, the notion that these rag-tag followers of a crucified faith healer could be of political or religious significance would have seemed ludicrous.

But... with the conversion of powerful political leaders – for whom Constantine may serve as a convenient [symbol]... *Christianity* evolved into *Christendom*, the great-grand sire of what is today known as 'The West'. Between the Edict of Milan in CE 313 and Justinian's edict of CE 529, Christianity's status in the Empire evolved from being *one religion among several* legitimate options to being the *only* legal public cult in CE 392. With Charlemagne's ascent to power several centuries later, Christendom emerged full-blown, infusing the West's social institutions and self-perception in its violent, 500-year ascent to global hegemony.<sup>3</sup>

The conversion of peoples to Christendom faith was achieved by a combination of voluntary, social, legal and violent compulsions. The incumbent populations of North and South America, Australia, Southern Africa and, most recently, Palestine, were overwhelmed, subjugated and frequently destroyed by European armies, merchants and migrants. Missionaries applied themselves to winning subjugated peoples over to the religion that would set them on the path to 'civilization', now touted as 'development'. This noble end was used to justify almost every conceivable means of persuasion and inducement, including military conquest, genocide, assimilation and proclamation. In the implicit and sometimes explicit thinking of missionaries, Christianity was the actual inner élan of Western civilization's lust and will to dominate.<sup>4</sup>

And so I return to the question. Must power, including the power of monetary advantage, be appropriated, protected and used by *Christians*, including *missionaries*, to further personal, family, cultural or even missional advantage? Have not missionaries staked their very lives in the belief that Jesus of Galilee is Lord, and that what he advocated and modelled in his earthly life has marked his true followers ever since, including – perhaps especially – his emissaries on earth? After all, they are followers of the one who said and proved by his life that true life is not

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<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Bonk and Lori Ransom, Theme Four: Mission and Power, in Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds), *Edinburgh 2010. Volume II: Witnessing to Christ Today* (Edinburgh 2010 Series), (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 86-115.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that a vast majority of merchants, armies and migrants to the Americas, South Africa and Macronesia represented the theological posterity of Latin Christendom. In fact, Christendom remains deeply divided into six parts: Roman Catholic and Arian in the West, Syrian or Assyrian (Nestorian) in the East, the Coptic Orthodox with the Greek or Melkite, and the Syrian Orthodox or Antiochene or Jacobite or Monophysite. See Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, AD 200-1000*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 279-85.

about *getting*, but *giving*; not about *winning*, but *losing*; not about *vengeance*, but *turning the other cheek*; not about *security*, but *falling into the ground and dying*.

Furthermore, missionaries who have been shaped within a Pietistic stream of Christianity can testify to being '*born again*' (1 Pet. 1:23), '*new creatures in Christ*' (2 Cor. 5:17), living not according to '*the spirit who is not at work in those who are disobedient*' (Eph. 2:2) but in step with the Spirit. Infusing their spiritual DNA as sons and daughters of God are both the desire and the capacity to be '*imitators of God as dearly loved children*' (Eph. 5:1), reflecting the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:1-11), and increasingly resembling him in the deepest recesses of their identity (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18).

Many missionaries have been, and still are, privileged citizens of western countries, living symbols and beneficiaries of nations whose military and economic conquests – frequently genocidal – subjugated most of the planet's inhabitants by reshaping the political boundaries and agendas of virtually every country in the world, issuing in what today is referred to as '*globalization*'... a system of economic organization designed to permanently advantage only the most powerful monetary, corporate and political interests. From within this acculturating cocoon, Christian missionaries have toiled to model and propagate a different code of understanding and its concomitant behaviours – the Sermon on the Mount. Not being served, but serving; not dominating, but submitting (Matt. 20:25-28); not accumulating, but giving (Matt. 5:40); not self-preserving, but falling into the ground and dying (John 12:20-26); not striding grandly at the front of the world's tawdry self-aggrandizing processions, but being dragged along at the back, like prisoners condemned to die (1 Cor. 4:1-13).

*Has this been the modus operandi or aspiration of missionaries? Has it ever been or can it be realistically achieved by men and women whose cultural and natural pedigree bestows upon them the advantage of acculturation within, and continued reliance upon, such brutally powerful political, economic and military entities? The record permits a qualified yes, sometimes. The question of how involves complicated questions to which answers – as varied as the missionaries themselves – are, at best, ambiguous.*

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### The Clash of Civilizations

The question of mission and economic power is at its core a *clash of civilizations* – to borrow a phrase that entered the public mind with the publication of Samuel Huntington's 1996 book by that title.<sup>5</sup> The

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<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Bonk, 'Following Jesus in Contexts of Power and Violence', in *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Vol. 31, 2007.4, 342-57.

missionary movement from the West is inextricably intertwined with the story of old and neo-Christendom's ascent to global hegemony.

As recently as a century ago, Europe dominated all of Africa, the entire Middle East except for Turkey, and most of the Asian sub-continent. The 35% of the earth's surface controlled by Europeans when Carey sailed for Serampore had grown to 84% by 1914. The British Empire, encompassing 20 million subjects, spread over 1.5 million square miles in 1800, engulfed 390 million people inhabiting 11 million square miles a century later.<sup>6</sup> It is not surprising, then, that missionaries should, by and large, come to accept their personal privilege as a mark of God's blessing on their civilization and as the inevitable outcome of the appropriation of the gospel they proclaimed. The superiority of their way of life, including the relative wealth to which even missionaries were thereby entitled, was not only a blessing but a sacred trust – a significant dimension of the good news that they proclaimed, a fruit of conversion to the Christian way of life.

Today we are much less sanguine about the western way of life. Profound questions are being compelled by the planet itself as it increasingly shows signs of acute, possibly fatal, degradation of its complicated life-support environments. As the peoples of the world have bought into the gospel of ever-expanding consumption – the stridently advocated 'good news' message of the West – species and weaker peoples are being destroyed and jeopardized as the ecosystem is inexorably degraded in what seems to be the slow-motion suicide of the human species – all in the glorious name of Gross National Product.<sup>7</sup> We in the West know of no other way to live, and politicians and leaders dare not take the long view with populations anxious about short-term survival. The short-term appeal of our way of life has taken root through the export of the ideologies and education systems that produce and sustain it. Western missionaries have played a significant if unwitting role in this.

Some solace may be taken from the fact that Jesus and his followers also lived during a time of acute economic and political inequity, brutally imposed and enforced. Like us, they inhabited a world of entrenched and growing inequities, governed by brutally aggressive armies vying for limited resources. An article in the *New York Times* several years ago pointed out that, although the idea has been for rich countries to sink their capital into the so-called 'developing world', in 2006 the net transfer of capital from poorer countries to rich ones was \$784 billion, up from \$229

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<sup>6</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 51. Huntington cites D.K. Fieldhouse, *Economics and Empire, 1830-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 3, and F.J.C. Hearnshaw, *Sea Power and Empire* (London: George Harrap, 1940), 179.

<sup>7</sup> According to the UN Environment Programme, an estimated 150-200 species of plant, insect, bird and mammal become extinct every 24 hours. See John Vidal, environment editor of *The Guardian*, Monday, 16th August 2010: [www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/aug/16/nature-economic-security](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2010/aug/16/nature-economic-security)

billion in 2002.<sup>8</sup> In 2013 it was estimated that while ‘developing’ countries received about \$136 billion annually in aid from donor countries, they lost ten times that amount – about \$1 trillion – through offshore capital flight.<sup>9</sup> As Rosenberg observed in the *New York Times Magazine* article in 2007, ‘In 1997, the balance was even. Even the poorest countries, like those in sub-Saharan Africa, are now money exporters.’<sup>10</sup>

As the author explains, this ‘reverse foreign aid’ is one inadvertent result of globalization. Instead of distributing wealth downward, as had been anticipated by the prevailing *laissez faire* economic ideology, it has actually concentrated wealth upward as poor countries, eager for economic stability, have invested their reserves in US Treasury bills, in effect lending money to the richest nation in the world. In Rosenberg’s words, ‘This allows the US to keep interest rates low and Washington to run up huge deficits with no apparent penalty.’<sup>11</sup> Willing or not, western missionaries are both exemplars and beneficiaries of this deeply unjust financial system.

### Missionaries and the Power of Money

The profoundly malforming impact of money on American systems of ‘justice’ and politics is so well known as to be a global cliché. But what about the much more modest economic underpinnings of western missionaries, who usually live quiet, unassuming lives of service, often barely able to make ends meet? I explored such questions several years ago in *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Missionary Problem... Revisited*, and in scores of articles and chapters over the past twenty years.<sup>12</sup> While there are many ways in which the relative economic power of the western mission enterprise has been evident over the past two centuries, the implications of this power have generally been overlooked, understated or lauded.

In this article, I assume that missionary motives and intentions are not the problem. Rather, the problem is the psycho-sociological dynamics of gross material inequity in close social proximity. Since the Christian faith is above all a *relational* rather than a *doctrinal* faith, it is to this that we must give attention.

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<sup>8</sup> Tina Rosenberg, ‘Reverse Foreign Aid: Why are poor countries subsidizing rich ones?’ in *New York Times Magazine* (25th March 2007), 16, 18-19.

<sup>9</sup> Jason Hickel, ‘The Donors’ Dilemma – Aid in Reverse: How Poor Countries Develop Rich Countries’, in *Global Policy*, 12th December 2013: [www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/12/12/2013/donors%E2%80%99-dilemma-aid-reverse-how-poor-countries-develop-rich-countries](http://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/12/12/2013/donors%E2%80%99-dilemma-aid-reverse-how-poor-countries-develop-rich-countries)

<sup>10</sup> Rosenberg, ‘Reverse Foreign Aid’, 19.

<sup>11</sup> Rosenberg, ‘Reverse Foreign Aid’, 16.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan J. Bonk, *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Missionary Problem... Revisited*. Revised and expanded edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006 [1991]). Several other articles are listed in the bibliography at the end of this article.

Paul Piff, an assistant professor of social psychology at the University of California, Irvine, who has for several years been studying the effects of money on human interrelationships, has made the unsurprising discovery that ‘the more money you have, the more focused on yourself you become, and the less sensitive to the welfare of people around you’.<sup>13</sup> His findings are no big surprise to anyone who has observed in others or in oneself the social dynamics of economic inequity in close social proximity, but they help to draw attention to the psychological sleight of hand that frequently substitutes our idealized selves for our real selves.

- a) People rationalize personal advantage by convincing themselves that they deserve it. Research repeatedly and resoundingly shows that the underlying reason for most economic disparities is that some people are born to privilege, while others are not. Nevertheless, people almost inevitably take personal credit for their own relative good fortune. Obversely, they place responsibility for impoverishment squarely on the less fortunate themselves.
- b) People who make less are more generous... on a small scale. Participants in an experiment in which rich and poor participants each received ten dollars to spend as they wished showed that those who made less than \$25,000, sometimes much less, gave 44% more to the needy stranger than those making \$150,000 or more per year.
- c) People who make less are more generous... on a large scale. The *Chronicle of Philanthropy's* examination of 2012 IRS records of every American earning at least \$50,000 showed that those earning between \$50,000 to \$75,000 gave away 7.6% of their income to charity, while those making more than \$100,000 gave away 4.2%. Even more telling were the charitable donation figures for those making more than \$200,000 per year, whose average giving dropped to 2.8%.
- d) Rich people are more likely to ignore pedestrians. Videotaping hundreds of vehicles driving through crosswalks in California, where the law requires that cars stop for pedestrians, Piff found that nearly half the drivers of expensive cars ignored pedestrians waiting to cross, while all the drivers of inexpensive cars yielded to the pedestrian.

Piff was not trying to disparage the wealthy. Nor is that the purpose of this article. He was simply showing how wealth affects our self-estimates and our capacity to empathise with the less fortunate. On a more hopeful note, his studies also showed that counteracting the negative psychological effects of wealth was usually not that difficult – that, even though wealth

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<sup>13</sup> ‘6 studies on how money affects the mind’, posted by Jessica Gross, 20th December 2013: *TED Blog* (<http://blog.ted.com/6-studies-of-money-and-the-mind>). See also Chris Taylor, ‘How Money Changes us, and not for the good’: *Reuters US edition*, Tuesday, 16th February 2016: [www.reuters.com/article/us-money-behavior-piff-idUSKCN0VPIQQ](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-money-behavior-piff-idUSKCN0VPIQQ)

rewards, perpetuates and reinforces self-interest, ‘simply reminding wealthy individuals of the benefits of co-operation or community could at times prompt them to act in just as egalitarian a manner as poor people’. This, surely, is good news for western missionaries, born to the power of money and its attendant privileges and dangers.

In a subsequent interview, Piff spoke of the dangers of inequality:

Inequality is a pressing issue, and not just for the poor, but for everyone. The social fabric gets frayed, trust and co-operation are undermined, people’s health gets worse. Inequality makes social outcomes worse for everybody – and that’s a problem. The real challenge is that it’s a self-perpetuating dynamic, because those at the top feel they are more deserving of what they have, and become less willing to share those resources with others. Inequality creates more distance between people.

It’s not the case that wealthy people are corrupt. That’s a caricature. But wealth is a resource that comes with certain psychological tendencies. If wealth tends to drive a decrease in compassion and kindness and generosity, then we have to find ways to mitigate that.<sup>14</sup>

For the past two centuries, Christian missionaries from the West have been buoyed up by their civilization’s power and its various vestiges, so that – while living modestly by the standards of their own societies – they have been unintentional examples of ostentatious living in many of the contexts in which they have served. Proclaiming the good news of the one who had nowhere to lay his head, and who told his disciples to live simply and without material entanglements, missionaries from the West have struggled to maintain credibility and integrity among peoples of conspicuous relative want.

The psychology and the sociology of inequity, of economic disequilibrium in close social proximity, is of deep concern to those who make a living from being religious... who ‘do well by doing good’... and who sometimes appear to peddle the word of God for profit (2 Cor. 2:17). According to some of the earliest, most credible teaching of the early church, found in the *Didache*,<sup>15</sup> a prophet who prophesied for money was a false prophet, and not to be listened to or welcomed.

Welcome every apostle on arriving, as if he were the Lord. But he must not stay beyond one day. In case of necessity, however, the next day too. If he stays three days, he is a false prophet. On departing, an apostle must not accept anything except sufficient food to carry him till his next lodging. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet... Every prophet who teaches the truth but fails to practise what he preaches is a false prophet... But if someone says in the Spirit, ‘Give me money, or something else,’ you must not heed him.

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<sup>14</sup> Taylor, ‘How money changes us, and not for the good’:

[www.reuters.com/article/us-money-behavior-piff-idUSKCN0VP1QQ](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-money-behavior-piff-idUSKCN0VP1QQ)

<sup>15</sup> *The Didache: The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, with Footnotes, Historical Notes on Manuscripts and a detailed Study Guide, compiled by Raymond Suen (Kindle edition).

However, if he tells you to give to others in need, no one must condemn him.<sup>16</sup>

These are high standards indeed! Men and women from the West who earn their living from religion, having long been associated with power – the power of militarily and politically dominant nations, the power of higher standards of living, the power of a better formal education, the power of mobility, the power of communications, the power of extraordinary educational advantages for their children – might be hard pressed to pass this first-century rule-of-thumb test of prophetic integrity!

Invited by the editors of *Lausanne World Pulse* in 2011 to write something about the power of integrity, I reminded readers that *power* is associated with *hubris* and the delusion of relative invincibility.<sup>17</sup> Those wielding power get their way most of the time by being louder, faster, stronger, smarter, larger and more influential than those around them. Individuals, families, sports teams, universities, corporations, political parties, armies, nations and missionaries too can all be *powerful*. In attaining, maintaining and imposing power, ethical scruples become a huge disadvantage, so we find ways to neutralize or at least compartmentalize them. This is illustrated by the frequent reports of large corporations, wealthy individuals or political tyrants who abrogate their responsibility for contributing their fair share to the common good by banking in the Cayman Islands, Switzerland or other offshore tax havens where they can conceal the extent of their greed. ‘Integrity’ in such cases is simply a social mask. The underlying reality is the kind of hypocrisy decried by Jesus in Matthew 23.

Rarely have the economically and politically powerful been noted for integrity. Conversely, those with integrity seldom aspire to or wield power. Power seems to be unavoidably corrosive, corrupting those who wield it, however well-intentioned they may be. Power corrupts because every layer of human identity – individual, ethnic, tribal, racial, political, communal, religious, national, etc. – defaults to the self rather than to the other, justifying whatever it takes to promote, sustain and advance self-interest, even to the point of taking the lives and possessions of those who stand in our way. Such self-seeking is antithetical to obedience to Jesus, who modelled and advocated self-giving – what he called taking up our cross and following him (Matt. 16:24) – as the only sure evidence of kingdom life.

Given what we plainly know and experience of power, what can we do? Since in its conventional usage power should *not be appropriated* by Christians for self-serving purposes, what must we do to be saved? How

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<sup>16</sup> *The Didache*, Section XIII, Chapter 11, vv. 4-8, 10, 12 (Kindle edition).

<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Bonk, ‘The Conundrum of the Power of Integrity’, in *Lausanne World Pulse* 2011. Archives: [www.lausanneworldpulse.com/themedarticles-php/1432/08-2011](http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/themedarticles-php/1432/08-2011)

can we release the Holy Spirit's promised power to *witness* (Acts 1:7), when *witness* – the literal translation of the Greek word *martyr* – is more about *relinquishing* human power than *wielding* it or *benefiting* from it? 'What then must we do to be saved?' to coin the desperate query addressed to Paul and Silas by the guards when the Philippi prison security systems were breached and the lives of the guards were on the line (Acts 16:1-40). There is no easy path. Only the narrow, difficult path down which Jesus leads his followers will get them to their desired destination.

### The Antidote to the Power of Money in Mission

Since ours is a relational faith, and we are taught to follow the example of Jesus in order to rightly understand the meaning of loving God and loving our neighbour, it is with the example and the teaching of Jesus that we must begin.

#### *A Missiology of Weakness*<sup>18</sup>

Mission theology is built on three, distinctively Christian, beliefs: the incarnation, the cross, and weakness as power. Each of these is indispensable in coming to grips with the pathologies of economic power in mission.

**The Incarnation** is at the heart of our Christian faith. Followers of Jesus have always understood and to some extent agreed that the incarnation is not merely a *description* of Jesus' self-emptying, but a *prescription* for those who have ever since followed him. The incarnation teaches us that God is not impressed with ingenious human to increase power, speed, mobility, and efficiency. The triumphalist strategies of western missiologies – various heady schemes to evangelize the world or to reach all the unreached peoples in the world – are utterly at odds with the incarnation. Such approaches to mission assume a plentiful supply of money. This kind of thinking smacks of Babel, not the baby in the manger. God's mission on earth through Jesus was, by the standards of modern missiology, astoundingly parochial, unfolding in obscurity, vulnerability and early failure. As our Scriptures teach us, this was no mere cosmic slip-up on God's part... no strategic disaster because of the limits of his creative thinking! It was deliberate. 'As you have sent me into the world, I have sent [those whom you gave me] into the world,' Christ prayed for his disciples (John 17:16, 17). As Paul made clear by word and deed, this was to be the model for life and mission for all Jesus' followers: 'Your attitude should be

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<sup>18</sup> Adapted from Jonathan J. Bonk, *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Missionary Problem... Revisited*, 182-88. Kosuke Koyama's writing is particularly insightful in reflecting on the paradox of weakness as power. See, for example, *Three Mile an Hour God: Biblical Reflections* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979).

the same as that of Christ Jesus,' Paul reminded believers at Philippi (Phil. 2:5). At the very least, the incarnation means giving up the power, privilege, and social position which are our societal due.

*The Cross*, similarly, is not merely a divine judicial contrivance for our individual atonement, but a symbol of the only way of life to which our Lord's followers have ever been invited. Christ is not merely 'the atoning sacrifice for our sins' (1 John 2:2; 4:10), but a model for the lives of his followers. 'Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me,' Jesus told his disciples, 'is not worthy of me' (Matt. 10:38; cf. Mark 8:34). Such words strike at the heart of any approach to mission premised on the power of money or reliant on financially dependent strategies. Jesus' blunt account of the rejection and suffering that lay just ahead elicited a rebuke from Peter. The forcefulness of Jesus' response to Peter would be surprising, were it not for the seriousness of Peter's mistaken sense of how must do his work: 'Get behind me, Satan! You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men' (Mark 8:31-33).

### *A Missiology of the Righteous Rich*

For followers of Jesus, his Sermon on the Mount serves in ways analogous to the United States' recourse to its Constitution. Some argue that this is a societal self-correcting document; the pervasive power of wealth regularly exposes this as shallow cant, since the intentions and spirit of its tired old statutes are whittled down by those whose vast wealth purchases the will of lawmakers dependent on their money.

But these two defining documents could not be more dissimilar in intent, means or outcomes. In Jesus' 'Kingdom Charter', the powerful are never 'blessed' – although they are tellingly castigated. Throughout his short life, Jesus steadfastly rejected conventional power as a means to advancing God's will on earth. He chose, advocated and modelled *weakness*, not power.

The only 'power' advocated and promised to followers of Jesus is the power of weakness – the power to lay down one's life; the power of a grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying, and thereby yielding new abundant life.

Given the relative power advantage that western missionaries have traditionally enjoyed, they – and all who, like them, wield power as Christians – face a conundrum. What, then, can be done, when economic power seems to be the birthright of western mission, infusing the warp and woof of all that they are and do?

The modern world is, if possible, even more economically polarized than it was when I wrote my book *Missions and Money* twenty years ago. The United States, Korea and other consumer-driven countries are increasingly

characterized by profound and growing internal inequities that threaten the harmony and even the viability of these societies.<sup>19</sup>

When within a given social context we are rich, it follows that what the Bible says *to* and *about* the rich, it says *to* and *about* us. Missionaries are not exempt from this rule. *Wealth* and *poverty* are among the most frequently recurring themes in our Christian scriptures. While gross material inequity in close social proximity poses profound relational, communicatory and strategic challenges for missionaries, more fundamental are the complex questions of ethical integrity that challenge any wealthy follower of Jesus moving in contexts of profound poverty.

I would like to propose that Christians generally, including missionaries – whenever they either anticipate or discover that their way of life and its entitlements make them rich by the standards of those around them – embrace the status of ‘righteous rich’ and learn to play its associated roles in ways that are contextually appropriate and biblically informed.

It is clear that the Christian scriptures draw a sharp distinction between the righteous who are prosperous and the rich who are unrighteous, and that the distinction between the two is determined chiefly on the basis of their respective dealings with the poor. It would seem absolutely vital for missionaries to make the Biblical study of this subject an essential part of both their preparation and their ongoing spiritual journey.

Mindful of their sacred Scripture’s insistence on pro-active care for the weak and needy – an emphasis infusing Sabbatical and Jubilee guidelines in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and reinforced in the parable of the Good Samaritan – it is inevitable that active response to human need was and is integral to the theological DNA of Protestants generally and of Evangelicals particularly.<sup>20</sup> To ‘*pass by on the other side*’ is not an option (Luke 10:25-37). ‘*Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins*’ (James 4:17). ‘*If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?*’ (1 John 3:17)?<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009). This book is the distillation of thirty years of research showing the connection, and multiple levels, between economic inequity and social dysfunction.

<sup>20</sup> David W. Bebbington’s oft-cited ‘quadrilateral’ identified the four core orientations characteristic of evangelicals: Biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism and activism. See his *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman/Routledge, 1989).

<sup>21</sup> I explore the ambiguities and dubious outcomes of these good intentions in a chapter entitled ‘Economic Development and Christian Mission: A Perspective from History of Mission’ (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 2016). It was a paper given at the European Conference on Mission Studies, ‘Mission and Money: Mission in the Context of Global Inequalities’, sponsored by the Nordic Institute of Missiology and Ecumenism (NIME), the European Conference on Mission Studies, 3rd-6th April 2014, Cultural Center Sofia, Finland.

In his orderly summary of Old Testament teaching on the righteous rich,<sup>22</sup> Christopher Wright observes that the righteous rich are those who:

- Remember the source of their riches – namely, the grace and gift of God himself, and are therefore not boastfully inclined to take the credit for achieving them through their own skill, strength or effort (even if these things have been legitimately deployed) (Deut. 8:17-18; 1 Chr. 29:11-12; Jer. 9:23-24).
- Do not idolize their wealth by putting inordinate trust in it, nor get anxious about losing it. For ultimately it is one's relationship with God that matters more and it can survive (and even be deepened by) the absence or loss of wealth (Job 31:24-25).
- Recognize that wealth is thus secondary to many things, including wisdom, but especially personal integrity, humility and righteousness (1 Chr. 29:17; Prov. 8:10-11; 1 Kings 3; Prov. 16:8, 28:6).
- Set their wealth in the context of God's blessing, recognizing that being blessed is not a privilege but a responsibility – the Abrahamic responsibility of being a blessing to others (Gen. 12:1-3). Wealth in righteous hands is thus a servant of that mission that flows from God's commitment to bless the nations through the seed of Abraham.
- Use their wealth with justice; this includes refusing to extract personal benefit by using wealth for corrupt ends (e.g. through bribery), and ensuring that all one's financial dealings are non-exploitative of the needs of others (e.g. through interest) (Ps. 15:5; Ezek. 18:7-8).
- Make their wealth available to the wider community through responsible lending that is both practical (Lev. 25) and respectful for the dignity of the debtor (Deut. 24:6, 10-13).
- See wealth as an opportunity for generosity – even when it is risky, and even when it hurts, thereby both blessing the poor and needy, and at the same time reflecting the character of God (Deut. 15; Ps. 112:3; Prov. 14:31, 19:17).
- Use wealth in the service of God, whether by contributing to the practical needs that are involved in the corporate worship of God (1 Chr. 28–29), or by providing for God's servants who particularly need material support (2 Chr. 31).
- Set an example by limiting personal consumption and declining to maximize private gain from public office that affords access to wealth and resources (Neh. 5:14-19).

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<sup>22</sup> Christopher J.H. Wright, 'The Righteous Rich in the Old Testament'; Jonathan J. Bonk, *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Missionary Problem... Revisited* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 199-200.

It is because such a righteous rich person is marked by genuine, life-transforming fear of the Lord that the blessings he or she enjoys are not tainted with wickedness and the whiff of oppression.

Job is probably the most ancient biblical character who was simultaneously *rich* and *righteous*. His characterization of a righteous rich person – in this case, himself – is an appropriate way to draw this essay to a conclusion.

**Job 29:11–17:** Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me, because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him. The man who was dying blessed me; I made the widow's heart sing. I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger. I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth. (See also Job 31:16-28.)

Whether one subscribes to the 'hidden hand of the market' as the source of all good things, or whether one detects in the regional, national and global market-place the not-so-hidden hand of the economically and politically powerful, it is clear that Job understood himself to be personally responsible for playing a pro-active role in the material well-being of poor people in his orbit, and that this is the way God wanted him to be. It should be the goal of any modern righteous person of means – whether missionary or business tycoon – to be able to sincerely and truthfully repeat these words to God. And having said them, to hear an echoing 'Amen' from the poor among whom they live.

## Conclusion

A missiology of the righteous rich is, at its core, no more than a willingness to be useful in terms defined by the local contexts and people. For this, there can be no better example than our Lord himself. With a mission more sweeping in scope and magnitude than those of even the most daring mission strategists, his commission was to save the world. Oddly, by the standards of western missions, Jesus spent his life as a laughably parochial figure, never in his actual ministry venturing beyond the borders of his own foreign-occupied country. By the standards of even the most tolerant mission administrators, he proved to be frustratingly deficient when it came to actually fulfilling his mission. His major difficulty seemed to have been the interruptions that intruded into his larger plans for the world.

Almost everything written in the Gospel accounts of his life relates directly or indirectly to the wrenching but strategically insignificant personal agendas of the ordinary men and women who pressed in on him on all sides during the few short years of his ministry. The Creator God incarnate, bent on saving the whole world, allowed himself to be interrupted by the sick, the lame, the blind, the withered, the bereaved, the

outcasts, the pariahs, the deaf, the demon-possessed, the grieving. Whatever he may have been doing at the time, he seemed never too busy or tired to stop and pay close attention to their agendas.

Adopting our Lord's 'missiology of interruptions' can save us from our powerful selves. It will ameliorate the deforming effects of wealth and entitlement upon our lives, enabling us to serve people on their own terms, putting us at the beck and call of those among whom we minister. It is *they*, rather than *we*, who will determine our ultimate usefulness at the end of time (Luke 4:18-19; cf. Matt. 25:31-46).

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# PART FOUR

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# MISSION AND POWER: A RESPONSE FROM THE CENTRE

Charles B. Hardwick

This chapter will examine the successes and challenges of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, a constituent body of the Presbyterian Church (USA), in undertaking ministry that follows Christ's example of surrendering power in order to join his mission to the world. I will begin by looking at Philippians 2:1-11 as a guiding scripture for the best guidance of institutional power. I will then introduce the Presbyterian Church (USA) and its Mission Agency, before closing with examples (both positive and negative) of the Agency's successes and failures to live institutionally into an ethic shaped by the second chapter of Philippians.

## Philippians 2 and the Use of Power

In Philippians 2:1-11, Paul calls his Christian readers to make his joy complete by being of one accord, because of the encouragement we receive in Christ. We are to do nothing out of self-serving motives, but instead, to view others as better than ourselves and seek their best interests. Paul longs for his readers to have the same mind as Christ Jesus – described in what was likely a pre-existing formulation as the one who did not regard equality with God as something to be used for his own benefit. Instead, Christ took on the form of a slave and chose obedience all the way to death. God then exalted him, so that all peoples everywhere would confess that he is Lord, to the divine glory.

Commentator Stephen E. Fowl contends that 'few other passages in the NT [sic] have generated more scholarly literature. Much of that scholarly literature has focused on the form of this passage... and also... an intense interest in the conceptual and religious background of the phrases and images used here to describe Jesus.'<sup>1</sup>

Given the broad scholarly attention to this pericope, space does not permit a full literature review. Instead, I will focus on the three main points from this passage that help to illuminate the most faithful exercise of institutional power in mission. The first point is that Jesus Christ is the source of any and all faithful power in the church, whether for corporate bodies or for individuals.<sup>2</sup> Paul calls us to a new way of life, yet he does not

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians* (Two Horizons New Testament Commentary), (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 89.

<sup>2</sup> While one does not need look far to see other types of power in the church (everything from political power to the power that comes from the pulpit of a high-

assume that we must grit our teeth and rely on our human strength to live up to this new standard. Instead, believers can embrace a life of self-sacrifice (giving up the power to benefit themselves) in order to honour others because they have received the encouragement, the comfort, the exhortation that comes from being in Christ. As Morna Hooker explains, 'Union with Christ forms the basis of the appeal to an appropriate way of life. It is because Christians are 'in Christ' that they... are able to share his mind and strength.'<sup>3</sup>

Karl Barth, in his own commentary on Philippians, reminds us that Christ is not only the source of our power to follow his kenotic (self-emptying) way, but also the proof and promise that it can be done. 'The law that was just laid down has of course been fulfilled; the Christians can only take their *start* from that fulfilment; for what must happen among them *has* already happened... It is there; it is given in the fellowship of those who are "in Christ Jesus".'<sup>4</sup> Empowered by Christ into what already exists, the church and her members are equipped and strengthened to live up to the high calling with respect to power that Paul articulates throughout this passage. This is the first of the three main points.

The second point to be drawn from this passage with respect to mission and institutional power is that we are called to put others before ourselves, seeking humility and partnerships instead of our own advantage. About partnerships, Paul says that because there is compassion and sympathy, we can and should 'be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind' (Phil. 2:1-2). The apostle develops an image of equality and full community, because everyone shares the same faithful perspective (which he later names as 'the mind of Christ', v. 5). Barth compellingly states that we do not have this faithful perspective 'so long and so far as each individual thinks he can somehow have it for himself, so long and so far as it has not entered into their relationship to one another'.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, when we realize that our faith drives us into a real partnership of equals – even when society does not consider us peers – we are both experiencing and demonstrating the mind of Christ. In this partnership, we voluntarily give up seeing the world from our own point of view, and instead look at it through the eyes of others. This sympathetic position, according to Barth, helps us to see Christ: 'It is only when men... come together, when they take a joint view of things, when they bow

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steeple church, to a Machiavellian power better suited to soap operas and Wall Street), the power I speak of here is a godly, faithful power that comes from Jesus Christ, and which, in turn, must be demonstrated and engaged in a Christ-like way.

<sup>3</sup> Morna D. Hooker, *The Letter to the Philippians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections* (New Interpreters Bible, Vol. XI), (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 499.

<sup>4</sup> Karl Barth, *Epistle to the Philippians: 40th Anniversary Edition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 50.

<sup>5</sup> Barth, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 54.

jointly before him who is greater than both one's neighbour and oneself – it is only then that the really, holy, true and helpful One comes into one's field of vision at all. It is not until I see the other's point of view that I myself really see.<sup>6</sup>

Paul goes on to say: 'Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others' (Phil. 2:2-3). Here we see the ethical call that stems from the partnership that we have in Christ Jesus. Of these verses, Barth writes that they speak of 'the ways, straight or crooked, by which a man seeks to promote his cause, his advantage'.<sup>7</sup> When these ways go crooked, and assertiveness bleeds into conceit and selfishness, we fall short of Paul's ideal. We put our own interests above those of our peers, and thereby make a true partnership impossible. However, we can also focus on grace – and when we do, grace changes everything. Barth again: 'To believe in grace means, concretely, to set the other above oneself. My neighbour is its bearer and representative and therefore in comparison with me... a superior.'<sup>8</sup> This is not true only in a superficial way of being restricted to attitude, but also in tangible, concrete ways which extend to verifiable actions in which we sacrifice our power for the benefit of others; actions which occur both on an individual and corporate scale (as we will see later in this paper).

The third and final point from the passage in Philippians is that the ultimate model for this self-sacrificing way of being in the world is Christ Jesus, who –

did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,  
but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.  
And being found in human form,  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death –  
even death on a cross (Phil. 2:6-8).

Here again, Barth provides the best analysis of the implications of this faithful action. If we know that Jesus Christ is the head of the church, and if we know that this *kenosis* (self-emptying) is part and parcel of who Christ is, then we know that the church operates with this same kenotic understanding of power (at least, in her best moments.) After all, as Christ asks us not to use our power for our own good, but rather to put others before ourselves, he believes the same thing about Christ. As Barth puts it:

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<sup>6</sup> Barth, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 59.

<sup>7</sup> Barth, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 55.

<sup>8</sup> Barth, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 56.

Christ too has an ‘own’; he too could assert his rights; he too could pride himself on his *doxa* (glory), with immeasurably more cause than we can. The thing that is ‘his own’ is in fact his equality with God. He could lay hold on that and assert and defend his property as a robber does his spoil.<sup>9</sup>

Instead, Christ gives up his own in order to serve the other – to serve us. He becomes human, but not just any human, but as a poor human with very few resources and absolutely no status. Moreover, he becomes a human who chooses death – and not just any death, but a humiliating death upon a cross. Christ is the very model of self-sacrifice – of putting others before himself with drastic, loving action.<sup>10</sup> This is the third major point, and the other two logically follow: (1) that Christ calls us into partnerships where we put others before ourselves, and (2) that Christ himself empowers these connections so that they are kenotically faithful.

### **The Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency**

The Presbyterian Church (USA) (PC(USA)) is a mainline denomination within the United States of America. Part of the Reformed tradition and proceeding from the Church of Scotland, Presbyterians have been a part of the fabric of the United States since before its founding. In fact, the only clergyperson to sign the Declaration of Independence was a Presbyterian, John Witherspoon. The current PC(USA) joined together the northern and southern streams of the Presbyterian tradition in the United States in 1983. Approximately 1.8 million confirmed adults and more than ten thousand churches comprise this denomination.

The PC(USA) has six national agencies, the largest of which is the Presbyterian Mission Agency (hereafter referred to as the Mission Agency or PMA). While other agencies cover the legislative aspects of the church, or provide retirement, health care, church loans, publications or investment vehicles, the PMA’s mission is to ‘inspire, equip and connect the PC(USA) in its many expressions to serve Christ in the world through new and existing communities of faith, hope, love and witness’. The agency works

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<sup>9</sup> Barth, *Epistle to the Philippians*, 61.

<sup>10</sup> In an earlier publication, I made the following caveat, which is important here as well: ‘There are dangers that we will draw too close a parallel between Jesus’ willingness to embrace suffering and death and what we might do in abusive relationships. The [self-sacrificing] life does not mean enduring physical or emotional abuse from a family member, partner, employer or anyone else. While our faith may at times lead us to extreme acts of suffering as martyrs have experienced both now and in the past, the [self-sacrificing] life does not mean embracing those acts of suffering as if they in themselves are somehow redemptive. (Please speak with your pastor or another trustworthy person if you are experiencing abuse at the hand of someone around you)’: Charles B. Hardwick, *Crossbound* (Louisville, KY: Witherspoon Press, 2015), 37.

to support local churches and other bodies to have more effective ministries, and its ministry is captured in five mission areas: Compassion, Peace and Justice; Evangelism and Church Growth; Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries; Theology, Worship and Education; and World Mission. Current strategic emphases include the developing transformational leadership throughout the church; engaging young adults to help the church become more faithful; initiating a movement to begin 1001 New Worshiping Communities; and expanding compassionate and prophetic discipleship in individuals and congregations. The Mission Agency has more than 300 employees and an annual budget of approximately \$75 million.

The polity of the PC(USA) is connectional in nature – a structure that sits conceptually between the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church and the congregational nature of the Southern Baptist denomination in the United States. Churches join together into local presbyteries, whose committees function as bishops would in other traditions. Presbyteries send ordained lay and pastoral leaders to General Assembly, which meets biannually as the highest legislative body of the church. Within this polity, the PMA does not have any authority over the ministries undertaken by its local congregations. Congregations are invited and encouraged to use the resources produced by the Mission Agency, but are not in any way forced to do so. For example, the PMA publishes a children's Sunday School curriculum, but local congregations are free to purchase (or develop) whatever curriculum from whatever source they believe would best fit their own church. Approximately 20% of PC(USA) congregations purchase denominational resources for children's Christian education.<sup>11</sup>

Mainline denominations in the United States have been consistently losing members and influence since the mid-1960s, and the PC(USA) is no different. When the northern and southern churches united in 1983, the new denomination was composed of about four million confirmed members. A little more than thirty years later, the number has shrunk to less than half of this. Many local congregations are struggling, with fewer than fifty in worship. When considering mission and power, the broader societal trends towards post-modernism and post-denominationalism mean that the PC(USA) has less power than ever.

However, while the denomination has less power than was formerly the case, it is not true that the PC(USA) is devoid of power. The relative powerlessness of a struggling, small local church is magnified significantly with ten thousand other congregations. Perhaps even more importantly, the denomination and her members typically run neck-and-neck among Protestant churches with the Episcopal church for the highest income per

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<sup>11</sup> Of course, not all congregations have enough children to offer a children's Sunday School class. It is difficult to judge what percentage of churches with such a programme purchase denominational curriculums.

member, highest education per member, most wealth per member, and highest endowment and budget per congregation.<sup>12</sup> While the PC(USA) and its members experience diminishing power, by comparison, the church has a great deal of power – particularly when those comparisons are not simply with other traditions in the United States, but extend to other Christian movements and denominations throughout the world.

Given this power, the key question becomes: what is the most faithful way to exert the power of an institution such as a denomination or, more specifically, a national agency of a denomination? In the next section of this paper we will return to the three conclusions from Philippians 2 and examine how these inform the mission and ministry of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

### **Institutional Power and the Mind of Christ**

Philippians 2 has given us three foundational thoughts as we approach the question of institutional power and the mind of Christ: Jesus is a model of self-giving, other-honouring love; Jesus calls us to join his mission to partner with and serve others by putting them before ourselves; and Jesus equips and empowers us to follow him in this way. In this section of the paper, I will examine three ways in which the Presbyterian Mission Agency has successfully followed Jesus' call to use its power to partner with and serve others, plus one recent example of when the PMA fell short.

The first of the positive examples is the World Mission area's decision to undertake mission in partnership with other denominations and organizations round the world. The scope of these mission efforts is broad: the PC(USA) partners with churches and organizations in more than 100 countries, and has 'mission co-workers' serving in more than fifty. Coming to understand the way that traditional mission work has often wrought as much havoc as brought about good, the denomination began to change its views on the missionary project in the 1960s. The nomenclature for the person serving abroad changed accordingly. In the 1960s and 1970s, the church used 'fraternal worker' and since then, the preferred term has been 'mission co-worker'.

While this term has come under criticism,<sup>13</sup> it does imply the priority of partnership within the denomination's mission efforts. Rather than assuming its own superiority over the churches and structures of cultures abroad, the Mission Agency has attested (in a statement adopted by the General Assembly, the denomination's highest elected body) that 'we

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *A Field Guide to US Congregations, Second Edition: Who's Going Where and Why*, 2nd edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, David Dawson, 'It is time to rehabilitate missionary', in *Mission Crossroads* 22 (7th September 2008), 59.

believe we are called to mission through the discipline of partnership'.<sup>14</sup> Drawing in part on Philippians 2:1-11, the document states:

As Presbyterians, we recognize the Reformed tradition as one part of the larger body of Christ, the church. Other communions in the household of God have equally unique and valued places at the table of God's mission. Recognizing our human limitations and because of our fundamental unity in Jesus Christ, we believe we are called to mission in the discipline of partnership. We believe that doing mission in partnership broadens our awareness of how interconnected God's mission is at the local, national and global levels... The discipline of partnership assumes that mission can best be done by joining hands with those who share a common vision. Partnership in mission involves two or more organizations who agree to submit themselves to a common task or goal, mutually giving and receiving.<sup>15</sup>

In this passage, we see some of the hallmarks of the best use of institutional power in terms of partnership and service, as highlighted in the paper above: 'unity in Jesus Christ', 'partnership', 'interconnectedness', 'sharing', and 'mutually giving and receiving'.

The statement by General Assembly also highlights the importance of Christ's example, another of the three points from Philippians 2:1-11: 'Guided by Christ's humility, we work to empty ourselves of all pride, power, sin and privilege so that God may be glorified (Phil. 2:5-11).'<sup>16</sup> The statement even recognizes the importance of divine empowerment to live into this vision: 'We understand this work to be centered in the Lordship of Jesus Christ and made real through the active and leading power of the Holy Spirit.'<sup>17</sup> The principles guiding the work include shared grace and thanksgiving; mutuality and interdependence; recognition and respect; open dialogue and transparency; and the sharing of resources.

Needless to say, the Presbyterian Mission Agency and its mission co-workers have not always lived up to these standards. Abuses still occur from time to time, and an old-school paternalism must be vigilantly guarded against in every application of mission. However, the General Assembly recognized this and included a series of probing questions to bring the ministry back to a Philippians 2 vision. Some of these questions include the following:

- Is each partner's self-reliance affirmed, with mutual giving and receiving?
- Beyond unhealthy dynamics of power and dependency, is there an openness to new dynamics of mutual service and mutual renewal?
- Are the gifts and needs of all partners affirmed and respected?

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<sup>14</sup> 'Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership': 2003 General Assembly Policy Statement, Presbyterian Church (USA), 1.

<sup>15</sup> 'Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership', 3.

<sup>16</sup> 'Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership', 3.

<sup>17</sup> 'Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership', 1.

- Do partners minister to and inspire one another, listen to and critique one another?<sup>18</sup>

This perspective on World Mission and ministries of evangelism, reconciliation and service to the least of these which occur in other national contexts is the first example of a ministry of the Presbyterian Mission Agency which seeks to bring the values of Philippians 2 to bear in a tangible way upon the often power-imbalanced relationships inherent in such efforts.

The next positive example comes in the area of using investments to bring about social change. The Presbyterian Mission Agency provides staff and guidance for its Mission Responsibility Through Investment committee, which makes recommendations to the General Assembly about how its financial investments can be used as instruments to change the actions of publicly-held corporations, so that these actions will be more fuelled by justice for all. The denomination urges divestment from a list of 41 domestic and international companies due to their involvement in military-related production, tobacco or human rights violation. In 1983, the Assembly explained these actions, stating:

The Presbyterian Church (USA) faces the responsibility for investing assets accumulated over many years. Such investment holdings function in two ways in relation to the mission of the church. First, they are a source of income for the support of mission program and institutional objectives. Second, *investment holdings represent power and influence for pursuing mission objectives of the church directly.*<sup>19</sup>

The italicized portion of the above quote (emphasis added) demonstrates the comfort with which the church spoke of its own power (which was, granted, higher in 1983 than it is today). Yet the church continues to use its power to work towards the justice-filled world that God desires, even today. The power wielded by the denomination, though lower than in previous generations, is still a multiple of the power of a single congregation with respect to investment decisions. The question remains: does the PC(USA) and its General Assembly use this power to benefit itself, or to serve others throughout the world?

A recent test case is legislation brought to the Assembly from the Mission Responsibility Through Investment committee about divestment from three American companies because of their alleged profiting from non-peaceful pursuits in Israel-Palestine. Although the committee had brought this initiative to multiple General Assemblies with no success (the most recent having been a two-vote defeat at the 2012 Assembly), the motion finally attained victory in 2014, by the slim margin of six votes

<sup>18</sup> 'Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership', 5.

<sup>19</sup> 'The Divestment Strategy: Principles and Criteria', in *Minutes from the 196th General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (USA)*. (New York and Atlanta: Office of the General Assembly, 1983), 193-94.

(both this and the prior margin out of approximately six hundred commissioners). The victory means that neither the Presbyterian Mission Agency nor the Presbyterian Foundation (with holdings valued at approximately US\$1.7 billion) can make future investments in the three companies concerned.

Such close votes reveal the controversial nature of the divestment tactic as the best way to work for peace in Israel-Palestine. However, it is undeniable that the decision of the national church, supported by the Presbyterian Mission Agency's work with the Mission Responsibility Through Investment committee, wielded more power than a single congregation's decision to divest. Front-page stories on national newspapers had mixed reviews of the Assembly's action, and rapid and aggrieved responses from many national Jewish organizations quickly followed.

This negative response from the Jewish community and many individual Presbyterians is an example, however, of how the PC(USA) made a decision that honoured, served and partnered with the marginalized other, to its own detriment. By partnering with the Palestinians and bringing attention to the accusations of human rights violations by the state of Israel, the denomination used its power, like Christ, to care for the least of these. The Assembly could have taken an easier (and far less controversial) way out, and resisted the vote for divestment. Instead, the commissioners, knowing the bad publicity which would come, put the well-being of the Palestinians ahead of the easy road for their own denomination. As they did, they wielded their power in a way that is consistent with Philippians 2: following Christ's example of self-giving love, and putting the interests of others before their own.

The final example of the Mission Agency successfully following this kenotic pattern comes in the work of its Office of Public Witness (OPW) in Washington, DC. This ministry is the public policy information and advocacy office of the national church, and it is staffed by the Presbyterian Mission Agency. The goal of the office is to promote the social witness perspectives and policies of the General Assembly. As legislation concerning gun control, health care or human trafficking comes before Congress, the staff of the OPW has historically spent much of its time and energy canvassing senators and representatives for laws that are consistent with the policies that have been adopted by the PC(USA) General Assembly.

This approach had been consistent with the direction of the Presbyterian Mission Agency until recent years. The pattern in earlier years was to expect that local congregations and the presbyteries of which they are a part would send money to the PMA, who would then spend that money investing in ministries on behalf of the local churches. Rather than a partnership, a sense of hierarchy existed. Because of the broad experience of the national staff, the system expected this group of people to make

wiser decisions about how to accomplish ministry than the local church. Rather than partnering with local churches or, even better, prioritizing local churches, the national church was the primary locus of ministry in the eyes of denominational leadership.

In the last few years, however, this perspective has changed. Instead of claiming that the national church knows the best way to shape ministry, the leadership of the Mission Agency now sees that the local church is the primary locus of ministry – with its leaders and members as the most knowledgeable about the shape of faithful ministry. The mission of the PMA, as mentioned before, reflects this change: ‘To inspire, equip and connect the PC(USA) in its many expressions to serve Christ in the world through new and existing communities of faith, hope, love and witness.’ Rather than doing ministry on behalf of the local churches, the Mission Agency staff seeks to motivate, resource and link local churches to ever more faithful ministry. This approach, which trusts and empowers the wisdom of the local church, no longer seeks to use its institutional power to build up its own ministries (at the expense of building up those of the local church). Instead, in a way similar to the pursuit of partnership present in World Mission, the PMA works to use its power to give life to local expressions of ministry. As with World Mission’s work with partner churches and mission co-workers, the Mission Agency in this new model seeks to avoid paternalism in order to give power to those who are closest to ministry at a local level.

The way that this plays out within the Office of Public Witness is that it no longer simply speaks for all Presbyterians for General Assembly policies about which not all Presbyterians agree, such as abortion, gun control or the Middle East. Instead, the staff of this office also spends time inspiring, equipping and connecting local congregations to join in with advocacy as well, at a local, state or national level.

The kenotic aspect of this work to support congregations’ own ministry of advocacy comes into focus even more vividly when those churches begin to promote policies which do not agree with the votes of prior General Assemblies. Local congregations can choose to promote any positions they want; they are not bound to the national church’s positions. The practical result of this is that one local group of Presbyterians might learn the tricks of the advocacy trade from the staff of the OPW, yet use the wisdom they have received to argue against the staff on various issues before Congress or another elected body. The OPW could avoid this by holding onto its power more tightly (with an attitude of ‘we don’t dare give the local churches skills in advocacy, because we are not sure what positions they will take as the approach elected leaders’), but instead, this office follows the Christ-like example from Philippians 2 of sharing power with others, in partnership.

I want to add one example of a time when the Presbyterian Mission Agency failed to follow Christ’s example: a planned early 2015 advertising

campaign for its Special Offerings. The PMA encourages congregations to take part in four Special Offerings each year, and these donations fund ministries within Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries, Compassion Peace and Justice, and World Mission. The denomination prepares and distributes publicity materials to congregations in order to help rally support for the offerings, which raised approximately twelve million dollars in 2014.

As promotional materials were being prepared for the 2015 campaign, the funds development staff made plans for an edgier campaign, hoping to break through to churchgoers with attention-grabbing materials that would drive donations higher. The posters and bulletin inserts planned for the offerings each featured a picture of an individual with a very large headline designed to provoke incredulity or surprise, with much smaller taglines which gave more information designed to give the background needed to help the viewer make sense of the whole piece. For instance, one image was a picture of a young girl of Asian descent. The bold headline stated, 'Needs help with her drinking problem.' The significantly smaller type of the tagline then explained, 'She can't find water.' Another of the images was a young black man with a beard with the large headline, 'Needs help getting high.' The tagline then clarified, 'Above the flood waters.' Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, funded by the Special Offerings, co-ordinates ministries which could help provide clean water or housing for the dispossessed. The staff co-ordinator of the campaign stated that 'the images are meant to highlight the absurdity of the stereotypes people might have about the people benefitting from the offerings'.<sup>20</sup>

The reaction on social media showed, however, that the campaign clearly did not communicate its intended message. The combination of the photographs of black people and the headlines mentioning stereotypically prejudicial issues for those pictured created outrage once the materials became public. The anger centred on two issues. The first was that the black people did not seem to be partners in the gospel, but rather the powerless recipients of charity, to be given by rich, (largely) white Presbyterian donors. The second issue was that the word-plays in the advertisements (joining 'drinking problem' with a lack of water and 'getting high' with the tragedies caused by a flood) seemed to make light of people struggling with addiction. Opposition to the campaign came from people in the pews, local pastors and significant denominational leaders. As the complaints mounted, the executive leadership of the Mission Agency made the decision to cancel the campaign and replace it with another intended to be less provocative.

The original campaign did not simply miss the mark as a fund-raising tool. It also missed the mark with respect to the faithful use of power as

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<sup>20</sup> 'Special Offerings take on new look: 2015 Marketing Campaign Hopes to Make "Bold Statement"': Presbyterian News Service, 3rd December 2014.

guided by Philippians 2. Although the Special Offerings themselves are one way in which Presbyterians can give up power and privilege by giving generously to accompany those in situations of crisis or long-term deprivation, the campaign undermined this faithful surrender of privilege of walking beside another and replaced it with a paternalistic hand-out denigrating those whom the supported ministries support. One keen observer, speaking for the Hispanic/Latino National Presbyterian Caucus, captured the problem succinctly: ‘The caucus decries the use of these stereotypes in this campaign. It conveys insensitivity towards people of color by depicting us as recipients of charity instead of co-participants in the redemption of the world through true Christian ministry and solidarity.’<sup>21</sup> Although this remark does not quote Karl Barth’s admonition (quoted above) that we open ourselves to see the world through others’ eyes in order to give away power, it might as well have done so. By failing to live up to the Presbyterian Mission Agency’s own standards for World Mission discussed above, the campaign also failed to follow Jesus’ example of the kenotic self-surrender of power in order to partner with and serve others.

### Conclusion

Despite the positive examples listed above (World Mission, Mission Responsibility Through Investment, and the Office of Public Witness), it is clear that like all individuals and other institutions, the PMA needs great vigilance and a constant reliance on Christ’s wisdom, nurture and challenge in order to live into the use of power described in Philippians 2. In that passage we see Jesus’ decision to use all the power and privilege of the Heavenly One in self-surrender. Jesus entered into all the pain, struggle and disarray of the world, taking on the form of a human. Even worse, he took on the form of a *slave*, living a life and dying a death of ultimate service. Jesus’ example teaches both individuals and institutions the most faithful way to use the power and privilege granted to them: partnering with and serving others. Even more importantly, by the power of the Holy Spirit, this example is not simply a goal one must somehow reach on one’s own, but is rather both a promise and a reality.

Paul goes on to say (in Phil. 2:9-11) that, because Jesus was faithful unto death on a cross (the ultimate act of self-sacrifice), God exalted him with the name of the Most High. At this name, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. With this act, Jesus continues to demonstrate his self-giving: when humans bow to Jesus and acknowledge him as Lord over all, we receive abundant life here and eternal life to come.

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<sup>21</sup> Leslie Scanlon, ‘Special Offerings campaign draws criticism’, in *The Presbyterian Outlook* (12th January 2015): [www.pres-outlook.com](http://www.pres-outlook.com). This article is a good source for other complaints about the Special Offerings campaign.

This eschatological vision of a future where everyone experiences God's hopes and dreams for them is the ultimate purpose of institutions which live out the ethic of power, partnership and service of Philippians 2. All this, of course, will be to the glory of God the Father. May it be so soon, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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## LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

**BARRETO JR., RAIMUNDO C.** (Brazil) is Assistant Professor of World Christianity at Princeton Theological Seminary, USA. Before joining the PTS faculty, he served as director of the Division on Freedom and Justice of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA). Barreto is the author of *Evangelicos e Pobreza no Brasil* (2013). His recent publications include 'M.M. Thomas and Richard Shaull: comparing notes on the world church and the ecumenical movement', in *The Life and Witness of M.M. Thomas* (2016) and 'Rubem Alves and the Kaki Tree: The Trajectory of an Exile Thinker', in *Perspectivas* (Spring 2016).

**BIEHL, MICHAEL** (Germany) is currently head of Desk for Mission Studies and Theological Education at the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW). Before this, he served as the Director of Missionsakademie, Hamburg. He is an adjunct faculty (*Lehrbeauftragter*) for Missiology, Ecumenics and Religious Studies at the Department of Protestant Theology at the University of Hamburg.

**BONK, JONATHAN** (Canada) retired as Executive Director of the Overseas Ministries Study Center and Editor of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research in July 2013. Although he lives in Winnipeg, Canada, he serves as Research Professor of Mission at Boston University, where he directs the Dictionary of African Christian Biography ([www.dacb.org](http://www.dacb.org)). He recently published 'Religion and Security in Africa: A Christian Perspective', in *Sicherheit, Glauben und die Differenz in der Kultur. Drei Stellungnahmen*. Hrsg. Von Armin Triebel. Berlin: SSIP-Mitteilungen Beiheft 3, 2015.

**BOTHA, NICO** (South Africa) is Professor in Missiology at the University of South Africa; Tent making minister in the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa; Executive member of IAMS; General Secretary of the Southern African Missiological Society.

**CHIBA, HIROMI** (Japan) teaches International Relations and American Studies at Fukuoka Jo Gakuin University, Japan. She was a visiting scholar at the Theological School, Drew University, USA, 2013-2014. Her recent publication includes 'The Role of the Protestant Church in the US Refugee Resettlement Program during the Early Cold War Era: The Methodist Case', in *Exchange*, 43 (2014).

**CHUNG, MEEHYUN** (South Korea) is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK). After her doctoral studies at Basel University, she served as head of the Women and Gender

Desk at Mission21, Protestant Mission Basel, Switzerland, till 2013. Currently, she is Professor of Systematic Theology at the United Graduate School of Theology of Yonsei University, and also serves as the Chaplain of Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea. Her publications include (translated into Korean) *D. Sölle, Mystik und Widerstand. Du stilles Geschrei* (Seoul, 2007); *Liberation and Reconciliation* (WCC Publications, 2014).

**CRUZ, GEMMA TULUD** (Australia) is Senior Lecturer in Theology at the Australian Catholic University in Melbourne. She taught for several years in the United States before moving to Australia, and is the author of a number of publications including *Toward a Theology of Migration: Social Justice and Religious Experience* (2014); *An Intercultural Theology of Migration: Pilgrims in the Wilderness* (2010). She is working on a book on the mission of the churches in the age of global migration.

**ESTERMANN, JOSEF** (Switzerland) is director of the Romero Haus in Lucerne, Switzerland, and lectures at the University of Lucerne. He served as Lay Missionary of the Bethlehem Mission (CH) in Peru (1990-1998) and Bolivia (2004-2012), and as Director of the Institute of Missiology Missio e.V. (MWI) in Aachen, Germany (1998-2004). Recent publications include 'Si el sur fuera el norte: Chakanas interculturales entre Andes y Occidente' (2008); 'Movimientos sociales y Teología en América Latina' (Coordinator) (2010); 'Interculturalidad: Vivir la diversidad' (2010); 'Compendio de la Filosofía Occidental en Perspectiva Intercultural' en cinco tomos (2011); 'Apy Taytayku: Religion und Theologie im andinen Kontext Lateinamerikas' (2012); 'Cruz y Coca: Hacia la descolonización de la Religión y la Teología' (2013).

**HARDWICK, CHARLES 'CHIP'** (USA) is director of Theology, Formation, and Evangelism for the Presbyterian Church (USA) in Louisville, Kentucky. He has previously served congregations in Illinois and Georgia. His recent publications include 'Divine and Human Action in Preaching and the Sacraments' for *Call to Worship* (2016), and 'An Exploration of Jesus' Walk to the Cross from Luke', in *Crossbound* (2015).

**HOCK, KLAUS** (Germany) has been Professor for 'History of Religions – Religion and Society' at the University of Rostock since 1996. Previously, he worked as a research fellow for Religious Studies at the University of Hamburg (1981-1986) and at the Institute of Religious Studies Education at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg (1986-1988). He also taught at an ecumenical college in Northern Nigeria (1989-1993), and then held the desk for Development Education/Co-ordination at the policy planning unit of the Association of the Churches' Development Services in Germany, 1994-1996. Professor Hock also worked as a consultant for the 'Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa' (PROCMURA),

and continues as moderator of the European Liaison Committee of PROCMURA. He has published widely on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations (especially in Africa south of the Sahara), African religions, and religions in Africa, transculturation, and elusive forms of religion ('religious hybrids'). Publications include 'Bekehrung in Afrika – Afrikanische Konversion: Religionswechsel in afrikanischen Ländern mit christlich-muslimischer Bevölkerung', in *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 141/1 (2016); *Entangled Knowledge: Scientific Discourses and Cultural Difference* (Münster, 2012).

**JONES, ARUN** (USA) is the Dan and Lillian Hankey Associate Professor of World Christianity at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA. Dr Jones grew up as the son of Methodist missionaries in North India, himself served as a missionary and pastor, and taught at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Austin, Texas. His education was completed at Yale University and Princeton Theological Seminary. He is the author of *Christian Missions in the American Empire: Episcopalians in Northern Luzon, the Philippines, 1902-1946* (2003), and most recently of 'Translation, Inculturation and Conflict in South Asia', in B.S. Moses Kumar and David Zersen (eds), *Planting in Native Soil* (ISPCK, New Delhi and Concordia University Press, Texas, 2015).

**JØRGENSEN, KNUD** (Norway) is Adjunct Professor at the MF Norwegian School of Theology. As a journalist, Jørgensen served with Radio Voice of the Gospel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the Lutheran World Federation, Geneva, the International Mass Media Institute, Kristiansand, Go out Centre, Hurdal, Norway, Norwegian Church Aid, the Mekane Yesus Seminary, Addis Ababa, and the mission foundation Areopagos. He was the Dean of Tao Fong Shan, Hong Kong, until 2010. His publications are on journalism, communication, leadership and mission. He is also one of the editors of the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series.

**KAHL, WERNER** (Germany) is Associate Professor for New Testament at Frankfurt University and Head of Studies at the Academy of Mission at Hamburg University. He taught New Testament studies at the University of Ghana, 1999-2002. His primary areas of research are the Synoptic Gospels, New Testament miracle stories, West African exegesis, intercultural biblical hermeneutics, and the Qur'an. His recent publications include 'Studienkoran Bd 1: Die frühmekkanischen Suren – chronologisch angeordnet, reimschematisch dargestellt und textnahe übersetzt (Studien zu Interkultureller Theologie an der Missionsakademie, Bd 7), Hamburg 2015. Vom Verweben des Eigenen mit dem Fremden. Impulse zu einer transkulturellen Neuformierung des evangelischen Gemeindelebens

(Studien zu Interkultureller Theologie an der Missionsakademie, Bd 9), Hamburg 2016.

**KAUNDA, CHAMMAH J.** (South Africa) is from Zambia and lives in South Africa. He is a Post-doctoral Research Fellow in the Department of Christian Spirituality, University of South Africa, Pretoria. He has published numerous articles and chapters of books in the area of African Theology, Systematic Missiology, and Ecumenism.

**LING, SAMUEL NGUN** (Myanmar) is Professor of Theology of Religions and President of the Myanmar Institute of Theology, Yangon; he also serves as the President of the Association for Theological Education in Myanmar, and a member of the Board of Trustees and Senate of the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia.

**PHIRI, ISABEL** (Switzerland/Malawi) is Associate General Secretary for Public Witness and Diakonia of the World Council of Churches, and Honorary Professor in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Phiri is a Presbyterian lay person from Malawi. Publications include *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa* (with Dietrich Werner), Regnum Books International, 2013.

**LONGKUMER, ATOLA** (India) a Baptist from Nagaland, India, currently teaches Religions and Missions at the South Asian Institute for Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS), Bangalore. Publications include 'Together Towards Life: Contemporary Asian Theology', in *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conception of Mission* (eds), Kenneth R. Ross et al (WCC Publications/Regnum, 2016).

**LUDWIG, FRIEDER** (Germany) is Professor of History of World Christianity and Mission Studies at the Fachhochschule für Interkulturelle Theologie in Hermannsburg. He taught in Munich, Bayreuth, Göttingen, Jos (Nigeria) and St Paul (Minnesota). Research interests include the history of Christianity in Africa, Asia and Europe, Intercultural Theology and Missiology, Christianity, Islam and traditional religions in Africa, and religion and migration. Together with Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, he edited the volume *African Christian Presence in the West* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2011).

**MBAYA, HENRY** (South Africa) is senior lecturer of Missiology at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa.

**RICHERBÄCHER, WILHEM** (Germany) is Professor of Systematic Theology in Intercultural Perspective at the University of Applied Sciences for Intercultural Theology Hermannsburg. He served as the Secretary for

Ecumenical relations of his home church in Kassel, 1999-2012, and part-time Professor for Missiology and Religious Studies at Philipps University, Marburg. Among his recent publications include an article “‘Spiritual Warfare’ – a Viable Concept in Intercultural Theology?” (2015).

**SØRENSEN, JØRGEN SKOV** (Denmark) is the General Secretary of development and mission organization Danmission, Denmark. He previously taught Ecumenism, Missiology and Inter-religious relations at the United College of the Ascension, Selly Oak, Birmingham, UK, and Constructive Theology at the Centre for Multi-religious Studies at University of Aarhus (Denmark). His publications include *Missiological Mutilations – Prospective Paralogies: Language and Power in Contemporary Mission Theory* (Peter Lang Verlag, 2007).

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