World Christianity

Theology and Mission in World Christianity

Editors-in-Chief

Stephen B. Bevans (*Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, USA*)
Kirsteen Kim (*Fuller Theological Seminary, USA*)
Miikka Ruokanen (*University of Helsinki, Finland/*
Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, China)

Editorial Board

Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (*Trinity Theological Seminary, Ghana*)
Martha T. Frederiks (*Utrecht University, The Netherlands*)
Dana L. Robert (*Boston University, USA*)
Elsa Tamez (*Latin American Biblical University, Costa Rica*)
Rachel Zhu Xiaohong (*Fudan University, Shanghai, China*)

VOLUME 19

The titles published in this series are listed at *brill.com/tmwc*

World Christianity

Methodological Considerations

Edited by

Martha Frederiks
Dorottya Nagy

BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

This is an open access title distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license, which permits any non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided no alterations are made and the original author(s) and source are credited. Further information and the complete license text can be found at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

The terms of the CC license apply only to the original material. The use of material from other sources (indicated by a reference) such as diagrams, illustrations, photos and text samples may require further permission from the respective copyright holder.

Cover illustration: Nemere Kerezsi, In the apiary. Used with kind permission by the artist.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Frederiks, Martha Theodora, 1965– editor. | Nagy, Dorottya, editor.
Title: World Christianity : methodological considerations / edited by
Martha Frederiks, Dorottya Nagy.
Description: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, 2021. | Series: Theology and mission
in world Christianity, 2452–2953 ; volume 19 | Includes index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2020046138 (print) | LCCN 2020046139 (ebook) | ISBN
9789004441668 (paperback) | ISBN 9789004444867 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Theology—Methodology. | Christianity.
Classification: LCC BR118 .W666 2021 (print) | LCC BR118 (ebook) | DDC
230—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020046138
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020046139

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: “Brill”. See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 2452-2953
ISBN 978-90-04-44166-8 (paperback)
ISBN 978-90-04-44486-7 (e-book)

Copyright 2021 by The Authors. Published by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.
Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Hes & De Graaf, Brill Nijhoff, Brill Rodopi, Brill Sense, Hotei Publishing, mentis Verlag, Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh and Wilhelm Fink Verlag.
Koninklijke Brill NV reserves the right to protect this publication against unauthorized use. Requests for re-use and/or translations must be addressed to Koninklijke Brill NV via brill.com or copyright.com.

This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

Contents

Notes on Contributors VII

Introduction 1
Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy

1 World Christianity: Contours of an Approach 10
Martha Frederiks

2 Recalling the Term 'World Christianity': Excursions into Worldings of Literature, Philosophy, and History 40
Dorottya Nagy

3 Decoloniality and Interculturality in World Christianity: A Latin American Perspective 65
Raimundo C. Barreto

4 The Interpretations, Problems and Possibilities of Missionary Sources in the History of Christianity in Africa 92
Emma Wild-Wood

5 Methodological Reflections on the Study of Chinese Christianities 113
Joseph Tse-Hei Lee and Christie Chui-Shan Chow

6 Interfaith Relations within the Emerging Field of World Christianity 135
S. Wesley Ariarajah

7 Thai Comparative Theologizing: Material and Methodological Reflections 158
Kari Storstein Haug

8 Interreligious Dialogue: A Case Study Approach in Respect to the Vatican and the World Council of Churches 179
Douglas Pratt

9 Conquering Rome: Constructing a Global Christianity in the Face of Terror. A Case Study into the Representations of the Beheading of Twenty-One Migrant Workers in January 2015 204
Lucien van Liere

10 Multiple Religious Belonging and Identity in Contemporary Nigeria: Methodological Reflections for World Christianity 225
Corey L. Williams

11 Augustine's Approach to Heresies as an Aid to Understanding His Ideas on Interaction between Christian Traditions 251
Paul J.J. van Geest

12 The Rise of 'New Generation' Churches in Kerala Christianity 271
Stanley John

13 Methodological Considerations: Convergences 292
Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy

Index 307

Notes on Contributors

S. Wesley Ariarajah
is a Methodist minister from Sri Lanka and currently Professor Emeritus of Ecumenical Theology at the Drew University School of Theology, Madison, NJ. Before teaching at Drew for 17 years, he served the World Council of Churches, Geneva, for 16 years, first as the director of the Council's Interfaith Dialogue Program for 10 years and later as the Council's Deputy General Secretary. He has written widely on Religious Pluralism, Interfaith Relations, Theology of Religions, Dialogue and Mission, and Ecumenism. His latest publications include: *Your God, My God, Our God. Rethinking Christian Theology for Religious Plurality* (Geneva: WCC, 2012), and *Strangers or Co-Pilgrims? The Impact of Interfaith Dialogue on Christian Faith and Practice* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017).

Raimundo C. Barreto
is a Brazilian-American scholar teaching World Christianity in the History and Ecumenics Department at Princeton Theological Seminary. Among his activities in the field of World Christianity, he is one of the three conveners of the Princeton Theological Seminary World Christianity Conference, and the general editor of the Fortress Press Series 'World Christianity and Public Religion.' His latest publications include: *World Christianity as Public Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), co-edited with Wanderley P. da Rosa and Ronaldo Cavalcante, *Evangélicos e Pobreza no Brazil. Encontros e Respostas Éticas*, 2nd edition, revised and expanded (São Paulo: Editora Recriar/Editora Unida, 2019), *Migration and Public Discourse in World Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019), co-edited with Afe Adogame and Wanderley P. da Rosa, and *Decolonial Christianities. Latinx and Latin American Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019), co-edited with Roberto Sirvent.

Christie Chui-Shan Chow
received her Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary in 2015. She is a visiting faculty at the City Seminary of New York. Her monograph entitled *Schism. How Adventism is Reshaping Post-Denominational China* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, forthcoming) reflects her interest in church-state relations, conversion studies, Christian ethics, and gender politics. Her recent publications include '*Qiuwen* (Bibliomancy). Enlivening the Chinese Bible Union.' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 30,1 (2020), 'Indigenizing the Prophetess. Toward a Chinese Denominational Practice.' in Anthony E. Clark (ed.), *China's Christianity. From Missionary to Indigenous Church* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), and

(co-authored with Joseph Tse-Hei Lee) *Chujing yu shiye. Chaoshan zhongwai jiaoliu di guangying jiyi* [*Context and Vision. Visualizing Chinese-Western Cultural Encounters in Chaoshan*] (Beijing: Sanlian chubanshe, 2017).

Martha Frederiks
is Professor for the Study of World Christianity at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. From 1993–1999 she worked in West Africa in the field of Christian-Muslim Relations. Since 1999 she works at Utrecht University, where she obtained her Ph.D. (2003, *cum laude*) with her book *We Have Toiled All Night. Christianity in The Gambia 1456–2000* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2003). Current research interests include developments in African Christianity, religion and migration, and Christian-Muslim relations. Recent publications include: 'Mission' in Robert Segal and Kocku von Stuckrad (eds), *Vocabulary for the Study of Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2017): 453–458, (with Dorottya Nagy) *Religion, Migration, and Identity. Methodological and Theological Explorations* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), and (with Dorottya Nagy) *Critical Readings in the History of Christian Mission* (Leiden: Brill forthcoming). Frederiks is a contributing editor of the series *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History* (Leiden: Brill), co-editor of *Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity* (Berlin: Lang Verlag) and with Lucien van Liere editor-in-chief of *Exchange. Journal of Contemporary Christianities in Context* (Brill: Leiden).

Paul J.J. van Geest
a philologist and theologian, is vice-dean of research of the Theological Faculty of Tilburg University (the Netherlands), full Professor of Church History and the History of Theology at the Tilburg University, and visiting professor at the Faculty of Theology of KU Leuven. He has published a dozen monographs, works for a wider audience, and numerous articles on the philosophy of Thomas a Kempis, late medieval nominalism, moral values in Early Christianity, and Augustine. His current research focuses on the role of fear and the pursuit of integrity in the first centuries of Christianity. Paul van Geest is editor of *Late Antique History and Religion* (Leuven: Peeters), *Augustiniana* (Leuven: Peeters), *Brill Series of Church History* (Leiden: Brill) and *Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill). He holds various executive positions in the world of education and is chairman of *Christen Democratische Verkenningen*, the magazine of the Dutch Christian Democratic Party (CDA).

Kari Storstein Haug
is Professor of Missiology at VID Specialized University, Stavanger-campus, in Norway. Between 1995 and 2003, she served as the Dean of Studies and

Lecturer of Biblical Studies at Luther Seminary Thailand. Between 2003 and 2015 she worked at the School of Mission and Theology (MHS) in Norway. Since 2016, she works at VID Specialized University (a merger of several Norwegian schools and university colleges, including the former MHS). Current research interests include migration and theology, interreligious and intercultural hermeneutics, Christian faith and practice in contexts of religious and cultural diversity, Christianity and Buddhist-Christian encounters in Thailand. Her publications include *Interpreting Proverbs 11:18–31, Psalm 73, and Ecclesiastes 9:1–12 in Light of, and as a Response to, Thai Buddhist Interpretations. A Contribution to Christian-Buddhist Dialogue* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 'Possibilities and Limitations of Interreligious Scripture Reading. Some Reflections Based on Buddhist Readings of Old Testament Wisdom Texts.' *Mission Studies* 31,2 (2014). *Kirken i verden og verden i kirken. Globale perspektiver på trosopplæringen* (The Church in the World and the World in the Church: Global Perspectives on Christian Education). (Stavanger: Hertervig Akademisk, 2016), together with T.S. Drønen, G. Skeie, and G.M. Ådna, 'Migration in Missiological Research.' *International Review of Mission* 107,1 (2018). She is one of the three editors of *Norwegian Journal of Missiology*.

Stanley John
is Associate Professor of Intercultural Studies at the Alliance Theological Seminary of Nyack College in Nyack, New York. He is a member of the Indian diaspora, born and raised in Kuwait. His research focuses on the intersection of transnational religion and global Pentecostalism in the context of World Christianity. He is the author of *Transnational Organization and Practice of Faith. A Contextual Analysis of Kerala Pentecostal Churches in Kuwait* (Leiden: Brill, 2018). He serves as pastor of Ridgeway Alliance Church in New Rochelle, New York.

Joseph Tse-Hei Lee
is Professor of History and Director of the Global Asia Institute at Pace University in New York City. He is author of *The Bible and the Gun. Christianity in South China, 1860–1900* (New York: Routledge, 2003; Chinese edition, Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2010), and co-author with Christie Chui-Shan Chow of *Chujing yu shiye. Chaoshan zhongwai jiaoliu di guangying jiyi* [*Context and Vision. Visualizing Chinese-Western Cultural Encounters in Chaoshan*] (Beijing: Sanlian chubanshe, 2017). His co-edited works include *The Church as Safe Haven. Christian Governance in China* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), *Christianizing South China. Mission, Development, and Identity in Modern Chaoshan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), *Hong Kong and Bollywood. Globalization of*

Asian Cinemas (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), *China's Rise to Power. Conceptions of State Governance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), and *Marginalization in China. Recasting Minority Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). His research focuses on the intersection of faith and politics in modern China.

Lucien van Liere
is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Utrecht University. His academic work explores the relationship between religion, representation, and violence. He has published on subjects ranging from the Ambon civil war and the place of Islam in secular politics to the future of religious studies and media-representations of violence. Among his recent publications are: (with Bob Becking and Anne-Marie Korte) *Contesting Religious Identities* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 'The Banality of Ghosts. Searching for Humanity with Joshua Oppenheimer in "The Act of Killing".' *Journal for Religion, Film and Media* (2018), and (with Elizabeth van Dis) 'Post-War Reflections on the Ambon War.' *Exchange* (2018). Together with Martha Frederiks he is editor-in-chief of *Exchange, Journal of Contemporary Christianities in Context* (Leiden: Brill).

Dorottya Nagy
is professor of Theology and Migration at the Protestant Theological University in Amsterdam (PThU), the Netherlands with research interests in migration, mission studies, Christianity in post-communist Europe, and innovative ways of theologizing. Awareness for responsible methodology lies at the heart of her academic interests. Her publications include *Migration and Theology. The Case of Chinese Christian Communities in the Globalisation-Context* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2009), 'Minding Methodology. Theology-Missiology and Migration Studies.' in Frederiks and Nagy, *Religion, Migration, and Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), and together with Gé Speelman 'Conversion Controlled. Missiological Reflections on Assessing Conversions to Christianity among Asylum Seekers in the European Union.' *Theology* 120,5 (2017). Nagy is president of the Central and Eastern European Association for Mission Studies (CEEAMS) and member of the editorial board of its journal. Nagy is an ordained Lutheran minister, is married and mother of two children.

Douglas Pratt
taught Religious Studies at the University of Waikato, New Zealand, for 30 years, retiring in mid-2018. He is currently Honorary Professor in the Theological and Religious Studies Programme of the University of Auckland, New Zealand, and

Adjunct Professor in the Faculty of Theology, University of Bern, Switzerland. Pratt is a Research Team Leader and member of the editorial team for the University of Birmingham based international *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History* (CMR) project and also co-editor of a volume of thematic essays in the CMR series (Leiden: Brill, 2020), covering the first millennium of interaction (600–1600 CE). His research interests include Christian-Muslim relations, interfaith dialogue, and contemporary issues in religion. He has recently published *Religious Extremism. Rejecting Diversity* (London: Bloomsbury 2018), *Christian Engagement with Islam. Ecumenical Journeys since 1910* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), and *Fear of Muslims? International Perspectives on Islamophobia* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2016). His 2005 text *The Challenge of Islam. Encounters in Interfaith Dialogue*, has been reissued in the Routledge Revival Library (2017).

Emma Wild-Wood

is Senior Lecturer in African Christianity and African Indigenous Religions at the University of Edinburgh and teaches in the Centre for the Study of World Christianity where she studied for her doctorate. She has also taught in the University of Cambridge and directed the Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide. Before that she taught in the north east of the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Uganda. She is author of *Migration and Christian Identity in Congo (DRC)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), and has co-edited *East African Revival. History and Legacies* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012) with Kevin Ward, *Foundations for Mission* with Peniel Rajkumar (Oxford: Regnum, 2013), *Locating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies of Local and Universal Expressions of the Christian Faith* (Leiden: Brill, 2017) with Joel Cabrita and David Maxwell, and *Ecumenism and Independency in World Christianity. Historical Studies in Honour of Brian Stanley* with Alexander Chow (Leiden: Brill, 2020). Her most recent monograph is *The Mission of Apolo Kivebulaya. Religious Encounter and Social Change in the Great Lakes (c.1865–1935)* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2020).

Corey L. Williams

(PhD, Edinburgh) is Chair of Religious Studies Programmes and Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Global Christianity at Leiden University, the Netherlands. He is also the General Secretary of the African Association for the Study of Religions and Co-Chair of the World Christianity Unit for the American Academy of Religion. His research and teaching interests include religion in contemporary Africa and the African Diaspora, anthropology of religion, interreligious encounters, migration and religious networks, and religion and public policy. His research has been awarded grants from the Lilly Foundation,

American Academy of Religion, Yale University, and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His most recent publication is 'Christianity and Multiple Identities.' *Studies in World Christianity* 25:1 (2019), edited with Afe Adogame, and he is currently finalizing a monograph titled, *A Spirit of Accommodation. The Politics of Religious Belonging and Identity in Contemporary Nigeria.*

Introduction

Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy

1 *Water naar de zee dragen* or Carrying Coals to Newcastle?[1]

The number of publications featuring the term 'World Christianity' seems to multiply on a daily basis. The question is therefore justified: why yet another book? There are already countless publications examining the histories and contemporary manifestations of Christianity/ies worldwide, exemplifying translocal connectivities, multiple centers, and integrative forces.

To us as editors, the alacrity with which World Christianity has been embraced as a paradigm is both a cause for joy and a reason for concern. On the upside, the popularity of what Paul Kollman (2014) has called the "world-Christian turn" evidences that the time was ripe for paradigmatic innovation. The wide support for and eager embrace of the concept World Christianity evinces that scholars were keenly awaiting a paradigm that had ingested post-colonial critiques and could methodologically account for the contextuality, and hence inherent diversity, of Christianity/ies in past and present. On the downside however, the rapid popularization of the World Christianity label seems to have impeded a thorough scrutiny of the methodological implications of such a paradigmatic shift. Thus far, few publications have explored the "world-Christian turn" from a methodology point of view. This book intends to do just that.

A brief literature survey can illustrate the type of issues at stake: Justo González (2002) has for example pointed to the prolongation of a Europe-centered periodization of Christianity, a matter raised by Enrique Dussel as early as the 1960s. Arun Jones (2014) has highlighted the persistence of binary thinking (e.g. indigenous versus missionary), whereas Nagy (2010) has raised the pervasiveness of ethnic and national categories in World Christianity research, which, she argues, leads to oversimplifications of Christianity/ies' complexity and superdiversity. Tinyiku Maluleke (2016) has broached the issue of power, limelighting that the much celebrated changed demographics of Christianity have not produced a change in power dynamics, as much of the literature seems to presume.

1 In order to flag the taken-for-granted hegemony of the English language in the academia (which for neither of us is our mother tongue), we opted for a bilingual title of this section.

© Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004444867_002
This is an open access chapter distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

Other scholars have flagged that World Christianity scholarship tends to be selective in its representation of Christianity/ties, favoring some trends, traditions, and manifestations over others. Dyron Daughrity (2013) for example has pointed to the absence of Oriental and Eastern Orthodoxy in World Christianity literature, Nagy (2010) to the recurring trope-like references to China's growth and Frederiks (2019) to the highly selective portrayal of migrant Christianity in Europe. In as much as these selective representations are problematic in their own right, they are also corollaries of the theoretical presuppositions and ambitions that drive much World Christianity scholarship, but that are rarely made explicit. Joel Cabrita and David Maxwell (2017: 21) have for example taken World Christianity scholarship to task for its "fetishistic commitment to regional particularity" and its "exoticising reification of the local" and its limited attention for integrative forces within Christianity/ies. This fascination with local distinctiveness however is the logical outcome of a conceptualization of World Christianity enmeshed in theories of translatability and inculturation. Similarly, Frederiks (2019: 326, 333) has argued that the preoccupation with vibrancy and numerical growth of 'Christianity in the global South' in much World Christianity scholarship signals its entanglement with two, often intertwined, theoretical strands: the Church Growth movement which considers quantitative growth a proof of "the workings of the Holy Spirit and therefore its 'possession of the truth'", and postcolonial theory "that promulgates the vibrancy, authenticity and veracity of Christianity in the 'global South' over against European Christianity."

At the heart of these methodological concerns is the notion World Christianity itself, which as Peter Phan (2012: 172) points out, suffers from "conceptual clarity and consistency". For reasons expounded in chapters 1 and 2 of this volume, the editors Frederiks and Nagy problematize trends that conceptualize World Christianity as a subject matter or a field of study, and propose to reserve the term World Christianity for a particular, multidisciplinary approach to study Christianity/ies (Frederiks, this volume; Nagy this volume, Nagy 2017).

The brief literature review above demonstrates the necessity of a comprehensive inquiry into the methodological ramifications of the "world-Christian turn". This volume gives methodology the center stage and aspires to spark the debate on methodology. To that end, we as editors have purposely invited a diverse group of contributors from a variety of academic backgrounds (anthropology, religious studies, history, missiology, intercultural studies, theology, and patristics) as well as of multiple cultural and national belongings. The authors do not share a collective understanding of what 'World Christianity' entails.

As such, the contributions exemplify the conceptual ambiguities, currently endemic in 'World Christianity' scholarship. All contributors were explicitly asked to foreground methodological issues and describe, where possible, how they negotiated the methodological challenges they encountered.

This has resulted in a heterogenous volume. Some of the chapters are theoretically-oriented, others are case-study based. Some chapters have a historical focus, while others examine contemporary Christianity/ies. Some mainly focus on intra-Christian dynamics, whereas others foreground the encounters between Christians and people of other faith traditions. The diversity notwithstanding, each of the chapters touches on methodological issues relevant to World Christianity debates and draws out methodological issues relevant to delineating a 'World Christianity' approach.

In chapter one Martha Frederiks makes a case for understanding the term 'World Christianity' to signify a particular approach of studying Christianity/ies. In order to make this argument, Frederiks first explores the genealogy of World Christianity and situates prevalent conceptualizations, such as Wold Christianity as a subject matter and as a field of study, in current academic discussions. Outlining the multiple conceptual and terminological pitfalls of current conceptualisations, she then proposes to reserve the term 'World Christianity' for a particular approach to studying Christianity/ies, referencing a kindred proposition made by Nagy in 2017. Recognising Christianity's inherently plural character, a World Christianity approach, Frederiks argues, "entails the conscious and consistent endeavour to study particular Christian communities, beliefs, or practices in the light of and in relation to Christianity's wider (hi)story, mindful of integrative and globalizing forces as well as of its multiple centers, trajectories, and agents, and cognizant of the diversity of beliefs and practices this has produced across time and space" (Frederiks, this volume). Frederiks then proceeds to describe, in broad strokes, how to operationalize such a World Christianity approach from a religious studies perspective.

In chapter two Dorottya Nagy seeks to further ground the proposal for a World Christianity approach by exploring parallel developments of 'worldling' or 'world-mindedness' in the wider humanities, with particular attention for conceptualizations in world literature, world philosophy, and world history. She argues that such intellectual exercises assist in further articulating the methodology of a World Christianity approach. Building on earlier work in which she identified connectivity, diversity, unity, and locality as central concepts in a World Christianity approach from a theological perspective (Nagy 2017), she concludes her chapter by exploring how 'worlding' in the wider humanities informs these categories.

In chapter three, Raimundo Baretto critically interrogates World Christianity's theoretical underpinnings. Echoing critiques that the dominance of African histories and experiences in the theorization of World Christianity limits its analytical usefulness in other contexts (Cabrita and Maxwell 2017: 22; Mallampalli 2017: 164), Baretto proposes to use critical corrective tools from Latin American Christian historiography, liberationist hermeneutics, and decolonial theory to develop a more comprehensive theoretical approach.

Baretto's chapter is followed by two chapters on historiography that examine how to mitigate World Christianity's partiality to polyphony and pluriformity with biased source materials. In chapter four, Emma Wild-Wood proposes the dual strategies of close reading and triangulation. Wild-Wood argues that a close reading of traditional missionary sources which acknowledges their variety of genre, audience, and content and which is sensitive to the nuances in and between the sources will yield fresh interpretations of well-worn materials. In addition, she proposes to triangulate missionary records with other sources (e.g. newspapers, private archives, or regional sources) to strengthen the quest for multiple perspectivity. Wild-Wood illustrates the effectiveness of these strategies by means of a micro-historical example, drawn from Church Missionary Society materials on Uganda. Her investigation of the motivations of the missionaries and the relationships between missionaries and indigenous peoples shows that the sources give evidence of unequal power relations as well as cultural exchange and also reveals how far indigenous peoples were drawn to a cosmopolitan and universal missionary vision. Thus, the methods proposed by Wild-Wood not merely produce a richer and more complex historiographical narrative, but simultaneously query the historical validity of established binaries of local versus global, indigenous versus missionary.

Also Joseph Lee and Christie Chow, who in chapter five discuss the challenges of historical research in China, question the use of the oppositional categories 'indigenous versus missionary'. Demonstrating the expediency of a critical inquiry into knowledge production, they argue that historiographies of Christianity in China that position an indigenous church over against Euro-American missionary Christianity buy into the post-1949 ideological national narrative. Separating the ties between Chinese and global churches, they maintain, has been part of the political agenda of the Communist state. Lee and Chow also caution against the use of essentialist analytical categories such as 'Chinese Christianity' and 'popular Christianity' that ignore the complex religious landscape, fragmentated by doctrinal, liturgical and political disagreements. Mapping and interpreting China's rich and diverse Christian landscape while negotiating the state's control over access to the official

archives and over how Christianity is represented in the official historiography and in public discourse requires a combination of archival research and multi-site fieldwork, Lee and Chow argue. In contexts like China, they maintain, a mixed method approach, is a prerequisite to move beyond the state-centred historical narrative.

The two chapters on historiography are followed by a series of chapters that spotlight religiously plural settings and interfaith relations. In chapter six, Wesley Ariarajah explores the role and place of interfaith encounter and Christian presence in religiously plural societies in the emerging field of World Christianity. While he unequivocally endorses the need to investigate the impact of other religions on Christianity and the impact of Christianity on other religions, Ariarajah takes the discussion a step further by arguing that World Christianity scholarship also needs to reflect on how these encounters have affected or should affect Christian theology and missiology. To set the proverbial ball rolling, Ariarajah takes the World Christianity paradigm to task for not being sufficiently inclusive and makes a case for a paradigm that involves a "wider ecumenism", encompassing all religious traditions. In keeping with this, Ariarajah proposes that Christian communities in religiously plural settings develop a public theology that is of "service to the concerns of the poor and marginalized masses" and "is open to the participation of peoples of other religious traditions and ideologies who would bring in their own resources to the task" (Ariarajah, this volume).

The volume continues with five case-study based chapters. In chapter seven, Kari Storstein Haug reflects on the role of comparative theology within the field of World Christianity. Her chapter presents two examples of Thai comparative theologizing and examines how Thai Christians within the predominantly Buddhist religious context of Thailand reflect on their faith in light of and as a response to the religious context in which they are situated. The chapter argues that by combining empirical and text-based methods, comparative theology can contribute to the World Christianity project by engendering in-depth knowledge of both the agency of local Christians and of local and contextualized forms of Christian theology and practice in religiously plural settings.

Where Haug studied the effects of interreligious coexistence on the beliefs and practices of individuals, Douglas Pratt, in chapter eight, focusses on the institutional level and examines the origins and development of contemporary Christian engagement in interreligious dialogue during the 20th century. Spotlighting the Vatican and the World Council of Churches (WCC) as key institutional expressions within Christianity worldwide, Pratt uses historical and comparative methods to study the theological dynamics that undergird the

reflection on the relationship to people of other faiths within the WCC and the Vatican and based on the historical investigation develops a typology of five models of interfaith engagement. Pratt's case-study demonstrates the expediency of synchronic studies within a World Christianity approach and evidences both similarities and divergencies in Christian institutional engagement in interfaith relations and interreligious dialogue.

Chapter nine by Lucien van Liere introduces yet another set of methods and demonstrates the value of discourse analysis and memory studies for a World Christianity approach. In a careful discussion of the ISIS video, showing the beheading of twenty-one migrant workers in Libya in January 2015 and of Christian responses to this atrocity, Van Liere demonstrates how all parties evoke frames developed through collective memory in order to ascribe meaning to the massacre: Islamic State by charging a 'global Christianity' with the historic aggression of 'the crusader' and Christian stakeholders (e.g. Coptic Church, Pope Francis, and American evangelical groups) by fashioning a global Christian community around a martyr frame. Van Liere argues that by discursively interconnecting religious communities across time and space and fortifying translocal bonds, each of these representations sculpts a specific interpretation of what 'global Christianity' entails, thus showing how conceptualizations such as 'global Christianity' are fashioned by public discourse as well as by the academia.

Chapter ten, written by Corey Williams, converges on the religiously plural landscape of contemporary Nigeria. In the chapter Williams explores multiple religious belonging and identity in the Yoruba region by researching a 'religious field'. Williams argues that whereas "the study of single traditions can bring attention to polycentrism, pluriformity, and transnational connections within individual traditions, this independent approach lacks a dynamic understanding of what Janson and Meyer term a 'religious field in which several religious groups coexist in ever shifting dynamics of similarity and difference' (Janson and Meyer 2016)" (Williams, this volume). In order to more fully comprehend everyday lived religion, Williams maintains, the analytical frame needs to be expanded to include multiple religions. Williams' case-study of examining participation in the Yoruba Egúngún festival shows the fruitfulness of this 'religious field' approach as Williams is able to detail how lived religious experience cuts across multiple religious traditions, enabling researchers to grasp a more holistic understanding of everyday lived religion. Williams concludes that while every religious field is distinct and needs to be contextualized, the methodological lessons offered on religious belonging and identity, everyday lived religion, entangled religion, bias and hierarchy, and multi-directional

exchange demonstrate that the notion 'religious field' can be applied broadly and productively in World Christianity scholarship.

Chapter eleven, a study of Augustine's changing conceptualizations of heresy by Paul van Geest, demonstrates that trends akin to World Christianity are also manifest within patristics. While Van Geest does not explicitly frame his work as 'World Christianity', his methodological experiment to temporarily bracket out Augustine's standing as the bedrock of the Latin Church, allows him situate Augustine in his contextual connectivities and read Augustine's texts as one voice amidst others, thus offering a window into the pluriformity and multivocality of Christianity's early history. His case-study convincingly shows the fluidity between heresy and orthodoxy in the patristic period, with Augustine constantly rethinking and rephrasing his theological understandings of heresy, both in conversation with different opponents and in relation to changing religious and political circumstances. Thus, the chapter evidences that a World Christianity approach can be fruitful for the study of both contemporary and past Christianity/ties.

In the last case-study chapter of this volume Stanley John grapples with the issue of taxonomy. Reflecting on his fieldwork at a Kuwaiti branch of Heavenly Feast, a Kerala 'New Generation' church with parishes in both India and abroad, John investigates how to categorize new movements such as the 'New Generation' churches in a way that does justice to both their identification with global Pentecostalism and their unique local histories. His review of taxonomies developed in North America brings him the conclusion that these taxonomies and conceptual frameworks fail to capture the complexity and uniqueness of these movements. John advocates that rather than to impose categories borrowed from other contexts on these Indian churches, it is necessary to develop a taxonomy from within their local social and ecclesial contexts.

In the final chapter we as editors revisit the methodological issues raised in the contributions in order to discern how the methods, perspectives, and insights discussed, aid us in further developing and operationalizing a World Christianity approach.

Finally, this volume is a quest for methodological (re)orientation and accountability in 'World Christianity' discourses from across research interests and disciplines. While each contribution to this volume merits reading in its own right, we hope that the variety of methodological perspectives offered by the collective chapters will aid and entice readers from a diversity of disciplinary background in visualizing and operationalizing what we call a 'World Christianity approach'.

In the apiary (*front cover*)
In the spring of 2010, I had a dream in which I placed the Platonic bodies, the tetra-, hexa-, octa-, dodeca-, and icosahedrons in beehives. Before I could find out what the bees did with the bodies, I woke up. During my wakefulness I applied the thoughts from my dream on a comb-press, this was how I could best transplant my ideas about the Platonic bodies into the world of bees. I wanted to understand as much as possible why the ideal geometry of work in case of the bees is the hexagonal comb building, closed by rhombuses.
Nemere Kerezsi

Bibliography

Cabrita, Joel & David Maxwell (2017). 'Introduction. Relocating World Christianity.' In Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood, eds. *Relocating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*. Leiden: Brill: 1–44.

Daughrity, Dyron B. (2013). 'Ignoring the East. Correcting a Serious Flaw in World Christianity Scholarship.' In Afe Adogame and Shobana Shankar, eds. *Religion on the Move! New Dynamics of Christian Expansion in a Globalizing World*. Leiden: Brill: 41–59.

Frederiks, M.T. (2019). '"Microcosm" of the Global South. The Discursive Functionality of Migrant Christianity in World Christianity Discourses.' *Exchange* 48, 4: 313–333.

González, Justo L. (2002). *The Changing Shape of Church History*. St. Louis, MO: The Chalice Press.

Jones, Arun W. (2014). 'Scholarly Transgressions. (Re)writing the History of World Christianity.' *Theology Today* 71, 2: 221–232.

Janson, Marloes and Birgit Meyer (2016). 'Introduction. Towards a Framework for the Study of Christian-Muslim Encounters in Africa.' *Africa* 86, 4: 615–619.

Kollman, Paul (2014). 'Understanding the World-Christian Turn in the History of Christianity and Theology.' *Theology Today* 71, 2: 164–177.

Mallampalli, Chandra (2017). 'The Orientalist Framework of Christian Conversion in India. Three Venues of "Inducement" from Colonial Times to the Present.' In: Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood, eds. *Relocating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*. Leiden: Brill: 162–186.

Maluleke, Tinyiku S. (2000). 'The Quest for Muted Black Voices. Some Pertinent Issues in (South) African Mission Historiography.' *Missionalia* 28.2: 41–61.

Nagy, Dorottya (2010). 'Where is China in World Christianity?' *Diversities* 12,1: 70–83.
Nagy, Dorottya (2017). 'World Christianity as a Theological Approach. A Reflection on Central and Eastern Europe.' In Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood, eds. *Relocating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*. Leiden: Brill: 143–161.
Phan, Peter C. (2012), 'World Christianity. Its Implications for History, Religious Studies and Theology.' *Horizons* 39,2: 171–188.

CHAPTER 1

World Christianity: Contours of an Approach

Martha Frederiks

1 Introduction

Over the past years, I have been teaching an introductory course on Christian history. During the weekly seminars the students read a selection of primary sources. One of the seminar sessions is dedicated to the 'Church of the East', during which we do a parallel reading of the text of the Nestorian monument, commemorating the 150th anniversary of the 'luminous religion' in China (781) and the dialogue between the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī and Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I in Baghdad (c. 780). Both materials originate from the same period and church tradition, but where the Nestorian monument uses Buddhist and Daoist notions to express Christianity, the Baghdadi dialogue engages Islam as its main conversation partner (Horne 1917: 381–392; Ji 2007: 24–81; Mingana 2009). Students are often astonished to discover that these texts, which are so dissimilar in genre, locality, and context, are connected through the person of Timothy I, who, while resident in Baghdad, was also the patriarch of the Nestorian churches in China when the monument was erected. Philip Jenkins calls him "arguably the most significant Christian spiritual leader of his day, much more influential than the Western pope, in Rome" (Jenkins 2008: 6).

Timothy's patriarchate was vast, with bishops in present-day Syria, Armenia, Yemen, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, and China (Irvin and Sunquist 2001: 284–287). Yet however impressive the spatial extent of Timothy's ecclesial responsibilities, in the class we remind ourselves that there was more to the Christian story in the latter decades of the eighth century than the Church of the East. We recall, for example, that around the same time, somewhat further to the west, Empress Irene was taking measures to end the first period of Byzantine iconoclasm, itself a side-effect of the advance of Islam (Crone 2017: 361–397). Or that even further west on the Iberian Peninsula a member of the Umayyad dynasty had established the emirate of Cordoba and was commissioning the construction of the illustrious *Mezquita de Cordoba* on the site of a former Visigoth church (Hillenbrand 1994:113–114). Towards the north, Charlemagne was on the warpath, simultaneously submitting and Christianizing neighbouring Saxons and Lombards to realize his ambition to

© MARTHA FREDERIKS, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004444867_003
This is an open access chapter distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

reinstate the Western Roman Empire and become a 'new Constantine' (Riche 1993: 117–125; Sypeck 2006).

We usually end our mental journeys 'at home', recollecting what was happening in our own context at the time. During the seminar on the Church of the East, for example, we recalled that during the late eighth century substantial parts of what later became the Netherlands were still mission territory. And we discovered that it may well have been the fortuitous meeting between Charlemagne and Alcuin of York in 781 and Alcuin's emphasis on Christianisation through persuasion rather than force, which eventually produced one of the oldest Christian vernacular texts of our area—the *Heliand*, a Saxon gospel harmony (Murphy 1995; Haug 1997: 27–30).

During the course, we consistently repeat the exercise of reading primary sources and recalling their context as well as events or developments (secular as well as religious) relevant to Christian history that occurred in other parts of the world at approximately the same time. Gradually, the students begin to discern a web of connectivities that links the Council of Toledo (589) with the Great Schism (1054), and the Fifth Crusade (1213–1221) with the fall of Dongola (1276) and the subsequent demise of Nubian Christianity. Also, after a number of weeks it begins to dawn on the students that there is not one story to tell about the history of Christianity, but that there are manifold narratives about a multiplicity of Christianities that are intricately entangled through webs of connectivities.

This prefatory anecdote introduces some of the features of what I call a 'World Christianity approach'. Rather than considering World Christianity a subject matter or a field of studies (Kollman 2014: 166), I conceptualize World Christianity to be an approach to study Christian tradition(s), entailing a number of methodological and theoretical perspectives. The vignette highlights several of those perspectives: the conceptualization of Christianity as an inherently plural, cumulative tradition (Smith 1964: 141) with multiple and variable centres of authority, influence, and power that shape(d) the tradition(s) throughout its history/ies; the multifaceted translocal connectivities between these Christianities; discernment and recognition of the entanglements of the Christian tradition(s) with political, economic, social, and cultural contexts as well as of Christian and other faith traditions and the subsequent range of Christianities this has produced; the importance of synchronic and diachronic studies of Christianity to uncover aforesaid entanglements and connectivities, to mention just a few.

In this chapter I will sketch the contours of such a 'World Christianity approach'. I use the word 'contours' advisedly because this approach is still very much 'in the making' and will benefit from further academic engagement.

Mindful of the importance of situating myself as a researcher, I locate myself as an academic working in a religious studies department at a secular university in the Netherlands (Utrecht University) who studies Christianity from a religious studies perspective with a partiality to historical- and anthropological methods. My personal- and academic biography so far has resulted in an academic focus on the Christian tradition(s) in sub-Saharan Africa and on Christian-Muslim relations. Hence, many of the examples I cite and the academic debates with which I interact, are related to these areas of expertise. This is in no way intended to disavow the significance of other regions, examples, or debates.[1]

I will begin this contribution by briefly recapitulating the genealogy of the concept World Christianity and by situating the prevalent conceptualizations in current academic discussions. This is followed by an exploration of the rationale to opt for a World Christianity approach, rather than to consider World Christianity a subject matter or a field of study. Lastly, I will dot lines to demarcate the contours of such a World Christianity approach.

2 World Christianity: The Career of a Concept

The term 'World Christianity' is in vogue. Titles which feature World Christianity seem to proliferate, be they introductions to World Christianity, histories of World Christianity, perspectives in World Christianity, the role of theology or mission in World Christianity or readers in World Christianity.[2] Also the nomenclature of academic chairs, journals and book series seems affected by what Paul Kollman (2014) has called the "world-Christian turn", with World Christianity rapidly replacing words such as missiology, 'non-Western' or 'Southern' Christianities, ecumenism or church history.

The notion World Christianity seems to exercise a compelling attraction to a wide-ranging audience. But as Peter Phan (2012: 172) has eloquently

1 For a theological take on a World Christianity approach see Nagy 2017.

2 The following brief bibliography, which is by no means comprehensive, can serve as an illustration: Introductions to World Christianity: Cooper 2016; Sanneh and McClymond 2016; Farhadian 2012. Histories of World Christianity: Irvin 2017; Daughrity and Athyal 2016; Shenk 2002; Sanneh 2008; Davies and Conway 2008; Irvin and Sunquist 2001, 2012; Ward and Stanley 2000. Perspectives in World Christianity: Cabrita, Maxwell and Wild-Wood 2017; Tan and Tran 2016; Burrows, Gornik and McLean 2011. The role of theology in World Christianity: Ogbonnaya 2017; Friedli 2010; Tennent 2007. Mission in World Christianity: Danielson 2017; Gallagher and Hertig 2009. Readers in World Christianity: Davies and Conway 2008; Coakley and Sterk 2006; Thomas 1995.

pointed out, "[p]opularity (…) does not always mean conceptual clarity and consistency." Various scholars have endeavoured to shed light on the multiple conceptualizations of World Christianity (Cabrita and Maxwell 2017: 5–30; Kollman 2014: 164–177; Thangaraj 2011: 11–13). Dana Robert (2011: 149–151) traces the genealogy of World Christianity to the first half of 20th century when the concept was coined in relation to mission and ecumenism by people like Francis John McConnell, Kenneth Scott Latourette, and later also Henry van Dusen. Where for Latourette 'World Christianity' represented the manifold ways in which the Christian tradition transformed and was transformed by multiple contexts, for Van Dusen World Christianity signified his strongly Protestant-based and European-centred expectation of an imminent Christian unity. Thus, according to Robert, in Van Dusen's work, the notion of 'World Christianity' was inextricably linked to the ecumenical élan and optimism of the 1940s and 1950s and lacked the dimension of "multicultural and ecclesial diversity" that Latourette and later conceptualizations considered critical. The concept gained new currency in the late 1980s, when academics like Andrew Walls and the late Lamin Sanneh recalibrated the term and conceptualized it as "Christianity as a non-Western religion with multiple local manifestations" (Robert 2011: 152) or in the words of Sanneh (2003: 22) as "a wide variety of original, indigenous expressions that do not necessarily share the Western Enlightenment frame." Where for Walls World Christianity signals a historiographic project, for Sanneh World Christianity is a constitutive concept in a postcolonial project (Frederiks 2019; Ngong 2020).

As a discursive concept this conceptualization of World Christianity is embedded in theories on the translatability and inculturation of the gospel (Sanneh 1989; Walls 1982, 1990) with a strong emphasis on the vitality and growth of 'Southern Christianity', most clearly expressed through the popular phrase that the 'center of gravity of Christianity is moving South'. The postulated but frequently implicit background to this conceptualization of World Christianity seems to be a representation of European Christianity as a tale of secularisation and decline. Against this context, the construct 'World Christianity' seems to function as a discursive reassurance that due to the "meteoric rise of non-Western Christianity" (both in loci and it in its migration settings) there is hope for the Christian faith after all (Akinade 2010: 5; Jenkins 2010: 15; Frederiks 2019). This is most explicitly articulated by the late Kwame Bediako in his contribution to the volume *Understanding World Christianity*, honouring Andrew Walls:

> Thus, the present shifts in the center of gravity may have secured for Christianity a future that would otherwise be precarious in the

> secularized cultural environment of the modern West. It has given the faith a new lease on life in the predominantly religious worlds of Africa, Latin America, the Pacific and parts of Asia.
>
> Bediako 2011: 246

It is this late 1980s conceptualization of World Christianity, with its focus on the vitality and multiple manifestations of the Christian tradition in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania that has become dominant.[3] This conceptualization of 'world' in World Christianity as an abbreviation for originating from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific, has striking parallels with notions such as World Cinema, World Music, and World Literature, which, in the words of Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim (2006:1) "are categories created in the Western world to refer to cultural products and practices that are mainly non-Western".[4]

Several academics such as Namsoon Kang (2010: 33) and Sathianathan Clarke (2014: 195) have observed that discourses that adhere to this conceptualization of World Christianity often tend towards triumphalism and favour certain aspects of Christianity over others. The discourses seem to stress the demographic robustness and vitality of Christianity as well as its multiple local varieties, often supported by references to missiometric exercises which highlight the continued growth of Christianity. These discourses mainly seem to focus on continuities, vibrancy, and advance, rather than on discontinuities, ruptures, and decline. They also seem to have what Cabrita and Maxwell have called "a theological predisposition towards incarnational and translatability features of Christianity" and "a fetishistic commitment to regional particularity" but pay little attention to globalizing and integrative forces within the Christian tradition (Cabrita and Maxwell 2017: 21–22).

Subsequent academic debates have resulted in some modifications to the conceptualization of World Christianity sketched above. First of all, parallel to other academic disciplines, the stipulation of the qualifier 'world' in concepts like World Christianity, World Music or World Cinema as referencing solely the

3 This conceptualization seems particular popular among scholars in North America and academics connected to the Yale-Edinburgh group, a network initiated by Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh in the early 1990s. Cabrita and Maxwell, who situate the emergence of the concept 'in a particular theological and political milieu of postcolonial anxiety' and consider it in part to be 'the product of missionaries and missiologists' postcolonial guilt', also point to the popularisation of the concept through the Currents in World Christianity Project funded by the Pew Charitable Trust (Cabrita and Maxwell 2017: 4, 12, 14). While not referenced by Cabrita and Maxwell, this once more points to the influence of Sanneh in promoting the concept; between 1990–2000 he served a consultant for the Pew Charitable Trusts https://divinity.yale.edu/sites/default/files/user-cv-uploads/lsanneh.pdf.

4 Dorottya Nagy in this volume critically examines the notion 'World' in World Christianity, discussing 'worldling' trends within the Humanities.

non-Western world has been challenged and a case has been made to construe 'world' as 'world-wide' or pertaining to the whole of humanity (Phan 2012: 175; D'haen, Domíngez and Rosendahl Thomson 2013: x–xi; Nagib 2013: 30–37). Scholars like Thomas Thangaraj, Charles Farhadian, Kirsteen and Sebastian Kim as well as David Barrett in the *World Christian Encyclopedia* are examples of scholars who use the notion World Christianity to signify the geographic span of Christianity, indicating that Christianity has adherents worldwide. In this conceptualization 'World Christianity' includes the 'West' (Thangaraj 2011: 11–12; Farhadian 2012: 1; Kim and Kim 2008, 2016: ix). Others however refer to Christianity's dispersal across the globe by means of the concept 'Global Christianity' (e.g. Pew Forum; Escobar 2013; Johnson and Ross 2009; Robbins and Engelke 2010). And to underscore the at times bewildering muddle of terminology: Lamin Sanneh (2003: 22) uses the concept Global Christianity for "the faithful replication of Christian forms and patterns developed in Europe".

Secondly, academic debate has resulted in a corrective to the initial concentration on the contemporary in the conceptualization of World Christianity. Suggestions to also incorporate the historical dimensions have met with unequivocal acclamation and consensus, though the main body of research continues to focus on developments from the 19th century onwards (Irvin 2016: 4; Kim and Kim 2008, 2016; Farhadian 2012).

Paul Kollman, in his endeavours to help clarify the manifold conceptualizations of World Christianity, has pointed out that the term World Christianity is not only used for a phenomenon but also for an emerging field of studies (Kollman 2014: 166). Dale Irvin and Klaus Koschorke can be considered the pioneers and most active promoters of the conceptualization of World Christianity as an emerging academic field. In 2008 Irvin, in his positioning article in *The Journal of World Christianity* describes 'World Christianity' as:

> an emerging field that investigates and seeks to understand Christian communities, faith, and practice as they are found on six continents, expressed in diverse ecclesial traditions, and informed by the multitude of historical and cultural experiences … It is concerned with both the diversity of local or indigenous expressions of Christian life and faith throughout the world, and the variety of ways these interact with one another critically and constructively across time and space. It is particularly concerned with under-represented and marginalized communities of faith, resulting in a greater degree of attention being paid to Asian, African, and Latin American experiences; the experience of marginalized communities within the North Atlantic world; and the experiences of women throughout the world.
>
> Irvin 2008: 1–2

Both Irvin and Koschorke emphasize in their work that the field of World Christianity encompasses Christian expressions in present and past (therewith distinguishing it from for example the anthropology of Christianity[5] which has a predominant focus on modern period; see e.g. Robbins 2014) and Christianity as practised on six continents, therewith explicitly including the North Atlantic hemisphere in the field of World Christianity, though Koschorke's work seems partial to "außereuropäischen Christentumsgeschichte" (Hermann and Burlacioiu 2016: 9). Also characteristic for both scholars is their dual focus on local particularities and translocal connectivities. Both also emphasize that the history of Christianity is entangled with wider regional- and world histories and interacts with a broad palette of cultural experiences.

Where Irvin foregrounds Christian expressions of the underrepresented and marginalized, reminiscent of a liberation theology approach and its 'preferential option for the poor', Koschorke has underscored the polycentric structures of World Christianity (Koschorke and Hermann 2014). While not conceptualized as 'World Christianity', there are striking parallels between Koschorke's plea for "veränderte Landkarten" and "polyzentrische Strukturen" and Justo González' insightful *The Changing Shape of Church History*, which argues the necessity of transforming the cartography and topography in church history and the need for 'polycentric' maps (González 2002: 1–32).

3 Why an Approach?

Considering the amount of energy spent on the conceptualization and exploration of 'World Christianity' both as a subject matter and as a field, the question seems justified: why a proposal to conceive World Christianity as an approach?[6] I merely highlight three reasons:

Firstly, current attention for World Christianity (both as a subject matter and as a field) seems informed by a fascination for the numerical strength and vibrancy of Christianity (and often its more exotic expressions) with a predilection for the contemporary period, highlighting some developments in the Christian tradition, while disregarding others. Examples are usually drawn from Anglophone Africa, Latin American Pentecostalism, and to a lesser extent from Asia (e.g. China and Korea). As Dyron Daughrity (2013) has pointed out, Orthodoxy (Eastern as well as Oriental) seems absent from the research

5 The anthropology of Christianity is also distinct in its explicit attention for discontinuity, rupture and change (Robbins 2014).

6 For a rationale why not to discard the term all together see Nagy in this volume.

agenda; also, attention for other historic 'mainline' churches (e.g. Presbyterian, Methodist or Roman Catholic) in the post-colonial era is limited. Some rhetoric elements are reiterated again and again, such as the creativity and vitality of Africa's 'new' Christianity, China's growth (Nagy 2010) or the vibrancy of migrant Christian communities in Europe, most notably The Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God in Kiev.[7] Features of contemporary Christianity where vibrancy and numerical strength are less obvious, such as Christian minority churches in the Sahel, or North Africa, migrant communities in the Gulf or the continued role of state churches in Europe receive far less attention.

This lopsided representation of the Christian tradition and its unvoiced postulation that the significance of Christian communities is somehow linked to numerical strength is problematic. Furthermore, the tacit conjecture of much of the literature that emphasizes the growth of Christianity in 'the South' seems to be that the so-called 'shift of the center of gravity' also signifies a change in the power dynamics within Christianity worldwide. But as Tinyiko Maluleke has observed, while "in terms of numbers and dynamism the Christian center of gravity has indeed shifted", the "wealthiest adherents and institutions reside in the North" and therefore "the shift in the Christian center of gravity from North to South has not been able to displace the dominance of the North …" (Maluleke 2016: 67–68). Current World Christianity research rarely seems to interrogate such presuppositions or scrutinize power dynamics within Christianity worldwide.[8]

Secondly, as delineated earlier and as Nagy (2017: 144–145) has recently also detailed, current conceptualizations in the study of Christianity worldwide continue to be problematic. Both Irvin (2016: 15–16) and Nagy (2017: 146) have

---

7 Chandra Mallampalli (2017: 163–164) has flagged that the main architects of current conceptualizations of World Christianity were scholars in the study of African Christianity and has queried the aptness of some of its key features (e.g. translatability, cultural continuity and indigenous agency) for South East Asia and in particular India.

8 With the exception of the Constantine era and the colonial period—and possibly the contemporary struggle for power within the Anglican Communion—, there has been relatively little attention for the question how power dynamics have affected Christianity's manifestations, terminology, and conceptualizations in a given period and/or context. How have money flows, Jesus films, cheap American book publications, scholarships, access to internet and social media, military supremacy, commercial concessions, political domination or constructions of race, gender, caste, ethnicity etc. affected local expressions of Christianity as well as the relationships between the various local communities. Who claims to speak for 'Christianity' and with what aim? What allegiances, dependencies, and agendas are forged and promoted through aid programmes, ecumenical bodies, fraternal workers, remittances, political constellations or academic institutions and discourses in past and present? Who participates in the processes of fashioning, defining, transforming, and representing both local manifestations and translocal connectivities and who is excluded and why?

flagged the equivocality of the concept 'the West'. Where Irvin has highlighted how the geographic locality of 'the West' shifts over time, Nagy has critiqued the postulated but problematic inclusion of Central and Eastern Europe in 'the West' and 'Europe'. Conceptualizations such as the 'West' and the 'South' are strongly informed by a specific type of colonial experience and may lead to an oversight of areas or Christian communities with different histories, as Daughrity's 'Ignoring the East' (2013) evidences. These examples also illustrate that any construct that attempts to equate discursive concepts with geographical locations, eventually runs into problems, as is for example evidenced by Irvin's need to reference "marginalized communities in the North Atlantic world" in his delineation of World Christianity. Paul Freston (2010) has also eloquently demonstrated this in his deconstruction of the popular notion 'reverse mission'.

Thirdly, and closely linked to the previous observations, as Arun Jones (2014), Nagy (this volume) and others have argued, much academic reflection on the study of Christianity worldwide continues to work along bipolar lines of thinking, that find their origin in the colonial period, continually producing and reproducing binaries such as 'missionary' versus 'indigenous', 'the West' versus 'the Rest', 'North' versus 'South'.[9] Critical interrogation of such binaries by no means intends to contest that Western colonialism was incisive in local histories in multiple ways and requires scholarly investigation. Nor does it intend to disavow that in numerous areas the first encounter with the Christian faith occurred during the period of Western colonialism, leading to a messy imbroglio of Christianity and colonialism. However, to make this colonial experience, an intrinsic part of the conceptual framework for the study of Christianity throughout its two-thousand-year history, does not merely once again foreground North Atlantic hegemonic power, but also does not do justice to nor is representative of the diverse power dynamics of Christianity's long and heterogeneous history. Moreover, academic concepts or methods that consciously or unconsciously take their point of departure in the—often unvoiced—assumption that Christianity in Ghana has more in common with Christianity in Indonesia or Argentina than with Christianity in the Netherlands or the United Kingdom, as for example terms such as 'Christianities from the global/majority South' seem to presume, in my view retain orientalist structures of 'othering' and need to be exposed and dismantled.

9 The presupposition of Irvin's expression "marginalized communities in the North Atlantic world" is that what distinguishes the 'rest of the world' from 'the North Atlantic' is the experience of marginalization. Likewise, Koschorke's use of terms like 'South-South' connections, or 'North-South' interactions reproduce such binaries (Koschorke 2016: 42).

Conscious of all these conceptual and terminological challenges and pitfalls, Dorottya Nagy and I propose to invoke the term 'World Christianity' merely to indicate a particular approach to studying Christianity/ies. As Phan (2012: 172) and Ariarajah (this volume) have argued, the term 'Christianity' continues to evoke connotations of Christianity's "Western face". A World Christianity approach concurrently acknowledges and addresses this. Recognising Christianity's inherently plural character,[10] it entails the conscious and consistent endeavour to study particular Christian communities, beliefs, or practices in the light of and in relation to Christianity's wider (hi)story, mindful of integrative and globalizing forces as well as of its multiple 'centers', trajectories, and agents, aware that Christianity's manifestations always shape and are shaped by broader political, socio-economic and religious developments, and cognizant of the diversity of beliefs and practices this has produced across time and space. Where Nagy opts for a theological take on this approach (Nagy 2017), mine is a religious studies perspective, meaning that I refrain from normative claims as to what constitute 'faithful' interpretations of Christianity. In the remainder of this chapter I want to sketch how I operationalize such a 'World Christianity' approach from a religious studies perspective, stressing once more that this is work in progress.

4 Contours of an Approach

4.1 *Critical Inquiry into Trajectories of Knowledge Production*

A key feature of a World Christianity approach as I envisage it consists of a critical inquiry into the trajectories of knowledge production and construction as well as into the genealogies of key analytic concepts and theories in the study of Christianity. Rather than naively and guilelessly using past hypotheses, terms, theories, and data-sets, we need to critically examine the metadata and meta-information of the research we utilize, aware of the context in which they were formulated and cognizant that neither "global awareness" (Nagy 2017: 144) nor attention for commensurate representation of academic actors have been defining characteristics of past scholarly endeavours. Similarly, as researchers we do not merely need to work on producing materials from more

10 While a World Christianity approach acknowledges Christianity's inherently plural nature, it also acknowledges the myriad of translocal connectivities that interconnect Christianity's multiple 'centers' as well as integrative forces within Christianity worldwide. Acknowledging both Christianity's centrifugal and centripetal dynamics I have opted for the continued use of the concept 'Christianity' rather than Christianities, which mainly highlights Christian particularities.

inclusive perspectives, but also critically need to assess our own processes of knowledge production in order to detect biases and blind spots.

Therefore, a key feature of a World Christianity approach as I envisage it, is to critically interrogate past and present trajectories of knowledge production and the inherent mechanisms of exclusion and marginalization, mindful of the fact that there is disparity between researchers, that textual sources seem to dominate the knowledge production of Christianity, and sensitive to the fact that the production, conservation, and examination of texts during extensive periods of Christian history was the privilege of a small elite and hence not all voices are equally represented in past sources and current debates. (Farhadian 2012: 2–3).

Aim of this investigation is to create an awareness of how past and present trajectories of knowledge production and construction have shaped and continue shape our perceptions and conceptualizations of the Christian tradition(s). It is for example common knowledge that much of the past research on Christianity has worked with a Eurocentric perspective. Andrew Walls (2000: 107) once pithily called church history as taught until very recently, a "glorified form of European clan history". This eurocentrism is amongst other things expressed in the classic division of Christianity's history worldwide between church- and mission history. But, as Enrique Dussel (1967) has repeatedly stated, it is also exemplified in the way in which pivotal moments in Europe's history with Christianity still seem to determine the periodization of the history of Christianity worldwide.[11] González (2002: 11–12) has evocatively pressed this point with his example that May 26 1521 was the day that the Edict of Worms was issued against Luther as well as the day that Hernán Cortés was laying siege to the imperial city of Tenochtitlán, stating that "many would agree that the jury is still out as to which of those two events will eventually prove to be more important for the history of the church at large." Thus, there is not merely a need to rewrite the history of Christianity from a wider, more inclusive, multi-centred perspective but it is also vital to critically assess the tools (e.g. concepts, theories, and periodization) which are employed in this endeavour. In the remainder of this paragraph I would like to illustrate this by briefly reflecting on two pivotal instruments in the process of knowledge production: researchers and sources.

Over the past decades there has been a growing awareness of the interplay between social location and academia. Bourdieu for example has pointed to the correlation between cultural, linguistic, and economic capital and

11 For a discussion of Dussel's critique of prevalent systems of periodization, see Raimundo Barreto, this volume.

academic achievements. Nowadays, academics increasingly acknowledge that the academic world is not the level playing field it was imagined to be and that cultural, linguistic, and economic capital is a prerequisite for accessing international academic networks and prestigious publication channels (Bourdieu 1986: 241–258; Paltridge, Starfield and Tardy 2016). The acknowledgement that opportunities and resources have been and still are unequally allotted around the world and that unimpeded access to sources, publication outlets, and academic networks still is the privilege of a small elite, has major repercussions for knowledge production, considering this privileged group has the power to dominate academic debates, set its agendas, serve as peer-reviewers, and through referencing only a limited group of peers can also reproduce and further enhance the mechanisms of exclusion.[12]

Working with a World Christianity approach not merely implies being mindful of these mechanisms in past and present. In cognizance of postcolonial critiques of the production of knowledge *about* but *without* the 'other' (Kwok 2005: 3) as well as feminist theory stressing the importance of locating oneself in relation to knowledge production (Gottfried 2016: 5–7), it represents a proactive, conscientious effort to intellectually engage with (the work of) a broad spectre of scholars and sources from around the world and a vigilance regarding possible lacuna, 'blind spots' or biases in the work of previous generations as well as peers.

Also, sources require critical inquiry. Nowadays, most researchers are aware that Christianity's written history has chiefly been based on sources that were produced by a select elite and that much of the secondary literature takes a Eurocentric perspective (González 2002: 17–32). In response, numerous efforts have been (and are being) undertaken to recover the voices of hitherto underrepresented groups such as women, common people, indigenous agents or colonial subjects, at times supplementing archival materials with oral history or other sources (see e.g. Brock 2011; Grimshaw and May 2010; Phiri, Govinden and Nadar 2002; Soga and Williams 1983; Maretu 1983). Emma Wild-Wood (this volume) discusses strategies to critically interact with missionary sources (e.g. triangulation of sources) to trace indigenous voices, while Joseph Lee and Christie Chow (this volume) in their case-study on historiography of Christianity in China highlight the importance of moving beyond missionary and church sources to incorporate family archives, state documents etc. Irvin (2008:1–2) and González (2002: 26) have stressed the need of structurally incorporating these voices into the histories of Christianity. Irvin and Sunquist's *History of the World Christian Movement* (2001, 2012) and initiatives such as the

12 For comments on a recent example see Chitando 2010: 290.

Dictionary of African Christian Biography (www.dacb.org) and its derivative the *Bibliographic Dictionary of Chinese Christianities* (www.bdcconline.net) have begun to redress some of these issues. While recognizing that these processes need to start somewhere, it seems important to point out that much of this endeavor seems to privilege the recovery of *Christian* voices, thus making an implicit statement on the importance of other voices for understanding and writing Christianity's history.

While muted voices in historical sources have received considerable attention in the academia, the manner in which the density and accessibility of certain text- or archival corpuses seems to direct knowledge production has received far less reflection. To give an example: the quantity and accessibility (linguistic and otherwise) of archival materials from the colonial period in general and of the British Empire in particular have resulted in an overwhelming scholarly attention for this period. Though, as stated before, by no means denying that the colonial period was incisive in local histories in multiple ways and hence requires scholarly investigation, the disproportionate focus on the colonial period continues to further inscribe binary-thinking (the West and the Rest) as the overarching paradigm of all past cross-cultural encounter in academic literature and has tended to obscure and overshadow experiences from other periods, such as early modern period when relations between Africans (or Asians) and Europeans were more on par or the power balance was tilted in favor of Africans.

The predominant focus on the British materials also implies that theory on e.g. mission and colonialism is mainly based on experiences within the British Empire, which may or may not be representative for experiences with the Spanish, Portuguese, Danish, Dutch, French, Ottoman or Russian colonial empires. An analogous case is the manner in which theory on religion and migration has been chiefly developed on the basis of research on migrant Christian communities in the United States (Frederiks and Nagy 2016: 2).

Another example of how documentation density and political clout have directed and shaped knowledge production is the portrayal of African enslavement. The vastness of the material on the transatlantic slave-trade conjoined with academic and political sway have produced a representation of the transatlantic slave-trade as *the* enslavement experience and has tended to eclipse other histories of enslavement, such as "the forced migration of black Africans into the Mediterranean world of Islam" and into Muslim societies in the Middle East and Asia, even though according to estimated guesses over the centuries nearly as many Africans were deported via Indian Ocean- and trans-Saharan routes as via the trans-Atlantic routes (Frederiks 2016: 30; Hunwick 2002: ix; Segal 2002: 55–57).

Similarly, accessibility of materials and academic bias have resulted in ample attention for the establishment of Portuguese Christianity on the Swahili coast. Yet while there is documented evidence that in the 16th century there were also Assyrian, Abyssinian- and possibly Indian Christian traders on the Swahili coast as far south as Kilwa (present-day Tanzania), this has received little to no scholarly consideration. This is all the more surprising considering that by the 16th century the *dhow* trade on the Swahili coast was already centuries old and it can therefore be inferred that the Swahili coast in all likelihood had been in been contact with Christians long before the documented evidence of the 16th century (Frederiks 2016: 35–36). Part of the reason for this inattentiveness, is the near exclusive focus on textual materials in the study of Christianity (the period of Antiquity exempted). I concur with Daughrity (2013: 51) who, referencing the work of Patrick Manning, points to the need to supplement the analysis of texts with other sources, such as material culture, linguistic analysis, migration patterns, and archaeological excavation, thus widening the basis for knowledge production on Christianity's histories and underscoring that Christianity's new historiography needs to be an interdisciplinary project.

4.2 *A Cumulative Tradition with Multiple Centers of Influence, Authority, and Power*

A key feature of a World Christianity approach is the acknowledgement (and scientific implementation) of Christianity as an inherently plural and cumulative tradition with a multiplicity of formal and informal 'centers' of authority, influence and power that have produced its heterogeneity in past and present.[13] Many 'World Christianity' scholars have belaboured this point. These 'centers' (or hubs) may represent official Christian structures such as the seats of ecclesiastical hierarchies, but could also be devotional sites (e.g. Lourdes, Guadeloupe) or localities invested with discursive power (e.g. turning points in Christian history such as Wittenberg or Azuza Street). In addition there are political and economic centers which interact on Christianity e.g. Istanbul during Ottoman times, colonial London or the World Bank in Washington. Christianity's 'centers' are not stable and may lose their influence or appeal over time, underscoring what Bediako (2011: 246) once wrote: "that both *accession* and *recession* belong within Christian religious history."

13 Peter Phan (2008: 194) has used the image of a rhizome or rootstock plant for the dispersion of Christianity. I have chosen to use 'center' rather than center (without ' ') to dissociate both myself and the term from the center-margin debates; I rather conceptualize 'center' as a hub.

Klaus Koschorke (2011, 2014b) has popularized the idea of Christianity's multiple centers with the expression "the polycentric structures of World Christianity". I prefer to speak of a cumulative tradition with multiple 'centers' of influence, power, and authority as the word 'structure' evokes connotations of formalization and institutionalization that may or may not be applicable. In addition, the word 'polycentric' is yet another ambiguous, equivocal term. While initially mainly common in biology/mycology, political science, and social-geography, the last decades of the twentieth century saw the rise of the notion 'polycentrism' in Roman Catholic theology, where the word was re-conceptualized to refer to the bourgeoning multi-culturality in what had previously been conceived as a mono- or Eurocentric Roman Catholic Church (Schillebeeckx 1985: ix; Schreiter 1991: 23; Tiénou 1993: 248–249). The concept emerged against the background of the catholicity debate and was according to Harvey Cox the pivot in the debate between Cardinal Ratzinger and Leonardo Boff (Cox 1988: 13, 146). But where in Roman Catholic literature in the latter part of the twentieth century the term was mainly used for the *recent, cultural* diversity *within* one church, Koschorke's conceptualization of polycentricism refers to Christianity's *past history* as well as *current developments*, is applied to the *whole* of the Christian tradition and concerns multiple centers of *power* and *hierarchy* rather than 'mere' centers of cultural diversity.

González has observed that acknowledging Christianity's multiple centers and trajectories in past and present has two main consequences for writing of the history of Christianity; it heralds the discontinuation of the separation of church history and history of mission, and it refutes constructions of the history of Christianity that consider the European tale to be the lead narrative. He writes:

> The result is frightening and exhilarating. (…) I must somehow listen to those voices from other centers and from the margins that speak from different perspectives and see a past that is not exactly the same as I have seen. In fact, I can no longer speak of a single past, for out of these many centers and many perspectives come many pasts.
>
> González 2002: 17

The emphasis by Koschorke, González, and others on multiple 'centers' in Christian present as well as past, presents a valuable corrective to the hegemony of Eurocentric (or wide: North Atlantic) narrative of the past. As part of the rectification process, it would be worth investigating when and why this Eurocentric reading of Christianity's history began to dominate the literature, for there is ample evidence throughout the centuries that amongst the churches' hierarchy there lingered a sustained awareness that there were multiple

'centers' of Christianity, as is evidenced by e.g. the travels of Rabban Bar Sauma and Giovanni da Montecorvino, the presence of Ethiopians at the Council of Florence or the quest for Prester John. History is equally clear however, that awareness did not necessarily imply recognition of the other, as is demonstrated e.g. by the Fourth Crusade against Constantinople, Portuguese attempts at Latinizing Ethiopian- and Kerala Christianity and American Protestant evangelization of Oriental Christianity to mention just a few examples.

What would a World Christianity approach to Christianity as a cumulative tradition with multiple 'centers' of authority, influence and power entail for studying and writing Christian history? A World Christianity approach as I envisage it acknowledges and studies these multiple, diverse, versatile 'centers' and the beliefs and practices they advance, and pays explicit attention to the fact that the history of World Christianity is not a story of a linear expansion, but a narrative of both advance and decline, a story of conflicts and tensions as well as of occasional consensus and compromises (Woodberry 2012: 259–261). It entails studying the multiple manifestations of Christianity on their own as well as in a comparative perspective, diachronically or synchronically, endeavouring to understand and interpret them in context as well as in the light of and in relation to Christianity's wider (hi)story. Comparative studies could either be conducted within the Christian tradition or between Christian- and other faith traditions, studying parallel responses to political, social or economic developments or analogue movements, practices or transformation of beliefs (Janson and Meyer 2016).[14]

Furthermore, I concur with Klaus Hock who, following scholars such as Andrew Walls and Wilbert Schenk, and with a reference to the work of Dipesh Chakrabarty, has stressed the necessity of "provincializing" the European history/ies of Christianity: a project to discard Eurocentric perspectives as normative and to move beyond approaches that portray World Christian history as an extension of Europe's history of Christianity (Hock 2014: 399). Irvin (2016: 12) writes:

> Although Western forms of thinking have dominated the Christian experience these past five hundred years, they have not been the only way Christians have expressed their faith. Recovering the memory of those

14 There is already a substantial body of literature on the Judaism, Christianity, Islam nexus. Some study the interconnectedness of the three traditions while others for example study similarities and differences in Muslim treatment of Jewish and Christian communities in al-Andalus or the Ottoman Empire or early modern Christian parallel responses to Judaism and Islam or Muslims (Braude and Lewis 1982, Armour 2004, Lowney 2005).

> diversities and understanding their implication for theory, method and practice today is one of the fundamental tasks that the study of World Christianity has to undertake.

Following Irvin (2016: 13), González (2002: 17) and Sanianathan Clarke I envisage an approach that advocates "a study of Christianity from perspectives that are engendered from around the globe" and that refuses "to set up the universe of inquiry postulating 'an other'" (Clarke 2014: 194). As Irvin has argued, studying Christianity worldwide in past and present requires a multiplicity of models and theoretical productions. Such an approach entails a critical inquiry of periodizations, key-turning points, conceptual categories as well as a re-assessment of our analytical toolbox.

4.3 *Translocal Connectivities and Integrative Dynamics*

The prominence given to Christianity's multiple 'centers', trajectories, and distinct indigenous responses has raised concern for the lack of coherence and connectedness this seems to suggest. Scholars like Charles Farhadian (2012: 2) and Hartmut Lehmann (2014: 378–379) have pointed out that there are also integrative forces at work within Christianity, referring, among others, to global networks[15] (e.g. YMCA, WCC or Bible societies) and the role of translocal media. Lehmann has argued that attention for "polycentric structures" alone, captures only part of the dynamics within Christianity's story and has proposed to complement this with attentiveness for "multi-polar networks". In his more recent work also Koschorke has highlighted the relevance of translocal connectivities; this prevents, to use his imagery, Christianity's new historiography becoming a "book-binder synthesis", which merely staples together a set of regional histories (Koschorke 2014b: 23). Koschorke (2016: 42) has coined the expressions "multidirectional transcontinental interactions" and "plurality of crosslinks" to complement the notion of "polycentric structures". He writes:

> Unlike former missionary historiography this concept does not primarily deal with traditional North-South connections—focussing on Euro-American mission activities overseas—or with South-North relationships—which have recently been discusses in detail, for example,

15 Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene have underscored the importance of these networks and have coined the term 'religious internationals', defined as 'a cluster of voluntary transnational organizations and representations crystallizing around international issues, in which both "ordinary" believers and religious specialists could serve as protagonists' (Green and Viaene 2012: 1).

> in the context of African immigration and 'reverse mission' endeavours in Europe. Rather, it points to the plurality of cross-links in the so-called global South that in a new way have to be taken into account.

And he continues, especially "early instances of these transcontinental links in the 'Global South' are critical to such a new historiography" (Koschorke 2014a: 178). While by no means denying the pertinence of research into un(der) explored connectivities between African, Asian, Latin American or Oceanic expressions of Christianity, historical research seems to indicate that realities on the ground were more complex than these neat divisions between 'North-South' and 'South-South' connectivities seem to suggest. In 19th century Africa for example, these so-called 'North-South' and 'South-South' connectivities regularly intersected: in the 1840s West Indian- and German missionaries cooperated under auspices of the Basel Mission in the evangelization of people in present-day Ghana, the 1850s saw a joint missionary venture between British and West Indian Anglicans in the Rio Pongas, while in the latter part of the 19th century Indian Spiritans worked alongside Spiritans from Western Europe in East Africa (Gibba 2011; Koren 1994; Dickson 1969: 124).

But even when the concept translocal connectivities is widened beyond to facile binaries and bipolarities to include connectivities between local expressions of Christianity worldwide, it may still fail to capture the full extent of connectedness within the worldwide Christian community in past and present. David Maxwell (2017: 50) has for example drawn attention to "mechanisms of homogenisation, such as ritual practices, texts and institutions, that created uniformity within denominations and stimulated a broader sense of a universal faith" while Joel Robbins (2017: 247) has flagged up how in rural Papua New Guinea Christians experience a sense of connectedness to a worldwide Christian community. Such dynamics of homogenisation, incorporation, and belonging also play a role in knitting together local manifestations of Christianity and in creating the imaginary of a 'world-wide Christian community' and as such form a useful addition to the concepts of translocal connectivities as lenses for discerning Christianity's integrative dynamics.

A World Christianity approach as I visualize it, studies Christianity's local manifestations and histories in past and present but also pays attention to the integrative dynamics and translocal connectivities that, intentionally or serendipitously, interconnect(ed) local 'centres' and expressions across the globe. These dynamics and connectivities can take manifold modes and forms (human, material or immaterial) and can for example comprise of human agents, translocal organizations, and networks (e.g. denominational, missionary, ecumenical, academic, activist, cultural, ethnic, NGOs), trade networks

(e.g. the Silk Road or the transatlantic trade), ritual practice, material objects (e.g. the Jesus film, relics, the harmonium, lithographs of the Broad and Narrow Way), creeds, periodicals, and books (e.g. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*), music, dress-styles, social media, or remittances to name just a few. At times also political preoccupation and policies have unintentionally forged translocal connectivities between Christian communities; communist friendship ties for example, concretized in exchange- and scholarship programmes, have produced connectivities which now contribute to the diversification of the religious landscape in Europe's former communist countries, with Nigerians founding churches in the Czech Republic or Chinese establishing Christian communities in Hungary and Romania (Bargár 2016; Nagy 2009). And as Van Liere convincingly demonstrates elsewhere in this volume, connectivities and dynamics of incorporation can also be forged through discourse and can be construed by agents both from within and outside the Christian tradition(s).

In the study of translocal connectivities in World Christianity sofar, human agency has been the main nexus of analysis.[16] Amongst these the Black Atlantic connectivities feature prominently in the literature, with studies highlighting the role played by Congolese and Angolan Christians in the 17th and 18th centuries in the establishment of the Christian communities in the Americas, the contributions of liberated Africans and Maroons in the spread of Christianity in West Africa in the 19th century, and the significance of Ethiopianism for the development of African Independent Churches (Hanciles 2014; Heywood and Thornton 2007).

More complex and multifaceted are connectivities such as those highlighted by Mercedes García-Arenal (1992: 39–55). García-Arenal has made a comparative study of Spanish perceptions and evangelization strategies of *moriscos* and Indians. In her work she demonstrates that strategies of evangelization and othering, developed in view of the *morisos* in 15th and 16th century Spain shape Spanish missionary approaches towards indigenous peoples in the New World, but also that the experiences of evangelizing Indians in turn informed and shaped policies towards *moriscos* on the Iberian peninsula. Similarly, Claire Midgley (2000) demonstrates how the British campaign against *sati* was simultaneously used to legitimate colonial rule (Spivak's white men saving brown women from brown men) and to enhance political participation of women in the UK. The dynamic interchange between the various nodes of these translocal connectivities and its impact on Christianity's manifestations, beliefs, and practices as well as the manner in which these interactions

16 More recently also the impact of missionary periodicals has drawn scholarly attention. See e.g. Hermann 2014; Hermann, Koschorke, Burlacioiu and Mogase 2016.

enhance or are instigated by a sense of belonging to a worldwide Christianity community merit further research.

4.4 *An Entangled World*

A World Christianity approach not only examines the interactions between and within Christianity's multiple manifestations, but also recognizes that Christian communities and their beliefs and practices in past and present, are part of an entangled world. Christianity's manifestations and transformations are enmeshed with and entrapped in social, economic, cultural, political, and historical realities as well as with other faith traditions. A World Christianity approach studies how Christianity's communities, movements, beliefs, and practices simultaneously fashion and are shaped by these entanglements.

Both church- and mission history have a long pedigree in situating and interpreting Christian manifestations, beliefs and practices in relation to their wider socio-economic, cultural, political and religious settings. There is an extensive scholarship on how Christian beliefs and practices have structured their environment (e.g. calendar, landscape, art, gender constructions, and ethics) as well as how Christian beliefs and practices in past and present have been moulded by their contexts (e.g. Tomkins 2005; Irvin and Sunquist 2001, 2012).

Studying Christianity as part of an entangled world implies studying the multiplicities and genealogies of causes and effects that enmesh Christian manifestations and practices with social, economic, cultural, political and historical realities as well as with other faith traditions. Sanneh's renowned study *Translating the Message* (1989) for instance exemplifies some of these multifaceted dynamics through the lens of Bible translation, expounding how language and imagery of Bible translations are shaped by their linguistic, religious, and cultural contexts, while also highlighting the impact of Bible translations on issues as diverse as the standardization of languages and the rise of African nationalist movements. Anna Johnston (2003) has taken missionary writings as a lens into the entanglements of the missionary movement and the colonial project. Drawing on insights from postcolonial studies, Johnston examines LMS missionary writings as sites of mutual imbrication and discloses the role of missionaries in the complex interplay between colony and metropolis. She argues that missionary representations of gender, domesticity, and sexuality changed both missionaries and the societies they came from, thus influencing British ideologies on race, class, and gender (Johnston 2003: 3). Similarly, Patrick Harries and Marcus Tomalin have pointed to entanglements of the 19th century missionary with the development of science, such as entomology and botany (Harries 2012), and linguistics (Tomalin 2011) while studies on Pentecostalism have disclosed Pentecostalism's entanglements with capitalism and modernity

and pointed to its impact on entrepreneurship, family life, and gender relations (Martin 2002; Soothill 2007). Each of these studies underscores Christianity's manifold and complex entanglements with social, economic, political, cultural and political issues and invites further investigation of new fields and deeper levels of imbrication and interconnectedness.

As Wesley Ariarajah argues elsewhere in this volume, correlations and entanglements of Christian- and other faith traditions merit explicit attention in a World Christianity approach. Local Christian manifestations and expressions are enmeshed with other faith traditions. The opening paragraph of this chapter referenced Daoist and Buddhist imagery on the Nestorian Stele. Contemporary belief in reincarnation or the practice of yoga and Zen meditation among Christians in the United States could also serve as illustrations of such entanglements (Gunther Brown 2013). Similarly, other faith traditions have also been transformed in the encounter with Christianity and Christian agents, as is evidenced by the development of Sufism as a result of interaction with, amongst others, Christian and Buddhist monastic traditions, by the Hindu renaissance in India as a result of the 19th century missionary encounter (Oddie 1999; Mallampalli 2003) or by Buddhism becoming a much more text-based tradition through a codification of an 'Ur-text' and standardization of key texts due to its encounter with Christianity (Woodberry 2012: 262). Some ten years ago, Welmoet Boender convincingly demonstrated that imams in Western Europe have begun to take on pastoral roles traditionally associated with Christian ministers (Boender 2007). These illustrations exemplify the multiple and multifaceted correlations across religious traditions in past and present, demonstrating that religious manifestations, beliefs, and practices continuously transform in mutual interaction; they also underscore how problematic conceptualizations of religious traditions as distinct entities are.

Recognizing and appreciating these entanglements, Wesley Ariarajah in this volume calls upon theologians to move beyond tacit observation and acknowledgment of such religious entanglements, challenging them to face the far-reaching implications for Christian theology/ies and Christian exclusivist claims this entails, while Raimundo Barreto makes a case for studying the history of Christianity as part of a wider history of religion project, thus making clear that also academic research contributes to the constant (re)negotiation of Christian beliefs and practices.[17]

17 For a similar theological exercise see Phan 2017: 130–134.

5 Concluding Remarks

In this contribution I have endeavored to demonstrate that ambiguities, equivocality, and conceptual pitfalls continue to afflict current conceptualizations of World Christianity. As response to this I have proposed to use the term World Christianity for a particular approach to studying Christianity in past and present. Recognizing Christianity's inherently plural character, I have described a World Christianity approach as entailing an interdisciplinary, conscious and consistent endeavour to study particular Christian communities, beliefs, or practices in the light of and in relation to Christianity's wider (hi)story, aware that Christianity's manifestations always shape and are shaped by broader political, socio-economic, cultural, and religious developments, mindful of its multiple agents, 'centers', and trajectories as well as of its integrative dynamics and translocal connectivities, and cognizant of the diversity of beliefs and practices this has produced across time and space. In this contribution I have described the (initial) contours of such an approach by highlighting four features: a critical inquiry into trajectories of knowledge production and construction, the recognition and scientific implementation of Christianity as a plural, cumulative tradition with multiple 'centers' in past and present, the study of Christianity's integrative dynamics and translocal connectivities, and the exploration of Christianity's multifaceted entanglements in past and present with social, economic, cultural, political orders and realities as well as with other faith traditions.

Bibliography

Akinade, Akintunde E. (2010). 'Introduction. The Grandeur of Faith. Exploring World Christianity's Multiple Trajectories.' In Akintunde E. Akinade, ed. *A New Day. Essays on World Christianity in Honor of Lamin Sanneh*. New York: Peter Lang: 1–13.

Asante, Emmanuel (2007). *Culture, Politics and Development. Ethical and Theological Reflections on the Ghana Experience*, s.l., Ghana: Combert Impressions.

Armour, Rollin (2004). *Islam, Christianity, and the West. A Troubled History*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books.

Bargár, Pavol (2016). 'Nigerian-Initiated Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches in the Czech Republic. Active Missionary Force or a Cultural Ghetto.' In Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy, eds. *Religion, Migration, and Identity. Methodological and Theological Explorations*. Leiden: Brill: 79–96.

Barrett, David B., George T. Kurian and Todd M. Johnson (2001). *World Christian Encyclopedia. A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (2nd edition).

Bediako, Kwame (2011). 'The Emergence of World Christianity and the Remaking of Theology.' In William R. Burrows, William R., Mark R. Gornik and Janice A. McLean, eds. *Understanding World Christianity. The Vision and Work of Andrew F. Walls*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books: 242–255.

Boender, Welmoet (2007). *Imam in Nederland. Opvattingen over Zijn Religieuze Rol in de Samenleving*. Amsterdam: Bakker.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1986). 'The Forms of Capital.' In John G. Richardson ed. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood: 241–258.

Braude, Benjamin and Bernard Lewis, eds. (1982). *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society*. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers.

Brock, Peggy (2011). *The Many Voyages of Arthur Wellington Clah, a Tsimshian Man and the Pacific Northwest Coast*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Burrows, William R., Mark R. Gornik and Janice A. McLean, eds. (2011). *Understanding World Christianity. The Vision and Work of Andrew F. Walls*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Cabrita, Joel and David Maxwell (2017). 'Introduction. Relocating World Christianity.' In Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood, eds. *Relocating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*. Leiden: Brill: 1–44.

Chitando, Ezra (2010). 'Review of F. Becker and P.W. Geissler, eds. *Aids and Religious Practice in Africa*.' *Exchange* 39,2: 289–290.

Clarke, Sathianathan (2014). 'World Christianity and Postcolonial Mission. A Path Forward for the 21st Century'. *Theology Today* 71,2: 192–206.

Coakley, John W. and Andrea Sterk (2006). *Readings in World Christian History*. Vol. 1 Earliest Christianity to 1453. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books.

Cooper, Derrek (2016). *Introduction to World Christian History*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

Cox, Harvey G. (1988). *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff. The Vatican and the Future of World Christianity*. Oak Park, IL: Meyer-Stone.

Crone, Patricia (2017). 'Islam, Judeo-Christianity and Byzantine Iconoclasm.' In Michael Bonner, ed. *Arab-Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times*. New York: Routledge: 361–397.

Danielson, Robert A., ed. (2017). *Teaching Mission in an Age of World Christianity*. Wilmore KY: First Fruits Press.

Daughrity, Dyron B. (2013). 'Ignoring the East. Correcting a Serious Flaw in World Christianity Scholarship.' In Afe Adogame and Shobana Shankar, eds. *Religion on the Move! New Dynamics of Christian Expansion in a Globalizing World*. Leiden: Brill: 41–59.

Daughrity, Dyron B. and Jesudas M. Athyal (2016). *Understanding World Christianity. India*. Minneapolis MN: Augsburg Fortress.

Davies, Noel and Martin Conway (2008). *World Christianity in the 20th Century*. London: SCM Press.

Davies, Noel and Martin Conway, eds (2008). *World Christianity in the 20th Century. A Reader*. London: SCM Press.

Dennison, Stephanie and Song Hwee Lim (2006). 'Situating World Cinema as a Theoretical Problem.' In Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lee, eds. *Remapping World Cinema. Identity, Culture and Politics in Film*. London: Wallflower Press: 1–15.

D'haen, Theo, César Domíngez and Mads Rosendahl Thomson (2013). 'Introduction.' In Theo D'haen, César Domíngez and Mads Rosendahl, eds. *World Literature. A Reader*. London: Routledge: X–XII.

Dickson, Kwamina B. (1969). *A Historical Geography of Ghana*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Dussel, Enrique (1967). *Hipóteses para una História de la Iglesia en América Latina*. Barcelona: Estela.

Escobar, Samuel (2013). *A Time for Mission. A Challenge for Global Christianity*. Carlisle: Langham Global Library.

Farhadian, Charles F., ed. (2012). *Introduction to World Christianity*. Malden MA: Wiley and Blackwell.

Frederiks, Martha T. (2016). 'Enforced Migration. An Indian Ocean Narrative.' In David Thomas *et al.* eds. *Christian Muslim Relations. A Bibliographic History*. Vol. 11 South and East Asia, Africa and the Americas (17th century). Leiden: Brill: 29–49.

Frederiks, Martha and Dorottya Nagy (2016). *Religion, Migration, and Identity. Methodological and Theological Explorations*. Leiden: Brill.

Frederiks, Martha T. (2019). '"Microcosm" of the Global South. The Discursive Functionality of Migrant Christianity in World Christianity Discourses.' *Exchange* 48, 4: 313–333.

Freston, Paul (2010). 'Reverse Mission. A Discourse in Search of Reality.' *Pentecostudies* 9, 2: 153–174.

Friedli, Richard, ed. (2010). *Intercultural Perspectives and Prospects of World Christianity*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag.

Gallagher, Robert L. and Paul Hertog, eds (2009). *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books.

García-Arenal, Mercedes (1992). 'Moriscos and Indians. A Comparative Approach.' In: Geert Jan van Gelder and Ed de Moor, eds. *The Middle East and Europe. Encounters and Exchanges*. Amsterdam: Rodopi: 39–55.

Gibba, Bakary (2011). *The West Indian Mission to West Africa. The Rio Pongas Mission, 1850–1963*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto.

González, Justo L. (2002). *The Changing Shape of Church History*. St. Louis, MO: The Chalice Press.

Gottfried, Heidi (1996). 'Engaging Women's Communities. Dilemma's and Contradictions in Feminist Research.' In Heidi Gottfried, ed. *Feminism and Social Change. Bridging Theory and Praxis*. Champaign IL: University of Illinois Press: 1–22.

Green, Abigail and Vincent Viaene (2012). 'Introduction. Rethinking Religion and Globalization.' In Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene, eds. *Religious Internationals in the Modern World. Globalization and Faith Communities since 1750*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan: 1–18.

Grimshaw, Patricia and Andrew May, eds (2010). *Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Exchange*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press.

Gunther Brown, Candy (2013). *The Healing Gods. Complementary and Alternative Medicine in Christian America*. Oxford: Oxford University.

Hanciles, Jehu J. (2014). 'The Black Atlantic and the Shaping of African Christianity, 1820–1920.' In Klaus Koschorke and Adrian Hermann, eds. *Polycentric Structures of in the History of World Christianity*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz: 29–50.

Harries, Patrick (2012). 'Natural Science and *Naturvölker*. Missionary Entomology and Biology.' In Patrick Harries and David Maxwell, eds. *The Spiritual in the Secular. Missionaries and Knowledge about Africa*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing: 30–71.

Haug, Walter (1997). *Vernacular Literary Theory in the Middle Ages. The German Tradition, 800–1300, in its European Context*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hermann, Adrian and Ciprian Burlacioiu (2016). 'Introduction. Klaus Koschorke and the "Munich School" Perspective on the History of World Christianity.' *The Journal of World Christianity* 6,1: 4–27.

Hermann, Adrian, Klaus Koschorke, Ciprian Burlacioiu, and E. Phuti Mogase (2016). *Discourses of Indigenous Christian Elites in Colonial Societies in Asia and Africa around 1900. A Documentary Sourcebook from Selected Journals*. Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden.

Hermann, Adrian (2014). 'The Early Periodicals of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (1903–1904) and the Emergence of a Transregional and Transcontinental Indigenous-Christian Public Sphere.' *Philippine Studies. Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 62,3–4, 549–565.

Heywood, Linda and John K. Thornton (2007). *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hillenbrand, Robert (1994). '"The Ornament of the World". Medieval Córdoba as Cultural Center.' In Salma K. Jayyusi and Manuela Marín, eds. *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*. Leiden: Brill: 112–135.

Hock, Klaus (2014). 'Transkulturelle Perspektiven und das Programm einer Polyzentrischen Christentumsgeschichte.' In Klaus Koschorke and Adrian Hermann, eds. *Polycentric Structures of in the History of World Christianity*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz: 399–408.

Horne, Charles F., ed. (1917). *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*. Vol. XII Medieval China, New York: Parke, Austin and Lipscomb.

Hunwick, John (2002). 'The Same but Different. Africans in Slavery in the Mediterranean Muslim World.' In John Hunwick and Eve M. Troutt Powell, eds. *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam*. Princeton NY: Markus Wiener Publishers: IX–XXIV.

Irvin, Dale T. (2008). 'World Christianity. An Introduction.' *The Journal of World Christianity* 1,1: 1–26.

Irvin, Dale T. (2016). 'What is World Christianity?' In Jonathan Y. Tan and Ahn Q. Tran, eds. *World Christianity. Perspectives and Insights. Essays in Honor of Peter C. Phan*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books: 3–27.

Irvin, Dale T. (2017). *The Protestant Reformation and World Christianity. Global Perspectives*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Irvin, Dale T. and Scott W. Sunquist (2001). *History of the World Christian Movement*. Vol. 1: Earliest Christianity to 1453. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Irvin, Dale and Scott W. Sunquist (2012). *History of the World Christian Movement*. Vol. 2: Modern Christianity from 1454–1800. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Janson, Marloes and Birgit Meyer (2016). 'Introduction. Towards a Framework for the Study of Christian-Muslim Encounters in Africa.' *Africa* 86,4: 615–619.

Jenkins, Philip (2008). *The Lost History of Christianity. The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa and Asia—And How It Died*. New York: HarperCollins.

Ji, Jingyi (2007). *Encounters between Chinese Culture and Christianity. A Hermeneutical Perspective*. Berlin: LIT Verlag.

Johnson, Todd M. and Kenneth Ross (2009). *The Atlas of Global Christianity. 1910–2010*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Johnston, Anna (2003). *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800–1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jones, Arun W. (2014). 'Scholarly Transgressions. (Re)writing the History of World Christianity.' *Theology Today* 71,2: 221–232.

Kang, Namsoon (2010). 'Whose/Which World in World Christianity. Towards World Christianity as Christianity of Worldly-Responsibility.' In Akintunde E. Akinade, ed. *A New Day. Essays on World Christianity in Honor of Lamin Sanneh*, New York: Peter Lang: 31–48.

Kim, Kirsteen and Sebastian Kim (2008), *Christianity as a World Religion. An Introduction*. London: Bloomsbury Academic [2nd revised edition in 2016]

Kollman, Paul (2014). 'Understanding the World-Christian Turn in the History of Christianity and Theology.' *Theology Today* 71,2: 164–177.

Koren, Henry J. (1994). *Spiritan East Africa Memorial, 1863–1993*. Bethel Park PA: Spiritus Press.

Koschorke, Klaus (2011). 'Changing Maps of the History of Global Christianity.' In Katharina Kurter and Jens Holger Schjørring, eds. *Europäisches und Globales Christentum. Herausforderungen und Transformationen im 20. Jahrhundert*. Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht: 273–293.

Koschorke, Klaus (2014a). 'New Maps of the History of World Christianity. Current Challenges and Future Perspectives.' *Theology Today* 71,2: 178–191.

Klaus Koschorke and Adrian Hermann, eds. (2014b) *Polycentric Structures in the History of World Christianity/Polyzentrische Strukturen in der Geschichte des Weltchristentums*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Koschorke, Klaus (2016). 'Transcontinental Links, Enlarged Maps, and Polycentric Structures in the History of World Christianity.' *The Journal of World Christianity* 6,1: 28–56.

Kwok, Pui-lan (2005). Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology. Louisville: Westminister John Knox Press.

Lehmann, Harmut (2014). 'Polyzentrische Strukturen in der Geschichte des Weltchristentums als Forschungsprogramm.' In Klaus Koschorke & Adrian Hermann, eds. *Polycentric Structures in the History of World Christianity*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag: 377–379.

Lienemann, Wolfgang (2014). 'Die Christenheit in der Weltgesellschaft. Kommentar und Fragen zu einem Forschungsprogramm.' In Klaus Koschorke & Adrian Hermann, eds. *Polycentric Structures in the History of World Christianity*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag: 385–393.

Lowney, Chris (2005). *A Vanished World. Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mallampalli, Chandra (2017). 'The Orientalist Framework of Christian Conversion in India. Three Venues of "Inducement" from Colonial Times to the Present.' In: Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood, eds. *Relocating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*. Leiden: Brill: 162–186.

Mallampalli, Chandra (2003). 'British Missions and the Rise of Indian Nationalism 1880–1908. In Andrew N. Porter, ed. *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880–1914*'. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishers: 151–181.

Maluleke, Tinyiku S. (2000). 'The Quest for Muted Black Voices in History. Some Pertinent Issues in (South) African Mission Historiography.' *Missionalia* 28.1: 41–61.

Maluleke, Tinyiku S. (2016), 'Christian Mission in a World under the Grip of an Unholy Trinity. Inequality, Poverty and Unemployment.' In Mari-Anna Auvinen Pöntinen and Jonas A. Jørgensen, eds. *Mission and Money. Christian Mission in the Context of Global Inequalities*. Leiden: Brill: 63–84.

Maretu (1983). *Cannibals and Converts. Radical Change in the Cook Islands*. Transl. and edited by Marjorie Tuainekore Crocombe. Suva: University of South Pacific.

Martin, David (2002). *Pentecostalism. The World Their Parish*. Oxford. Blackwell.
Maxwell, David (2017). 'Historical Perspectives on Christianity Worldwide. Connections, Comparisons and Consciousness.' In Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood, eds. *Relocating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*. Leiden: Brill: 47–69.
Midgley, Clare (2000). 'Female Emancipation in an Imperial Frame. English Women and the Campaign against *Sati* (Widow-Burning) in India, 1813–30.' *Women's History Review* 9,1: 95–121.
Mingana, Alphonse (2009). *The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch before the Caliph Mahdi*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.
Murphy, G. Ronald (1995). *The Saxon Saviour. The Germanic Transformation of the Gospel in the Ninth-Century Heliand*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Nagib, Lúcia (2013). 'Towards a Positive Definition of World Cinema.' In Theo D'haen, César Domíngez and Mads Rosendahl, eds. *World Literature. A Reader*. London: Routledge: 30–37.
Nagy, Dorottya (2009). *Migration and Theology. The Case of Chinese Christian Communities in Hungary and Romania in the Globalisation Context*. Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum.
Nagy, Dorottya (2010). 'Where is China in World Christianity?' *Diversities* 12,1: 70–83.
Nagy, Dorottya (2017). 'World Christianity as a Theological Approach. A Reflection from Central and Eastern Europe.' In Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood, eds. *Relocating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*. Leiden: Brill: 143–161.
Ngong, David T. (2020). 'Domination and Resistance. Lamin Sanneh, Eboussi Boulaga, and the Reinterpretation of Christianity in Africa.' *Exchange* 49,2: 93–109.
Oddie, Geoffrey A. (1999). *Missionaries, Rebellion and Proto-Nationalism. James Long of Bengal 1814–87*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon.
Ogbonnaya, Joseph (2017). *African Perspectives on Culture and World Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Paltridge, Brian, Sue Starfield and Christine M. Tardy (2016). *Ethnographic Perspectives on Academic Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Phan, Peter C. (2008). 'World Christianity and Christian Mission. Are They Compatible? Insights from the Asian Churches. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32,4: 193–200.
Phan, Peter C. (2012), 'World Christianity. Its Implications for History, Religious Studies and Theology.' *Horizons* 39,2: 171–188.
Phan, Peter C. (2017). 'Doing Theology in World Christianities. Old Tasks, New Ways.' In Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood, eds. *Relocating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*. Leiden: Brill: 115–142.

Phiri, Isabel A., Devarakshanam B. Govinden and Sarojini Nadar, (2002). *Her-Stories. Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.

Riche, Pierre (1993). *The Carolingians. A Family who Forged Europe*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Robbins, Joel and Matthew Engelke (2010). 'Introduction. Global Christianity, Global Critique.' *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109,4: 623–631.

Robbins, Joel (2014). 'The Anthropology of Christianity. Unity, Diversity, New Directions.' *Current Anthropology* 55,10: 157–171.

Robbins, Joel (2017). 'Anthropological Perspectives on World Christianity.' In Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood, eds. *Relocating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*. Leiden: Brill: 238–257.

Robert, Dana L. (2011). 'Historiographic Foundations from Latourette and Van Dusen to Andrew F. Walls.' In William R. Burrows, Mark R. Gornik and Janice A. McLean, eds. *Understanding World Christianity. The Vision and Work of Andrew F. Walls*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books: 141–154.

Sanneh, Lamin (1989). *Translating the Message. The Missionary Impact on Culture*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books.

Sanneh, Lamin (2003). *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Sanneh, Lamin (2008). *Disciples of All Nations. Pillars of World Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sanneh, Lamin and Michael McClymond, eds (2016). *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to World Christianity*. Madden MA: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.

Schillebeeckx, Edward (1985). 'Foreword.' In Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books: ix–x.

Schreiter, Robert J. (1991). 'Ethnicity and Nationality as Contexts for Religious Experience.' In Peter C. Phan, *Ethnicity, Nationality and Religious Experience*. Lanham: University of America Press: 9–28.

Segal, Ronald (2002). *Islam's Black Slaves. The Other Diaspora*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Shenk, Wilbert R. (2002). *Enlarging the Story. Perspectives on Writing World Christian History*. Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Smith, William Cantwell (1964). *The Meaning and End of Religion*. New York: Mentor Books.

Soga, Tiyo (1983). *The Journal and Selected Writings of the Reverend Tiyo Soga*. Edited by Donovan Williams. Cape Town: Balkema.

Soothill, Jane (2007). *Gender, Social Change and Spiritual Power. Charismatic Christianity in Ghana*. Leiden: Brill.

Sypeck, Jeff (2006). *Becoming Charlemagne. Europe, Baghdad, and the Empires of A.D. 800*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Tan, Jonathan Y. and Ahn Q. Tran, eds (2016). *World Christianity. Perspectives and Insights. Essays in Honor of Peter C. Phan*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books.

Tennent, Timothy C. (2007). *Theology in the Context of World Christianity. How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think About and Discuss Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Thomas, Norman E. (1995), *Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books.

Tiénou, Tite (1993). 'Forming Indigenous Theologies.' In James M. Phillips and Robert T. Coote, eds. *Towards the 21st Century in Christian Mission.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing: 245–252.

Thangaraj, M. Thomas (2011). 'An Overview. Asian and Oceanic Christianity in the Age of World Christianity.' In Heup Young Kim, Fumitaka Matsuoka and Anri Marimoto, eds. *Asian and Oceanic Christianities in Conversation. Exploring Theological Identities at Home and in Diaspora*, Amsterdam: Rodopi: 11–21.

Tomalin, Marcus (2011). *"And He Knew Our Language". Missionary Linguistics on the Pacific Northwest Coast*, John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Tomkins, Stephen (2005). *A Short History of Christianity*. Oxford: Lion Hudsons.

Walls, Andrew F. (1982). 'The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture.' *Faith and Thought* 1 & 2: 39–52 [republished in Andrew F. Walls (1996). *The Missionary Movement in Christian History. Studies in the Transmission of Faith*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark: 3–15].

Walls, Andrew F. (1990). 'The Translation Principle in Christian History.' In Philip C. Stine, ed. *Bible Translation and the Spread of the Church*. Leiden: Brill: 24–39.

Walls, Andrew F. (2000). 'Eusebius Tries Again. Reconceiving the Study of Christian History', *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 24,3: 105–111.

Ward, Kevin and Brian Stanley, eds (2000). *The Church Missionary Society and World Christianity. 1799–1999*. Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing.

Woodberry, Robert D. (2012). 'World Christianity. Its History, Spread, and Social Influence.' In Charles Farhadian, ed. *Introducing World Christianity*. Malden MA, Wiley and Blackwell: 259–271.

CHAPTER 2

Recalling the Term 'World Christianity': Excursions into Worldings of Literature, Philosophy, and History

Dorottya Nagy

1 Introduction

'Recalling' can be both an act of remembering and of taking back something that is known and used by a broader public, such as the term 'World Christianity', which has been understood in different ways and used for different purposes by an English-speaking and reading public for the last hundred years at least.[1] It has meant different things for different people in different times, and it continues to create even more new functions when transposed from English into other languages.[2] In fact, the jury is still out on the necessity of 'World Christianity' being transposed into different languages, especially ones that facilitate communication within the academia, and whether the English term is synonymous with the German term *Weltchristentum*, the French term *Christianisme mondial*, or the Portuguese term *Cristianismo mundial*.[3] 'World Christianity', in spite of its broad contextual usage, which resulted in the establishment of institutes and chairs at universities, and increased the sales of publishing houses, keeps raising the question, "What do you mean by it?" Even scholars such as Dale Irvin, who were at the cradle of the most recent

1 I thank all my excellent teachers in the field of humanities (literature, philosophy, psychology, art, and history), who taught me that the world is always larger than we think, and in order to grasp something of the world, one must not imagine themselves and their locality to be the centre of the universe.

2 During a conversation about the term, I learned that a Korean theological institute translated 'World Christianity' as 'world church', a transposition of the term that goes against arguments that advocate for critically looking at the concept of church history as a useful concept for historiography (see Phan 2012).

3 Here the issue of transposers also needs to be given attention, and the extent to which a term is being translated or transposed. For example, how does the English- Portuguese book, *World Christianity as public religion = Cristianismo mundial como religião pública* (2016) edited by Raimundo Barreto *et al.* address the question of English and non-English conceptualisations of issues the term 'World Christianity' is being used to describe?

© DOROTTYA NAGY, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004444867_004
This is an open access chapter distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

attempts to reconceptualise the term, repeatedly asked themselves, "What is World Christianity?" (Irvin 2016).[4]

Similarly to 'globalisation', 'secularisation', 'cosmopolitanism', and other contemporary buzzwords created and adopted by scholars, 'World Christianity' as a concept/product needs to be regularly recalled, examined, and (re)defined to ensure continued and proper usage. Of course, it is in the nature of such buzzwords to assume different meanings, even when used in a specific context, which means that different understandings of the term may co-exist. Here 'recalling' implies a place where the term can be further refined, and the designation of an agent responsible for ensuring the continued applicability of the term. It is within such a place, within the context of an interdisciplinary academic workshop, that I as a theologian-missiologist seek to explore the functionality of the term 'World Christianity' for theological and missiological research.

This chapter is based on my discussion published in the volume *Relocating World Christianity* (2017), edited by Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell, and Emma Wild-Wood, in which I assumed a critical distance from arguments that define 'World Christianity' as a field of study, an emerging discipline, or a new phenomenon, and proposed to define it as an approach to the study of Christians and Christian communities worldwide through the categories of connectivity, diversity, unity, and locality. However, assuming such a critical distance does raise the question of why I am interested in the viability and functionality of the term as an approach. The simplest answer to this question is that as a theologian-missiologist interested and engaged in studying Christians and Christian communities worldwide, I seek to connect with scholars who share the same interest. Since much of that interest seems to manifest under the keyword 'World Christianity', I seek ways of contributing to discussions there. To put it differently, discourses captured under the term 'World Christianity' point to the issue of knowledge construction about Christians and Christian communities worldwide, and I wish to investigate the viability of the term for innovatively researching and teaching that which is behind the abstraction called 'Christianity'.

As usage of the term 'World Christianity' is linked to knowledge construction about Christians and Christian communities worldwide, I chose to place

4 On his blog, Thomas Thangaraj posed the question, "What in the world is World Christianity about?" and concluded that World Christianity "is the world-wide Christian community that stands with open arms to welcome anyone from any part of the world to its fellowship, and kneels with bended knee to take its humble yet rightful place among the religions of the world." Source: http://www.bu.edu/cgcm/annual-theme/what-in-the-world-is-world-christianity/, date of access: 13 June, 2018.

the concept in the category of methodological tools, rather than limit it to a field of study, a discipline, or a phenomenon. In light of this, the question I seek to answer by recalling the term 'World Christianity' for the purposes of the present discussion is this: to what extent may an analysis of 'worldings'[5] in academic research be useful in further developing 'World Christianity' as an approach for the interdisciplinary study of the complexities of Christians and Christian communities worldwide?

It seems that parallel to the emergence of World Christianity discourses in recent decades, discourses on world literature, world philosophy, and world history have emerged as well. In my previous paper mentioned above, I observed that a rebooting of the term 'World Christianity' went hand in hand with a rebooting of the study of Christianity by social scientists, such as the emergence of the anthropology of Christianity (Robbins 2014; Nagy 2017). Similarly to theological discourses on liberation, apartheid, or in the form of contextual theologies, World Christianity discourses often borrow concepts, theories, and methods from the social sciences, while paying hardly any attention to the humanities and their discourses on worlding.

With reference to the growing body of literature on 'worldings', I argue that in order to develop 'World Christianity' into a methodological approach, we need to look at broader intellectual discourses that emphasise the necessity of world-mindedness. Therefore, in this chapter, I shall first provide a general overview of the usage of 'world' as a modifier in broader intellectual discourses, and then I shall engage in dialogue with conceptualisations of world literature, world philosophy, and world history. I call these sections "excursions," since they only provide a glimpse of what an interdisciplinary engagement with the concept of worlding might have to offer for deepening methodological reflections about researching Christians and Christian communities worldwide through the lens of a World Christianity approach. Following these interdisciplinary excursions, I shall return to the four concepts I introduced earlier as possible keywords for a World Christianity approach, and discuss the ways in which they could be further articulated.

5 Intellectual discourses on worlding usually revolve around Heidegger's verb *welten* and his preoccupation with *Dasein*. For that reason, I am grateful to Vladimir Biti (2016) and Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan (2008) for helping me rediscover the term. Biti taught me to think of 'world' as a modifier that is always related to power structures, and from Radhakrishnan's reading of Ranajit Guha's interpretation of Rabindranath Tagore, I learned that worlding happens when the "I exist" and the "I know" come together: "The worlding of the world is simultaneously ontological and epistemological. It takes place in a time alien to historiography: a time that is neither stranded in immanence nor interpellated by any regime of transcendence" (Radhakrishnan 2008: 230).

2 Framing Worldings

Given the importance of the modifier 'world' in conceptualising 'World Christianity', I shall recall the modifier in order to investigate its functionality for studying Christians and Christian communities worldwide. As Dana Robert (already in 2000), Dale Irvin, Peter Phan, and Martha Frederiks (this volume) argue, 'World Christianity' has been present in many theological discourses throughout the twentieth century. Based on their arguments, I postulated that the articulated or less articulated usage of the term goes hand in hand with, and is inseparable from, an intellectual movement, which created the term 'world-mindedness' for the interpretation of socio-political and ideological changes and events that were perceived as world-changing events or processes. Having made this observation, I want to point out the threefold methodological challenge such an intellectual world-mindedness poses for research. Firstly, who determines, and from which segment of the academic endeavour, the ways in which old and existing sources will be reinterpreted and new sources will be identified or generated? Secondly, what happens to the authority of the researcher with regard to sources and their usage? Thirdly, what happens to the authority of the researcher within academic entrepreneurship, which commercialises knowledge (Nyeko and Sing 2015)?

'Alterity' and 'otherness' have become main themes in knowledge construction within the framework of world-mindedness, which addresses the above formulated challenges as conditioned by significant geo-political transformations and accelerated technological developments, which have transformed experiencing time and place, alterity, and otherness. Nevertheless, 'world-mindedness' also generated a set of binaries, which for the last thirty years has heavily influenced research on knowledge construction. Beyond certain old but still favoured binaries, such as the west and the rest, or west and non-west, we have seen the emergence of new binaries like the global south and the global north, or the global and the local. The latter has been pushed further into the neologism 'glocal' or 'glocalisation', also favoured in theological and missiological research (Schreiter 1997; Satyavrata 2004; Suh 2015). In light of the arguments above, the question of whose terminology and taxonomy will win remains to be seen, because worldings as intellectual exercises also imply complex relations of power between the agents involved in a given research.

Placed in a global context, the modifier 'world' assumes multiple meanings, referring not only to geo-political places, but also to a diversity of perceptions, experiences, and processes of cohabitation within shared localities and beyond. This is why I argue that when placed before 'Christianity', 'world' may refer to parallel worlds within a shared locality, or worlds that are constructed

and owned by people with different conceptual, ritual, and virtual domains, such as the digital world, the overlapping worlds of particular confessions or movements, or different social worlds (Nagy 2017). In this sense, 'world' relates to the concept of "milieu" as "a live space that conjoins the heterogeneous series of organism and environment through artifices that conduct their mutual eventualities. The milieu is thus not so much a given space, but a space composed through the conjunction of heterogeneous eventualities" (Altamirano 2014: 18).

Phan observes that throughout the theological discourses of the last hundred years, several shifts have occurred in the meaning of the term 'World Christianity'. Phan and Thomas Thangaraj concluded that earlier usages of the term promoted Christian missions and ecumenical unity, while in its present usage, "the expression refers to the historical, sociological, cultural and theological diversity and multiplicity of Christianity, from its very beginning, throughout its two-millennia history, and arguably more so in the future" (Phan 2012: 175). However, such a redefinition of the term seems to go against researchers who, in the name of 'World Christianity' and a certain sense of theological normativity, do pursue Christian missions and ecumenical unity (e.g. Chung 2010; Werner *et al.* 2010; Robert 2013), but also pose questions to Phan's assumption that "[one Christian] faith which is expressed and practiced in myriad ways and in different locations altogether constitutes what we called world Christianity" (Phan 2012: 175).

I argue that the modifier 'world' does not automatically stand for an all-inclusive body of Christianities worldwide; rather, we need to unpack the manifold meanings and conceptualisations of the modifier in order to test its applicability as a methodological tool for studying Christians and Christian communities worldwide. The notion of 'World Christianity' needs to be placed in broader intellectual discourses that emphasise world-mindedness by using the modifier 'world' in articulating modes of research such as world history, world philosophy, and world literature. The term also deserves attention in light of the emergence of terms that derive most of their meaning from the modifier 'world', such as 'world wars', 'world bank', 'world heritage', 'world fashion', or 'world community'. Booming research and publishing on 'World Christianity' coincides with recent trends of worlding in other fields of study. With regard to such interdisciplinary worldings, my aim is to show how arguments about conceptualisations of world literature, world philosophy, and world history could assist us in further developing 'World Christianity' as a methodological approach.

Similarly to attempts that conceive of 'World Christianity' as a field of study or a phenomenon, there has been a growing body of literature applying the

same approach to world literature, world philosophy, and world history. To mention but a few examples, titles such as *How to Read World Literature* (Damrosch 2017), *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy* (Garfield and Edelglass 2011), or *World History. An Introduction* (Vanhaute 2013) reference projects similar to those on World Christianity. Of course, they are right in claiming that the issue of power relations and inequalities is integral to addressing worlded literature, history, philosophy, or Christianity, because these worlded 'entities' usually do not circulate freely across socio-political (and academic) borders; however, they seem to frame inclusivity across all times and places, and operate either within a west versus the rest or Eurocentric framework, or a unbalanced focus on postcolonial discourses. For example, in the Introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy* (2011), William Edelglass and Jay L. Garfield explain the omission of "Western philosophy" from the handbook as follows: "We have taken it as obvious that most contemporary academic philosophers in the world are well acquainted with the European tradition, and so take 'world philosophy' to be like 'world music'—everything but European. There will, we hope, come a time when the European case is so unmarked that this would be an inexcusable omission" (2011: 6). This argument seems to contradict another observation they make in their introduction, namely that there is a widespread tendency to believe that one's culture, and the philosophical tradition emerging from it, might be unique and superior to others (2011: 3).

As indicated in the introduction, this chapter seeks to identify arguments that address the conceptual legitimacy of worlding certain notions. Therefore, I shall not discuss the conceptualisation of worldings as fields of study or disciplines, or the methods through which these are transformed into compendia; nor do I discuss globalisation and cultural turn theories and their effect on researching Christians and Christian communities. I fully agree with Emily Apter when she writes that "I have been left uneasy in the face of the entrepreneurial, bulimic drive to anthologise and curricularise the world's cultural resources as evinced in projects sponsored by some proponents of World Literature" (Apter 2013: 2), and I would add 'W[orld] Christianity' as well, but I humbly and respectfully admit that those efforts should not be so easily dismissed. For the purposes of this chapter, I chose another path in the form of three excursions, the first of which is into world literature.

3 World Literature

Similarly to unsettled discourses on the booming business of 'World Christianity', unsettled discourses on world literature and its marketisation

are also thriving (Alon 2016). I have already mentioned Phan's observation that 'World Christianity' in its current usage usually refers to an all-inclusive compendium of what has been identified, or has identified itself and identifies as Christian over the last two millennia. However, in all its inclusivity, this worlding of Christianity seems problematic, and its problematic nature can best be illustrated by looking at lessons learned from conceptualisations of world literature.

Similarly to investigations of the notion of 'World Christianity', several scholars have searched for a genealogy of the notion of world literature. While there is a more or less general consensus that discourses on present worldings of literature cannot avoid Johann Wolfgang Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur*, there is less consensus about the actual meaning of the Goethean concept, which leads to conflicting readings of Goethe, and hazy connotations when it comes to the concept of world literature. The widely quoted Goethean statement from 1827 about the emergence of an "epoch of world literature"[6] can be and has been read in different ways. For example, Jérôme David (2013) identified four competing genealogies (methodological, critical, pedagogical, and philological), which are related but not necessarily originating from the Goethean concept, and operating with distinct agendas. The methodological genealogy resonates with the idea of 'World Christianity' scholars who call for the inclusion of neglected, silenced, or forgotten components of an all-encompassing Christianity. Such a methodological genealogy "designates everything our interpretative habits do not incorporate" (David 2013: 23), and formulates the power relations and dynamics inherent to knowledge construction in terms of justice. The critical genealogy initiates discourses on 'national versus transnational', but does not necessarily dismiss that dichotomy. For example, for Goethe, engagement with the literature of 'foreign nations' could also imply the improvement of one's own Germanness. The critical genealogy also implies a judgmental attitude towards literature that does not qualify as such, and points to the issue of the commerciality of written/produced texts. Goethe seemed to be rather critical of cheap but well-selling literature, yet as David (2013) illustrates with an anecdote, it was precisely the cheap and widely

6 "We Germans are very likely to fall too easily into this pedantic conceit, when we do not look beyond the narrow circle that surrounds us. I therefore like to look about me in foreign nations, and advise everyone to do the same. National literature is now a rather unmeaning term; the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach" (Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke* ['All Works'], 12/224 f.).

circulating translations of two Chinese novels that led to Goethe's revelation on world literature.[7]

The genealogies described above bring to mind discourses on ranking theologies, such as the 'theologies from below versus theologies from above', or 'popular theology versus academic theology', and the translation and translatability of these terms. The latter leads to the third genealogy in David's work, the pedagogical genealogy, which may serve different ideologies to develop their educational system. Finally, the fourth or the philological genealogy is preoccupied with issues of meaning and language, and thus, translation and translatability. This genealogy comes closest to the question of sources and their usage in theological and missiological research, and programmatically culminates in the advocacy of going beyond the concept of 'nation' as the sole analytic unit for research. David's philological genealogy begins with Goethe, and discusses such established scholars as Erich Auerbach in order to demonstrate that philology is more than just texts from the past, since there is human agency behind 'creating' humanity (from a theological point of view, it is human agency and their interaction with God), which means that both texts and "forms of lives" (*Lebensformen*) in their verbal and non-verbal (material) demonstrations belong to it. Insights from the philological genealogy resonate with the principle of a World Christianity approach based on the understanding of a shared humanity. Scholars looking at the Goethean concept from different knowledge traditions thus arrive at similar observations.

In a paper about discourses on world literature, Shanghai-based scholar Wei Maoping (2012), who was responsible for the first complete translation of Goethe's work into Mandarin, argued that Goethe's coining of the term *Weltliteratur* is strongly connected with the worlded socio-political and economical terminology of Goethe's time, such as 'world trade' (*Welthandel*) and 'world economy' (*Weltwirtschaft*). In Goethe's time, those notions signified an increasing and accelerated way of connecting 'citizens' through trade and economy with different people across the world, yet this connectivity, similarly to contemporary assessments of globalisation processes, was not uncritically received. Wei argued that dictionary definitions of world literature, whether defining it in terms of quantity as literature across all times and places, or in terms of quality as canons of literature that qualify certain works as world

7 The texts the anecdote refers to were most probably two love stories (*Haoqiu zhuan* ['The Pleasing History'] and *Yu Jiao Li* ['Jade Charming Pear'], authorship unknown). Both stories are highly didactic, and as Ma (2012) observes, both establish a link between public and private virtue, an issue with considerable relevance for self-cultivation.

literature while excluding others, miss the original meaning of Goethe's concept, which was a programmatic idea aimed at transforming society, even global society, by practicing world literature as encountering the other who helps the self in becoming more and more human (Wei 2012). Such a reading combines the clearly separated genealogical agendas of David by underlining the normativity of conceptualisations of world literature. More than that, world literature in this sense is not only a normative activity, but also a tool for ethical and political transformation (Cheah 2008), which aims to realize a global community through the consciousness of our shared humanity.

The idea of a shared humanity brings us to the idea of cosmopolitanism or "all under heaven" (*tian xia*), which since Socrates (to take a Greek classic) or Zhou (to reference Chinese collective memory) has operated on the argument that self-cultivation or the improvement of the self is only achievable through encounters with people who think, act, and behave differently from us (here, again, the issue of alterity rears its head). Meanwhile, according to Pheng Cheah, cosmopolitanism is not one of "perceptual experience but of the imagination. World literature is an important aspect of cosmopolitanism because it is a type of world-making activity that enables us to imagine the world" (Cheah 2008: 26). Yet at this stage, we must note that when made into a world-making project, world literature needs to be critically revisited and tested so cosmopolitanism or the idea of "all under heaven" as "a moral universalism" does not degenerate into imperial globalism: "The continuous shift of cosmopolitan ideas towards empire is one of the dominant motifs of modernity" (Vladimir Biti quoting Costas Douzinas 2016: 155). From this, Biti draws the following conclusion:

> Maintenance of its democratic character, not its celebrated "dialogue of equals" but its neglected constitutive disagreement between agencies and enablers has to be consistently practiced. What this unflagging practice is intended to foreground is that world literature is not so much a generous project of reconciling the divided parties, as it is regularly presented to be, but rather a compensatory project designed to come to terms with the underlying trauma of division. While systematically healing one traumatic experience, however, it cannot but inflict others.
>
> Biti 2016: 163

It is precisely the reproduction of old and harmful patterns of practicing intercultural exchange based on the principle of translatability that Apter argues against in her *Against World Literature* (2013) when she says that we need to be aware of power relations when it comes to using language and translation for

mediating meaning, and to the ideologies that facilitate such mediation (such as the ideology of expansion).

In making a connection between World Christianity discourses and world literature discourses, the role of languages in stimulating and facilitating encounters among different agents remains crucial and relevant. Consider the case of the *Manifeste pour une "littérature-monde" en français* ['Manifesto for a "world literature" in French'], which was published in the newspaper *Le Monde* ['The World'] on 15 March in 2007,[8] and signed by forty-four writers who advocated for a shift in terminology, for replacing the term *francophone* with "literature composed in French," and against such binary categories as the centre and the margin, the coloniser and the colonised. Reflecting on this manifesto, Subha Xavier concluded that it is "an opportunity for scholars of French literature to think beyond colonial and postcolonial rubrics, to the realities of migration and globalization, cosmopolitanism and multilingualism" (Xavier 2010: 64). According to Adele Parker, "the unsettled power relationship between Eastern and Western Europe is at the heart of the Manifesto, and it signals an increasing resistance against Paris being the centre of literature and thus creating peripheries around itself" (Parker 2013: 193). Conceiving of world literature as an interpretative tool of global living together also considers the role of the global movement of people, their encounters with each other, and how these encounters change their imaginaries of the world. In her paper, Xavier looks at the *littérature migrante* as emerging in the last thirty years (Xavier 2016), but her arguments could be used for studying world-making texts from all ages.

My short excursion into discourses on conceptualising world literature reveals several methodological issues. For one, it makes clear that literature scholars (who critically address the worlding of literature) do not tend to speak of world literature as a discipline or phenomenon, and that Goethe's epoch of *Weltliteratur* is rarely understood in terms of phenomenology. Rather, scholars try to identify the methodological aspects of using the term in fostering academic discourses on practicing literature studies in worldwide connectivities, and they do so in a programmatic and normative way. The issue of normativity (with regard to cohabitation), the issue of communication addressing the usage of language and its translatability, and the power dynamics inherent in normativity and communication are some of those methodological aspects. In fact, neither normativity nor translatability can be addressed without introducing two more concepts: recognition and comparability, which both

8 The text is available at the following link: http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2007/03/15/des-ecrivains-plaident-pour-un-roman-en-francais-ouvert-sur-le-monde_883572_3260.html, date of access: 13 June, 2018.

indicate that all agents involved in worlding discourses (researchers and researched ones, to propose a new dichotomy) reveal different aspects of, and construct identities through, practices and interactions. I now turn to these concepts in my next excursion into the concept of world philosophy.

4 World Philosophy

In a paper on the concept of world philosophy, Singapore-based philosopher Saranindranath Tagore (2017) argued that the concept functioned as "the pivot on which comparative philosophy turns" (Tagore 2017: 531). It is this postulation, and the insights I had gained from different conceptualisations of world literature, that made me look deeper into his arguments. The issue of comparability is crucial for the matrix of interconnectivity, unity, diversity, and locality, which formed the basis of my previous discussions of World Christianity as an approach. In his arguments, Tagore enters into dialogue with sceptical approaches towards world philosophy: by using the examples of modernist Edmund Husserl and post-modernist Richard Rorty, he demonstrates the replication of the same exclusionist position. Whereas Husserl argued against the broadening of the Eurocentric way of doing philosophy based on the claim that any philosophical tradition that refuses to make *theoria* (implying no consideration of praxis) its key concept cannot be called philosophy, Rorty delegitimised comparison because "acts of comparison across philosophical cultures imposed one's favoured conceptual scheme to generate similarity which as a matter of fact is absent" (Tagore 2017: 533). From these examples, Tagore concludes that the Greek grand narrative of Husserl operates on the same logic of excluding alterity as Rorty's arguments on fragmentation. Similar sceptical discourses are observable within discourses on alterity and Christianity, which create the false impression of a contradiction between the one (grand narrative) and the many (stories, fragments), when in fact these apply the same patterns of excluding alterity.

In order to transcend the sceptical, and in Tagore's reading, violent and exclusionist positions of Husserl and Rorty, Tagore proposes a Kantian (another modernist) approach based on the *a priori* proposition of possibility for conditioning comparison and conceptualising world philosophy. Through Kant, Tagore arrives at Goethe's *Weltliteratur*, and postulates that recognition lies at the heart of Goethe's concept: in other words, the act of recognising a shared humanity while reading a translated Chinese text. For Tagore, the concept of recognition recalls the normative praxis of philosophy. He agrees with Charles Taylor's *Politics of Recognition* (1994) when he claims that the possibility of

comparison lies in recognising alterity, which leads to a world philosophy approach through which different socio-historically situated traditions can connect with each other, communicate, and exchange ideas: "The act of recognition alone can introduce 'world' to the understanding of a disciplinary tradition, literary or otherwise" (Tagore 2017: 538). The act of recognition in worlding proposes a corrective approach to any theological- missiological understanding of alterity that operates on a Christian versus non-Christian binary.

I take Tagore's arguments as components for constructing a world philosophy approach (although he does not use the term *approach*), which implies a "hermeneutically malleable condition open to acts of interpretation" (Tagore 2017: 540), through which comparability and non-comparability can be addressed and thematised. "Only this act of recognition can allow the force of the *world* to open up to isolated interiority of the fragment" (Tagore 2017: 540), where "interiority" implies the possibility of superiority. What Tagore does not emphasise is that recognition for both Goethe and Taylor is inseparable from the question of identity, or the question of agency. I shall illustrate this with the following example.

In 2005, on the initiative of Turkey (in reductionist terms, a personified and "non-Christian nation state"), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) introduced World Philosophy Day, to be celebrated on the third Thursday in November each year. The Resolution adopted by the General Conference in October 2005 states that "philosophy is a discipline that encourages critical and independent thought, and is capable of working towards a better understanding of the world and promoting tolerance and peace," and adds with conviction that "world philosophy day would win recognition for and give strong impetus to philosophy and, in particular, to the teaching of philosophy in the world" (UNESCO 2006: 15). This underscores the relevance of Goethean *Weltliteratur* as a world-making activity project, and comes close to Karl Jasper's *Weltphilosophie*, understood through different hermeneutical lenses (Saner 1988; Teoharova 2005; Murata-Soraci 2010; Hügli 2012), which implies an intentional intellectual praxis of peace-searching and peace-building by identifying a shared humanity and an encompassing communication. It also claims that the understanding of the discipline of philosophy offers a method of transforming the self, training others, and transforming societies (Hadot 1995: 107).

A UNESCO Strategy for Philosophy, which was written in 2005 by Senegal-born political scientist Pierre Sané, strategically invites all philosophers of the world to promote "dialogue and philosophical analysis of contemporary questions," to encourage "teaching of philosophy" for the sake of free and well-informed thought, and to promote and disseminate "philosophical

knowledge in order to make sure that philosophy is accessible to all" (UNESCO 2006: 4). This example illustrates that it is not enough to construct a genealogy of worlded notions, and thus confirm that they have repeatedly been rebooted; it is also important to look at by whom, how, and why such worldings have happened and continue to happen. Looking at the UNESCO examples through Tagore's arguments, recognition needs to be considered, because recognition has always been a question of identity spelled out in terms of representation and presentation, of the commensurability of philosophical traditions, and of the creation of a shared language through which communication can take place. However, such an epistemological stance on alterity is already a theological, philosophical, and ideological position that starts with (our) a belief in a shared humanity.

The UNESCO examples described above suggest that we (academics working with the concept of 'World Christianity') should revisit programmatic discourses on worlding Christianity. To my mind, worldings in literature and philosophy underscore the preoccupation of a 'World Christianity' approach with sources and agency. These excursions make clear that worldings imply a committed hermeneutics of written texts, and an exploration of being (the ultimate question of identity and relationality) as understood through lived experiences expressed verbally and non-verbally. As long as there is an outspoken desire for recognising philosophical (especially in terms of transcendental philosophy) and religious traditions (Phan 2012), while commensurability is considered (Cabrita, Maxwell and Wild-Wood 2017), and there is a commitment to developing new terminologies that address difference and similarity (Tan and Tran 2016), these need to be tackled in an ongoing conversation about recognition and identity through presentation and representation. With reference to these latter notions, I shall now start my third excursion into worlding history.

5 World History

During the last few decades, as has been the case with world literature and world philosophy, preoccupation with world history in academia has intensified as well, not only in publishing, but also in curriculum development, which treats world history as a subdiscipline. While the jury is still out on whether world history and global history mean the same thing, in this section I shall discuss scholars who use these terms interchangeably.[9]

9 Similar discussions on the distinct or interchangeable meaning of the modifiers 'global' and 'world' for Christianity have also emerged in World Christianity discourses; see the discussion

The emergence of world history as a discipline is dated to 1982, when the World History Association (WHA) was established to propagate "[a] shift in higher and secondary education away from a sole emphasis on national and regional histories toward broader cross-cultural, comparative, and global approaches."[10] The WHA may be a North American enterprise, but there are also worldwide collaborations of scholars practising world history, such as the team built around World History Sources:

> [The WHS lays] an emphasis on comparative issues rather than civilizations in isolation; a focus on contacts among different societies and the economic, social, and cultural consequences of those contacts; and an attentiveness to "global" forces that transcend individual societies or even societies in mutual contact—forces such as technology diffusion, migration, disease transmission, extension and realignments of trade routes, or missionary outreach. World History Sources also benefits tremendously from recent advances in our understanding of how historical learning takes place, building on strategies designed to improve historical learning and history teaching.[11]

The statement above brings to mind an UNESCO project, which was launched in the era of World War II with the aim of peace-making, as well as underlining the ideas of interconnectedness, interdependence, international unity, and modes of representation (Duedahl 2011). These arguments resemble the world-making normativity I discussed in the previous sections. While discourses on 'World Christianity' do not necessarily point to methodological developments in world/global history research, they do formulate strikingly similar arguments. Whether it is 'Transcontinental Links, Enlarged Maps, and Polycentric Structures in the History of World Christianity' (Koschorke 2016), *The Cross Cultural Process in Christian History* (Walls 2002), *Christian Histories, Christian Traditioning: Rendering Accounts* (Irvin 1998), "Twentieth-century World Christianity" (Stanley 2004), *Christian Mission. How Christianity Became a World Religion* (Robert 2009), *History of the World Christian Movement* (Irvin

between Philip Jenkins and Lamin Sanneh. In the preface of the revised edition of *The Next Christendom* (2007), Jenkins addressed his terminology in relation to Sanneh, who made a distinction between the two terms in his book, *Whose Religion is Christianity: The Gospel beyond the West* (2003). Sanneh replied to Jenkins in *Disciples of All Nations. Pillars of World Christianity* (2008). Their arguments about making a distinction between 'global' and 'world' Christianity seem to rely on a static understanding of Christian identities.

10 Source: https://www.thewha.org/about/, date of access: 13 June 2018.

11 Source: http://chnm.gmu.edu/worldhistorysources/whmabout.html, date of access: 13 June 2018.

and Sunquist 2001, 2012), or "World Christianities. Transcontinental connection" (Phan 2016), they seem to live up to the "urgency of the task:"

> [To expand] the "cartography" of church history, that is, to study the geographical areas hitherto neglected in traditional church history, is made urgent by the recent momentous demographic shift of the Christian population from the Global North to the Global South, with the projected presence of four-fifths of Christians living in Asia, Africa, and Latin America by 2050. [...] By enlarging the "topography" of traditional church history is meant first changing its methodological approach. Instead of centering the narrative on the achievements of hierarchical leaders (often male and white) and Western missionaries, attention should be turned to the contributions of the people who have been marginalized in church history such as lay men and women, religious sisters, the poor, the tribals, and those accused of heresy, schism and syncretism.
>
> Phan partly referencing Justo González 2012: 178

It is mainly in the new historiography described above that the four keywords I have chosen for developing World Christianity as an approach can be found: unity, diversity, connectivity, and locality. These keywords belong to a larger vocabulary through which connections and comparisons are explored "with sensitivity for the more flexible and fluid dimensions of historical change" (Conrad 2016: 64). Scholars who conceive of world/global history as an approach, such as Sebastian Conrad, emphasise that connectivity and its related vocabulary do not convincingly guarantee originality in research: "Connections need to be embedded in processes of structural transformation, and this on a global scale" (Conrad 2016: 64–65). This argument resonates with the findings of the previous two excursions, namely that worldings usually have an ideological basis.

When we attempt to develop a genealogy of the concept of 'world history' using Hegel's *Weltgeschichte*, which is a philosophy (even theology) of the history of the world, it becomes clear that it is a normative ideology based on determinism and providence, which sees world history as a staged history that moves towards the realisation of human freedom (Hodgson 2012).[12] Change (*Veränderung*), and the creation of new life (*neues Leben*) and reason (*Vernunft*) are the interpretative categories for the universal. But then, ideologies usually are controversial. For example, Ranajit Guha (2002) offers a postcolonial critical analysis of Hegel's concept of world history, and proposes conceptualising world history through methods that research narrativity. Building on Tagore's

12 For a critical analysis of Hegel's world history, see Guha (2016).

critique of historiography, he envisions world history as "a narrative concerned with the everyday world" (Guha 2002: 74). Addressing the historicity of everyday life not only implies making room for the pasts of the "peoples without history," but also addressing the history of everyday life itself (such as materiality). Only then, as Guha demonstrates through an examination of Tagore's critique of historiography, can we recapture a more fully human past of "experience and wonder."

The mirroring of arguments described above brings us back to Tagore's conclusion on paralleling Husserl and Rorty, who both raised questions about alterity, representation, and the possibility of recognition, despite coming from two different traditions. To what extent could a world/global history approach provide tools for creating the possibility of recognition? In order to answer this question, I turn once more to Conrad (2016), whose conceptualisation of 'worlding' within his own field shows similarities with what Frederiks and I do when we discuss 'World Christianity' either for religious studies or theology and missiology.

When elaborating on global history as an approach, Conrad not only prescribes a conscious search for processes of structural transformation, but he systematically describes seven methodological choices through which one can apply such an approach. The first methodological choice is that beyond providing a macro-perspective, a world history approach also pays attention to micro- and meso-perspectives, which clearly ties into the issue of representation, and brings to mind the methodological choices of the anthropology of Christianity (e.g. Hann 2014). The second choice is that a world history approach works with an open understanding of space; for example, it implies that nation states are not naturally prescribed research units. The third choice is that a world history approach is aware of relationality when it comes to historiography. The fourth choice, connected to the earlier choices, is that a world history approach operates through the logic of the 'spatial turn', implying that connections between localities through migration, traveling, and material objects are of greater interest than notions such as development and time lag. This is a clear rejection of any understanding of teleological history based on the normativity of one narrative (or any narrative for that matter). This brings us to the fifth choice, which is that a world history approach sees synchronicity as crucial for research, implying the rejection of operating through metaphors such as centres and peripheries. The sixth choice is the issue of the self-reflexivity of the researcher, mainly practiced in the form of a critique of Eurocentrism. Finally, the seventh methodological choice Conrad identifies is integration, which brings him back to the argument that prioritizing the study of connectivity for a world history approach is not enough,

because the significance of connections (or the lack of them) depends on the components of the given circumstances: "Exchange in other words, may be a surface phenomenon that gives evidence of the basic structural transformations that made the exchange possible in the first place. Effective global history needs to remain aware of the systemic dimension of the past, and of the structured character of social change" (Conrad 2016: 70). This argument resonates with the point Frederiks and I repeatedly make in this volume, namely that a World Christianity approach, similarly to a world history approach, needs to be aware of power structures, and in light of those power structures, it needs to address the issue of agency: "Failure to note power structures confers agency on everyone who is involved in exchange and interactions, and by celebrating mobility runs the danger of ignoring the structures that control it" (Conrad 2016: 71). In conclusion, for Conrad, a world history approach that tackles the issues of comparison and connections has to focus on "large forms of structured transformation and integration" (Conrad 2016: 72).

In any case, a world history approach as proposed by Conrad seems to be less preoccupied with the topography and cartography of the world ('World Christianity') and more preoccupied with going "beyond the dichotomy of internal and external altogether" (Conrad 2016: 89). It is about self-reflexivity, relationality (connectivity), and the acknowledgement that "causal relevance of factors that do not lie within the purview of individuals, nations, and civilisations" are relevant (Conrad 2016: 89).

6 Back to the Matrix of Locality, Unity, Diversity, and Connectivity

In the introduction of this chapter, I proposed three brief excursions into world literature, world philosophy, and world history respectively, with the aim of further developing a World Christianity approach for theological and missiological research, which I initially framed through the notions of locality, unity, diversity, and connectivity. These excursions opened up new vistas through which a World Christianity approach could be further developed.

In light of the arguments on worldings, and especially with Conrad's world history approach proposal freshly on our minds, I shall now return to the question of history in world Christianity discourses, and examine to what extent the above outlined methodological choices have relevance there. Conrad, in a way summarizing the arguments presented in worldings of literature and philosophy, shows that the unity, diversity, locality, and connectivity formula implies an inherent relationality, self-reflectivity, and the exploration of alternative spatialities (Conrad 2016: 90). In my opinion, 'World Christianity'

as an approach should be guided by questions such as to what extent 'World Christianity' scholars operate with an open concept of locality when it comes to research design; to what extent a practice of case studies method can help in researching relationality; how is synchronicity being researched within the framework of 'World Christianity', and above all, what is the relationship between theological standpoints and addressing power structures?

Based on the limited material discussed in this chapter, I make the following observations:

Neutrality in worldings is not an option. World literature, world philosophy, and world history work with scopes and set methodological agendas. The recognition of a shared humanity seems to be one of the starting points based on which worlding approaches operate. While acknowledging the legitimacy of researching Christians and Christian communities worldwide (a position I repeatedly articulate), researching them does not mean a limited and exclusive attention to Christians only (Wild-Wood 2017: 324). Studying the issues of unity, diversity, and locality is always about relations, the connections of Christians and Christian communities with larger social settings, and avoiding internalist paradigms. Such a research focus does not recreate the old Christian and non-Christian dichotomy, but looks at cohabitation or living together from the perspective of a shared humanity, and at boundaries set by complex power relations. For example, a 'World Christianity' approach should be critical of denominational labels, and seek to move beyond studying Christianity in the framework of the nation state and national institutions (i.e. churches). It is within our shared humanity that diversification and unity (among Christians, and beyond) become relevant issues and can be discussed. At the core of this non-neutral worlding and this 'World Christianity' approach, the following issues remain crucial: what/who is a Christian; who identifies and who is being identified as such; who and how are Christian communities; what are their beliefs, and what do they teach? The non-neutrality of worlding, then, is considered both at the level of data and modes of analysis (the complicated relationship between researcher and human agency involved in research). In other words, a World Christianity approach always keeps in mind the non-neutrality of the researcher.

Transformation is a shared agenda. All three excursions revealed that worldings as research approaches have public and political functions, and they call for a change in research practice in literature, philosophy, and history. Worlding Christianity for an approach could subscribe to this agenda, especially through an understanding of the theological praxis of loving God and loving one's fellow human beings, and with the public and political aspiration of contributing to peaceful cohabitation worldwide. The idea of transformation encompasses

every sector and corner of the planet, and reveals that it is not only theology that is preoccupied with peace-building and stewardship for the planet. Theology and missiology are also preoccupied with the idea of transformation, in the sense of a world-making activity that is always based on normativity. Yet, to put transformation on the agenda of a World Christianity approach means a balanced preoccupation with changing, changed, and unchangeable components of worldwide processes. Referring back to Conrad, one should not be led astray by voices that legitimise speaking about transformation through a narrow understanding of change as experienced through mobility, flow, and migration. A World Christianity approach is interested in transformation related to knowledge construction.

Research is recognition, representation, and revision. By discussing worldings in different disciplines, with the aim of further reflecting on what a World Christianity approach might mean for studying the complex entanglements of Christians and Christian communities worldwide, I aimed to highlight the multi-layered nature of such research. A new historiography as envisioned under the key term 'World Christianity' by the Munich School and other scholars—such as Andrew Walls, Brian Stanley, Emma Wild-Wood, and Dana Robert—, seeks to find sources and voices that are neglected, unheard, or marginalised by a Eurocentric construction of historiography. Yet recognition and representation also need to be addressed in relation to the person of the researcher, who is another active agent of knowledge construction. When dealing with the issue of alterity, and the tension between sameness and difference, the researcher needs to tackle the different levels and degrees of recognition and representation. Therefore, who recognises and represents the researcher is a legitimate methodological question. To put it differently, who is worlding what, and whose worldings are recognised and/or revised by whom? The issue of the researcher's autonomy is one of complex power relations through which academic institutions are created, and in those power relations, knowledge might become a commodity being produced and sold according to certain types of entrepreneurial academics. The hegemony of English as an academic medium in working with 'World Christianity' (in whatever forms), and the ways in which universities and research institutions/centres operate through English as a *lingua franca* also have serious consequences for recognising both the research and the researcher. On the one hand, we need a shared language in order to communicate; on the other hand, communicating in English as a second, third, or even fourth language might mean a limited way of expressing our insights and knowledge.

Communication and the commensurability of languages are not self-evident. When Phan (2012) describes the implication of 'World Christianity'

for religious studies, history, and theology, he indirectly addresses the issue of communication. Both the excursion on world literature and world philosophy illustrate that it is again the act of recognition from which any act of communication can begin. The aim is not simply the broadening of the theological vocabulary and conceptual toolbox under the motto 'including all Christians from all ages and places with their languages and messages'. A World Christianity approach is preoccupied with languages, translatability, and untranslatability for a theological and missiological praxis, which aims at peaceful cohabitation in the present, and looks at complex modes of cohabitation in the past. My excursions demonstrated that communication and connection are usually interpreted as occurring between distant parties, while a World Christianity approach proposes that we tackle the issue of communication on a smaller scale as well. The commensurability of languages is not necessarily a transnational issue: it needs to be considered within a neighbourhood, a town, or within a Christian community. The re-envisioning of systematic theology happened and continues to happen when theologians and missiologists study communication, and communicate with others, and not just those whose languages they happen to speak. Language and communication for a World Christianity approach should never be about the translatability of *the* Message, which presupposes one single Christian language that spoken languages must adapt to, but the other way around: it is about the communicability of faith confessed through relations based on recognition. A World Christianity approach takes as its starting point the polidoxy of Christians and Christian communities worldwide (Keller and Schneider 2011), looks at them through different scales (research units), and seeks to study their interconnectedness. Due to the different grammars and semantics of spoken languages, these endeavours must remain conscious of the technicalities of these languages.

7 In Lieu of a Conclusion: Further on the Path of Knowledge Construction

In the introduction of this chapter, I expressed my intention of elaborating on 'World Christianity' as an approach, paying close attention to the ways in which discourses on 'World Christianity' relate to the issue of knowledge construction. Knowledge construction is directly linked with understanding and undertaking research, and translating it into teaching/education. Focusing on the notion of 'worlding', I looked at how 'world' as a modifier has been used in the humanities. I presented the insights I had gained from worlding literature, philosophy, and history, and demonstrated that such worldings point to

a myriad of questions about basic relationalities (I/we/it and you/them), with the researcher also being a part of those relationalities. My excursions showed that tackling questions about alterity creates space for, and even requires us to acknowledge normativity, because normativity is already mirrored in the way researchers design their research. I discussed Conrad's call for going beyond internalist paradigms, which for theologians might imply moving beyond the limiting dichotomy of Christian and non-Christian that often stifles the creativity of research processes. The concept of normativity and its relevance for a World Christianity approach needs to be given more attention in future publications. I pointed out that much of the worlding in literature, philosophy, and history acknowledges a shared humanity (think of the concept of 'humanities' in this light), not only as the field, but also as the task of academic enterprise. Yet both from a philosophical and a theological perspective, we still need to find answers to the question, to what extent is a belief in a shared humanity the only basis for reflective and responsible academic work? In such worlding approaches, normativity, recognition, comparability, and communication become methodological steps of invention and creation.

In light of the arguments presented in this paper, I conclude that conceiving of 'World Christianity' as an approach starts with the recognition that knowledge construction is always purposeful action, meaning that it is both reflective and intentional. Looking at the multi-layered discourses on 'World Christianity', we could say that both reflexivity and intentionality have been addressed, yet they need to be systematically and methodologically deepened. For theologians and missiologists practicing World Christianity as an approach, there is still a long way to go. However, it is important to realize that we are not alone in this endeavour, because we have the resources and insights of the disciplinary other, who can accompany us on this journey.

Bibliography

Alon, Shir (2016). 'The Becoming-Literature of the World. Pheng Cheah's Case for World Literature.' https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/becoming-literature-world-pheng-cheahscase-world-literature/ accessed 12 January 2018.

Altamirano, Marco (2014). 'Three Concepts for Crossing the Nature-Artifice Divide. Technology, Milieu, and Machine.' *Foucault Studies* 17: 17–35.

Apter, Emily (2013). *Against World Literature. On the Politics of Untranslatability*. London/New York: Verso.

Barreto, Raimundo C., *et al.* (2017). *World Christianity as public religion = Cristianismo mundial como religião pública*. Vitória, ES: Editoria UNIDA.

Biti, Vladimir (2016). *Tracing Global Democracy. Literature, Theory, and the Politics of Trauma*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Cheah, Pheng (2008). 'What is a World? On World Literature as World-Making Activity.' *Daedalus* 137,3: 26–38.

Chung, Paul S. (2010). *Public Theology in an Age of World Christianity. God's Mission as Word-Event*. London: Palgrave.

Conrad, Sebastian (2016). *What is Global History?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Damrosch, David (2017). *How to Read World Literature*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell.

Danielson, Robert A. and Linda F. Whitmer, eds (2016). *Teaching Christian Mission in an Age of World Christianity*. The 2016 proceedings of The Association of Professors of Missions. St. Paul, Minnesota, June 16–17, 2016. Wilmore, KY: First Fruits Press.

David, Jérôme (2013). 'The Four Genealogies of "World Literature".' (transl. by Mary Claypool). In Joachim Küpper, ed., *Approaches to World Literature*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag: 13–26.

Duedahl, Poul (2011). 'Selling Mankind. UNESCO and the Invention of Global History, 1945–1976.' *Journal of World History* 22,1: 101–133.

Garfield, Jay L. and William Edelglass (2011). *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang (1986–1999). *Sämtliche Werke*. Edited by Friedmar Apel, Hendrik Birus *et al.* Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag.

Guha, Ranajit (2002). *History at the Limit of World-History*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gruber, Judith (2013). *Theologie nach dem Cultural Turn. Interkulturalität als Theologische Ressource*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Gruber, Judith (2018). *Intercultural Theology. Exploring World Christianity after the Cultural Turn*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Hadot, Pierre (1995). *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold Davidson and trans. Michael Chase. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hann, Chris. (2014). 'The Heart of the Matter. Christianity, Materiality, and Modernity.' *Current Anthropology* 55,10: 182–192.

Hodgson, Peter C. (2012). *Shapes of Freedom. Hegel's Philosophy of World History in Theological Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hügli, Anton (2012). 'World Philosophy. On Philosophers Making Peace.' In Helmut Wautischer, Alan M. Olson and Gregory J. Walters, eds. *Philosophical Faith and the Future of Humanity*. Dordrecht/London/New York: Springer: 335–345.

Irvin, Dale T. (1998). *Christian Histories, Christian Traditioning. Rendering Accounts*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Irvin, Dale T. (2016). 'What is World Christianity?' In Jonathan Y. Tan and Anh Q. Tran, eds. *World Christianity. Perspectives and Insights*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books: 3–26.

Irvin, Dale T. and Scott W. Sunquist (2001). *History of the World Christian Movement*. Vol. 1: Earliest Christianity to 1453. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

Irvin, Dale T. (2012). *History of the World Christian Movement*. Vol. 2: Modern Christianity from 1454–1800. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Jenkins, Philip (2007 revised edition). *The Next Christendom. The Coming of Global Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Keller, Catharine and Laurel C. Schneider (2011). *Polidoxy. Theology of Multiplicity in Relation*. New York: Routledge.

Koschorke, Klaus (2016). 'Transcontinental Links, Enlarged Maps, and Polycentric Structures in the History of World Christianity.' *The Journal of World Christianity* 6,1: 4–27.

Ma, Ning. (2012). '"A Strong Resemblance". Samuel Richardson, Chinese Talent-Beauty Novels, and the Secret Origins of the "World Literature".' In Rachana Sachdev and Qinjun Li, eds. *Encountering China. Early Modern European Responses*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press: 103–126.

Murata-Soraci, Kymyio (2010). 'Tracing Confucius in Jaspers' Weltphilosophie.' *Existenz* 5,1: 16–22.

Nagy, Dorottya (2017). 'World Christianity as a Theological Approach. A Reflection on Central and Eastern Europe.' In Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood, eds. *Relocating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*. Leiden: Brill: 143–161.

Nyeko, Kizito Emmanuel and Ngui Kwang Sing. (2015). 'Academic Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurial Academics. Are They the Same.' *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* 5,12: 1050–1055.

Ong, Walter (1969). 'World as View and World as Event.' *American Anthropologist* 71: 634–647.

Parker, Adele (2013). 'Writing as Mirror. Origins and Identities in the Work of Brina Svit.' In Adele Parker and Stephenie Young, eds. *Transnationalism and Resistance. Experience and Experiment in Women's Writing*. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi: 185–210.

Phan, Peter C. (2012). 'World Christianity. Its Implications for History, Religious Studies, and Theology'. *Horizons* 39,2: 171–188.

Phan, Peter C. (2016). 'World Christianities. Transcontinental Connections'. *The Journal of World Christianity* 6,1: 205–215.

Radhakrishnan, Rajagopalan (2008). *History, the Human, and the World Between*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Robbins, Joel (2014). 'The Anthropology of Christianity. Unity, Diversity, New Directions.' *Current Anthropology* 55: 157–71.

Robert, Dana L. (2000). 'Shifting Southward. Global Christianity since 1945.' *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24,2: 51–58.

Robert, Dana L. (2009). *Christian Mission. How Christianity Became a World Religion*. Chichester: Wiley and Blackwell.

Robert, Dana L. (2013). 'Witness and Unity in 21st Century World Christianity.' *Transformations* 30,4: 243–256.

Saner, Hans (1988). 'Jaspers' Idee einer kommenden Weltphilosophie.' In Leonard Ehrlich and Richard Wisser, eds. *Karl Jaspers Today. Philosophy at the Threshold of the Future*. Lanham: University Press of America: 75–92.

Sanneh, Lamin (2003). *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Sanneh, Lamin (2008). *Disciples of All Nations. Pillars of World Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Satyavrata, Ivan (2004). '"Glocalization" and Leadership Development for Transforming Mission in India.' *Transformations* 21, 4: 211–217.

Schreiter, Robert J. (1997). *The New Catholicity. Theology between the Global and the Local*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.

Stanley, Brian (2004). 'Twentieth Century World Christianity. A Perspective from the History of Missions.' In Donald M. Lewis, ed. *Christianity Reborn. The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans: 52–83.

Stearns, Peter N. (2004). 'World History. Western Civilization and World History. Conflicts and Complements.' *Historically Speaking. The Bulletin of the Historical Society* 5,4: 2–4.

Suh, Myung-Sahm (2015). 'Glocalization of "Christian Social Responsibility"'. The Contested Legacy of the Lausanne Movement among Neo-Evangelicals in South Korea.' *Religions* 6: 1391–1410.

Tagore, Saranindranath (2017). 'On the Concept of World Philosophy.' *Philosophy East and West* 67,2: 531–544.

Tan, Jonathan Y. and Anh Q. Tran, eds. (2016). *World Christianity. Perspectives and Insights*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Taylor, Charles (1994). 'The Politics of Recognition.' In Amy Gutmann, ed. *Multiculturalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press: 25–74.

Thangaraj, Thomas (2018). 'What in the World is World Christianity? http://www.bu.edu/cgcm/annual-theme/what-in-the-world-is-world-christianity/, date of access: 13 June, 2018.

Teoharova, Genoveva (2005). *Karl Jaspers' Philosophie auf dem Weg zur Weltphilosophie*. Würzburg: Köningshausen & Neumann.

UNESCO (2006). *Philosophy. Intersectoral Strategy on Philosophy*. Paris: UNESCO.

Ustorf, Werner (2010). *Robinson Crusoe Tries Again. Missiology and European Constructions of "Self" and "Other" in a Global World 1789–2010*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck& Ruprecht.

Vanhaute, Eric (2013). *World History. An Introduction*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Wei, Maoping (2012). 'Ein neuer Versuch zu Goethes "Weltliteratur"-Begriff.' *Literaturstraße* 13: 43–48.

Walls, Andrew (2002). *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Werner, Dietrich *et al.*, eds (2010). *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity. Theological Perspectives, Ecumenical Trends, Regional Surveys*. Oxford: Regnum.

Wild-Wood, Emma (2017). 'Relocating Unity and Theology in the Study of World Christianity.' In Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood, eds. *Relocating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*. Leiden: Brill: 324–342.

Xavier, Subha (2010). 'From *Weltliteratur* to *Litterature-Monde*. Lessons from Goethe for the Francophone World'. *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 14,1: 57–65.

Xavier, Subha (2016). *The Migrant Text. Making and Marketing a Global French Literature*. Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press.

CHAPTER 3

Decoloniality and Interculturality in World Christianity: A Latin American Perspective

Raimundo C. Barreto

1 World Christianity: A Demographic Movement and a Field of Study

'World Christianity' has become a buzz word in the past few decades, contrasting Eurocentric perspectives that portray Christianity as a 'Western' religion.[1] As a world religion, Christianity presents itself as border-crossing, finding a home equally within multiple cultures, and between them. World Christianity refers, then, to both a field of study and a movement.[2] As a field of study, it explores the 'worldwide' nature of Christianity, paying attention to both the distinctiveness of Christian experiences in different cultural contexts and the relationships among them. Since the beginning of the twentieth century scholars noticed that the presence of Christianity in all six continents granted it the *de facto* status of a world religion.[3] That global presence, however, should not be understood as a static phenomenon. In the past century, and more emphatically in the past fifty years, World Christianity experienced a drastic demographic shift, undergoing an astounding numeric growth in the global south, especially in Africa, in contrast with dwindling numbers and decreasing public influence in the North Atlantic, the cradle of modern Christianity (Sanneh 2005: 3–18).

Scholars such as Andrew Walls (2002) and Lamin Sanneh (2003), among others, noticed that this most recent drastic demographic shift was reshaping the manifestation of Christian faith in the contemporary world, noting that the "world-Christian turn" (Kollman 2014) had sweeping cultural implications.

1 This chapter is an expanded and modified version of the argument I recently made in an article written for the *Journal of World Christianity* (Barreto 2019b).

2 Although the term World Christianity is commonly used to refer to the demographic movement in the axis of Christianity to the global South (Cabrita and Maxwell 2017: 1), this chapter focuses particularly on its use to describe a new field of study and the analytical shifts it has advanced in the study of Christianity worldwide.

3 The work that best represents the effort to study Christianity from this comprehensive and ecumenical perspective is the seven-volume history of the expansion of Christianity by Kenneth S. Latourette (Latourette 1937–1945).

© RAIMUNDO C. BARRETO, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004444867_005
This is an open access chapter distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

As a consequence, the reassessment of hegemonic historiographies, and a call for the enlargement of the Christian story which would include previously omitted, overlooked, and silenced narratives and experiences, became an important trend in the field (Shenk 2002). This ongoing 'world Christian revolution' is reshaping the way the history of Christianity, Christian theology, and other Christian disciplines are studied.

The past few decades have seen a number of methodological innovations in the study of Christianity worldwide. Andrew Walls, one of the pioneers and shapers of the field, for instance, challenged the common assumption of Christian advance as a linear progress (Walls 2002: 30). His work promoted renewed interest in cross-cultural approaches to the study of Christian history and experience (Bediako 2011: 7–10). Among other things, Walls noticed that since its colonial days Africa began to experience an expansion of Christianity without Christendom; something that became even more evident in the course of the twentieth-century. Postcolonial African Christianity, in particular, is a movement predominantly led by Africans, without state support or colonial apparatuses. This is the prevailing pattern of Christian expansion in contemporary World Christianity.

The late Lamin Sanneh, another key representative of the first-generation World Christianity scholars, emphasized indigeneity, local agency, and Bible translation as key elements freeing World Christianity from Western captivity and domestication (Sanneh 2003: 10–11).[4] Sanneh's work recovered the centrality of African agency in Christian narratives, re-centering African culture, values, and traditions. Although Sanneh himself does not make such connection, it is worth noting that the positive reassessment of indigenous culture, and the efforts to overcome 500 years of Eurocentric framework seen in many non-Western World Christianity scholars, including Sanneh himself, can be tracked back to the same spirit that fuelled the struggles for independence and autonomy in Africa and Asia since World War I, and liberationist aspirations in Latin America and the Caribbean. Likewise, the boom of African Christianity, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, coincided with the African struggles for autonomy. One can say, therefore, that both the struggle for the decolonization of Africa and the de-Europeanization of African Christianity took place within the same broader postcolonial framework. Without emphasizing such connection, Sanneh (2003: 24) tacitly admits it when he affirms,

4 Sanneh (2003: 10–11) brought attention to the relocation of narratives. He understood his task as one of reversing the argument "by speaking of the indigenous discovery of Christianity rather than the Christian discovery of indigenous societies."

> Under Christendom the basis and rationale for transmitting the gospel were colonial annexation and subjugation, with the church as an afterthought. Native lands and labor were expropriated, commercial and administrative agents appointed and deployed, mission stations set up, and church life and practice regulated. That way "Europeandom" as the faith and politics of early modern Europe spread abroad and was legitimized by the sacraments of the church. But with the shift into native languages, the logic of religious conversion assumed an internal dynamic, with a sharp turn away from external direction and control. *Indigenizing the faith meant decolonizing Christian theology* (italics mine RCB), and membership of the fellowship implied spiritual home rule. World Christianity was thereby weaned of the political habits of Christendom, even though the mental habits died hard.

Sanneh, and other scholars in the field of World Christianity, represent what Justo González called the new cartography and new topography of Christian history (González 2002).[5] They advance a new Christian map, placing past and current continental and cultural shifts at the center stage of the retelling of the global Christian story. Changing the cartography and topography of Christianity entails, among other things, the replacement of hegemonic narratives with polycentric ones. The enlarged stories that emerge from the "world-Christian turn", while inclusive of modern Western Christianity and the missionary movement, have for the most part placed a corrective emphasis on often neglected indigenous perspectives and marginalized narratives.

Dale Irvin, on the other hand, is representative of a concerted attempt to find a good balance between World Christianity's worldwide concerns and the competing demands of local stories, narratives, experiences, and perspectives. Irvin defines World Christianity as a field of study that examines the history of Christianity in all six continents, stressing that it is primarily concerned "with both the diversity of local or indigenous expressions of Christian life and faith throughout the world, and the variety of ways these interact with one another critically and constructively across time and space" (Irvin 2016: 4).[6] While trying to reach a more comprehensive understanding of World Christianity, Irvin points out that priority must be placed "with under-represented and

5 Seeing history as a dialogue between the present and the past, González states that current changes in the map of the world or in its centers of power impact the way we see the past. Consequently, shifts in both the world and in Christianity nowadays impact the way we see the history of Christianity, and the maps of the past.

6 Irvin's influential essay first appeared in the *Journal of World Christianity* 1,1 (2008): 1–26.

marginalized communities of faith, resulting in a greater degree of attention being paid to Asian, African, and Latin American experiences; the experience of marginalized communities within the North Atlantic world; and the experiences of women throughout the world" (Irvin 2016: 4). In short, all these first-generation World Christianity scholars show in their work World Christianity's bias toward untold stories and neglected perspectives.

Perhaps, Klaus Koschorke and the Münich school of World Christianity represent the most sustained and systematic attempt to examine the transnational and intercultural nature of World Christianity. Even this school, though, prioritizes—not exclusively but preferentially—Christian expansion beyond Western missionary agency (e.g. Burlacioiu 2016: 82–98). In spite of that, its methodological approach advances a historiography that focuses on World Christianity's "polycentric structures, transcontinental links, and those changed maps in search of overarching themes and experiences cutting across different regions and cultures" (Hermann and Burlacioiu 2016: 4). While resisting imperial hegemonic narratives, this approach seeks to avoid a counter-productive atomization of Christian history that risks reducing World Christianity scholarship to a plethora of unconnected case studies (Koschorke 2014: 180). Among other things, the Münich school of World Christianity sheds new light on the multiplicity and complexity of north-south and south-south networks in World Christianity, opening new windows for intercultural explorations in the field.

The prioritization towards marginalized communities should not be considered a problem, but a constitutive characteristic of World Christianity historiography, which attempts to correct the colonial bias that has informed Western Christian historiographies and Christian studies for at least two centuries. There are limits, though, to all the efforts above. While seeking to enlarge the telling of the Christian story, expanding the numbers of perspectives from which that story is told, they still approach Christian narratives and experiences without full consideration of their surroundings. In other words, the histories of regional, national, and local experiments with Christianity must be placed within larger frameworks of cultural and geopolitical histories that inform and impact the diverse Christian experiences.

Not unrelatedly, with a few exceptions, there is very little engagement of Latin American historiography, theoretical tools and insights in the formulation of World Christianity as a field of study. This article seeks to offer a modest contribution to close that gap, by re-centering Latin America as a locus of enunciation in the formulation of World Christianity discourses. To reach that goal, it uncovers a little explored connection between the Münich school and the historiography of the Comisión para el Estudio de La Historia de las Iglesias en América Latina y el Caribe (CEHILA), mediated by Enrique Dussel and the

Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). Then, it describes the movements of evolution and change in Latin American Christian historiography, as well as the dynamic development of liberationist thinking, and its recent transformation in connection with the rise of decoloniality and interculturality as new hermeneutical tools in the region. Attempting to correct a neglected relation in the theorization of the field of World Christianity, this chapter seeks to highlight possible epistemological contributions emerging in the Latin American context to World Christianity scholarship.

2 Latin America in World Christianity Scholarship

Klaus Koschorke developed his framework of a polycentric World Christianity as a scholar who became increasingly aware of the German academy's limitations and biases. A number of cross-cultural encounters were key for his reinvention as a scholar. Koschorke's evolution from a "typical patristic scholar" to a scholar of the global history of Christianity began as he spent time as a guest professor in Sri Lanka in 1982/83. His exposure, in particular, to Asian Christianity opened his eyes to new realities and perspectives (Hermann and Burlacioiu 2016: 5). In his interactions with Sri Lankan Christians, Koschorke realized that they "represented a world that at the time was beyond the awareness of most members of the European theological academia" (Hermann and Burlacioiu 2016: 8). Through his encounter with Asian Christian experiences and realities Koschorke was encouraged to turn his attention to the development of a historiography of Christianity which was mainly interested in unveiling broader inter-contextual connections and interactions.

Along with his relationships with Sri Lankan Christians, another encounter, which does not get the same kind of attention, also made an impact on Koschorke: his participation in "the 1983 meeting of the Working Commission on Church History of EATWOT in Geneva" (Hermann & Burlacioiu 2016: 9). One of the goals of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), formed in 1976 by a group of theologians from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, was to create a forum for dialogue between theologians mostly from Africa, Asia, and Latin America for an ongoing process of theological reflection, aimed at discerning which understandings of church and theology would have more meaning and be more operative in their own contexts (Torres and Fabella 1976: 2).[7] Latin American theologians played an influential

7 For the proceedings of the EATWOT founding conference in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, see Torres & Fabello 1976. Another good source of information about the EATWOT formative years can be found in Joseph 2015.

role in the formation of EATWOT, as participants in a "conversation among the margins."[8] That influence is undeniable, for instance, when one looks the number and significance of Latin American contributions to the EATWOT's theological production.[9]

Argentinian scholar Enrique Dussel was one of the two conveners of the 1983 meeting of the Working Commission on Church History of EATWOT referred by Koschorke. The other convener was Swiss theologian Lukas Vischer (Hermann and Burlacioiu 2016: 6–7). The meeting's main agenda was to revisit the periodization of a history of Christianity in a world perspective—an emphasis present in Dussel's work at least since the late 1960s.

Enrique Dussel's work spans a number of disciplines, including ethics, political economy, and history. Having doctorates in philosophy and history, Dussel has always fluctuated back and forth between these disciplines, venturing also into theological conversations. As a historian, from the inception of his career, he focused on rethinking periodization in history (Dussel 1967). A key influencer in the foundation of EATWOT,[10] Dussel also played a crucial role in the formation of the *Comisión para el Estudio de la Historia de las Iglesias en América Latina y el Caribe* (CEHILA), in Quito, Ecuador, in 1973.

CEHILA, an autonomous organization of Latin American historians, has been the main powerhouse for the production of Latin American Christianity's history as well as of a historiography of Christianity that is genuinely and unabashedly Latin American.[11] As a founder of CEHILA, and a strong proponent

8 This is the title of one of the chapters in Joseph 2015.

9 See, for instance, the prominence of liberationist perspectives in the EATWOT periodical, *Voices of the Third World*. *Voices* volumes from 1999 to 2017 can be found online at https://eatwot.academia.edu/EATWOT.

10 As Sergio Torres—the Chilean priest who served as the first secretary executive for EATWOT—noticed in the opening address of the first ecumenical dialogue of Third World theologians, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, August 5–12, 1976, Enrique Dussel, François Houtart and some students at the European Center for Latin American Students in Louvain were part of the initial conversations that expressed the desire to start a dialogue between theologians of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Torres and Fabella 1976:2). The conference in Tanzania in August of 1976 became the occasion for the creation of what was initially called Ecumenical Dialogue of Third World Theologians, later becoming the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians. Dussel was on the steering committee of the former, and served on the advisory committee of the latter.

11 In other words, CEHILA aimed at writing the first general history of Latin American Christianity from a Latin American perspective. Such historiography pays attention to the locus of enunciation, which is not only the social location but the epistemic location of the subject, reinforcing the view that "our knowledges are always situated" (Grosfoguel 2007: 213). Dussel and other Latin American scholars resisted the claims of neutrality and abstract universality in Eurocentric historiographies. History always means interpretation.

of such historiography, Dussel was a key figure in its development. CEHILA represented the first concerted effort to privilege the Latin American impoverished peoples as interpreters of the religious phenomenon in the region (Coutinho 1999). Starting with the theological category of the poor or the oppressed, CEHILA proposed a re-reading of the entire history of the Church in Latin America, creating its own periodization. That should be "a history from the people, for the people, and of the people" (Dussel 1992: 6). Brazilian historian Sérgio Ricardo Coutinho describes Dussel's role in that meeting as follows:

> As for the periodization proposal, it was formulated by Enrique Dussel still in the year of 1967, and refined later, in 1972, in his book *Historia de la Iglesia en America Latina: Coloniaje y Liberación (1492–1972)*. Periodization was seen by Dussel as the great instrument of the history he wanted to do (...) This was not altogether distant from other proposals made by Latin American social scientists taking as their starting point the key of colonialism. Dussel [however] introduced, as his starting point, an interpretative key originated in the theological, or rather ecclesiological concept of Christianity. This concept was widely accepted by members of CEHILA, with Pablo Richard being one of its exponents. In the work *Morte das Cristandades e Nascimento da Igreja*, this author defines that concept as a historical model of "Church" that seeks to assure its presence and expand its power in society using the mediation of the State, the latter being considered an instrument of the interests of the dominant class. Thus, the institutional Church, under different forms, gives legitimacy to the system of domination and tends to organize itself internally according to this logic of domination. Historically speaking, the "death" of this concept, or rather of a Church modelled after Christendom, would occur when [the Church] committed itself to the poor, thus giving rise to a new ecclesiological model: the popular Church.[12]
>
> Coutinho 1999

Therefore, it must not be delinked from the subjects that write, and their location. In the case of the history of the Church, that also means conscious or unconscious theological perspectives. Existing histories of the Church in Latin America were Eurocentric, and considered Latin American Christianity derivative from European missions. CEHILA aimed to relocate Latin America to the center of a new historical narrative, proposing a history from the perspective of the poor and Amerindia (the Latin American indigenous peoples). According to Dussel, "From the perspective of the poor, as dominated race, sex, class, ethnicity and nation, one can discover the Christian meaning of the event" (Dussel 1992: 6).

12 This historiographical turn in Latin America towards Christianization without Christendom—which in the context of Latin American Catholicism is referred to as "the popular church"—is the Latin American equivalent to the historiographical turn in Africa,

Anticipating by several years a language not so different from that found in World Christianity scholars such as Walls and Sanneh, Dussel contrasted Christendom with the idea of a popular church, a church spreading without the apparatus of the status quo. Dussel's historiography influenced the work of CEHILA and the EATWOT conversations in Geneva, where he and Koschorke first met in 1983. It is worth noting that Koschorke initially described his project as a history of the non-Western Christianity. Later on, he admitted the limits of that expression, renaming his approach as a history of World Christianity. His focus, though, continued to privilege Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Coutinho 1999).[13] Koschorke's interest in the history of non-Western Christianity shows the significance of his dialogue with the project being carried by non-Western theologians and historians in the EATWOT. It also affirms a neglected connection, which places Latin American scholarship in relationship with the development of World Christianity as a field of study.

Although the EATWOT is primarily an association of scholars, over the years it has created and strengthened ecumenical forums, networks and social movements that bring scholars and non-scholars together as collaborative partners.[14] The articulation of its initial dialogues in Dar es Salaam (1976) or in Accra (1977)[15] involved the work of individuals (invited theologians), national and regional councils (of churches), and mission agencies, among others. In short, EATWOT's scholarly production is representative of the variety of emerging (and established) theological voices in the World Christian movement.[16]

discussed earlier in this chapter. Nevertheless, the Latin American historiographical shift has not received as much attention in theoretical and methodological discussions among World Christianity scholars.

13 His co-edited sourcebook, which has appeared in German, English, and Spanish, shows that emphasis. See Koschorke, Ludwig and Delgado 2007.

14 Two of those hybrid forums are the World Forum on Theology and Liberation and the World Social Forum. The VIII EATWOT General Assembly, for instance, was held in Salvador, Brazil, where both the World Social Forum (WSF) and the World Forum on Theology and Liberation (WFTL) were meeting. The EATWOT met on March 10–11, 2018, whereas the WFTL started its event on March 12, and the WSF opened its works on March 13. All the EATWOT members gathering in Salvador were also involved in the broader conversations and networks represented at the WSF and the WFTL, with social activists, religious leaders, and scholars being part of that mix.

15 The Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians on December 17–23, 1977. For more information on this important conference that put African thinkers like Ogbu Kalu, John Mbiti, Desmond Tutu in conversation with Asian and Latin American thinkers such as Tissa Balasuriya (Sri Lanka), James Cone (USA), and J. Miguez Bonino (Argentina) in conversation on the topic of African theology see Appiah-Kubi and Torres (1979).

16 The idea of World Christianity as movement refers to the growing self-awareness among Christians, particularly in the global South, of how their cultures and histories inform

Furthermore, the scholarly production of EATWOT is fueled by grassroots movements and stands in an ongoing dialogue with them.[17] Among other things, it has contributed to blurring the boundaries separating the academy and the broader society.

In spite of the important contributions Latin American Christians have made to theology, philosophy and history in the past fifty years, there has been little prominence of Latin American scholarship in the theoretical development of World Christianity.[18] With most conversations happening in English, the initial breakthroughs in the field tended focus on anglophone perceptions of the African experiment with Christianity. It is worth noting, though, that Latin America does not lag behind in World Christianity scholarship. A growing number of historical resources and case studies focusing on Latin American experiences with Christianity are available in English.[19] On top of

their faith, and how they understand themselves as part of a broader worldwide Christian community and history. The rise of efforts such as CEHILA and EATWOT, along with all the many networks involved in their making, represent some of the facets of what can be considered a World Christian movement, which helps relocate Christian narratives, taking into consideration the diverse Christian experiences around the world and the interactions among them. Its academic counterpart is the scholarship that draws on those experiences, which constitute much of the burgeoning field of World Christianity.

17 For the idea of the 'Third World' as a movement, see Prashad 2007.

18 Few references to Latin American thinkers can be found in most of the defining texts in the field of World Christianity. Dale Irvin is one of the few who have engaged Latin American historiography and decolonial thinking—particularly Enrique Dussel, Walter Mignolo, and Gloria Anzaldua—in his theorizing of World Christianity. Justo Gonzalez, as I noted earlier, has offered his own contribution to the remapping of World Christianity in the end of the twentieth century. Yet, his work on the changing shape of church history is also seldomly referred to in conversations about the foundational texts in the field. Todd Hartch is a Latin Americanist who has offered a fine contribution to rethinking Protestant-Catholic relations by reinterpreted the growth of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches in Latin America as having stimulated change and renewal within the Catholic Church. His engagement of Amerindian and Afro-Latin American contributions to the changing face of Latin American Christianity, though, is limited. On top of that, despite the meaningful contributions Latin American historians such as Luis Rivera-Pagan (1992), Ana Maria Bidegain (2009), Eduardo Hoornaert (1994), and Enrique Dussel (1992) continue to make to the understanding of Latin American Christianity and religion in Latin America, situating Latin America within a broader interregional conversation, their works are rarely engaged by World Christianity scholars.

19 The impressive growth of departments of religion and seminaries in Latin America has generated a race for archival and ethnographic research in the region. I cannot list the abundance of primary resources available here. Koschorke, Ludwig and Delgado 2007: 277 ff contains a significant number of primary documents and excerpts on a variety of topics, including church and mission in the colonial state, indigenous voices, the reduction and the Jesuits, slavery, colonial Protestantism, heralds of independence, popular

that, the interest in the study of indigenous and African-derived religions in Latin America is on the rise, along with more detailed re-examination of interactions between missionary-oriented efforts and indigenous initiatives.[20] Finally, in the past couple of decades, an abundance of studies focusing on the boom of Pentecostalism and its impact on the transformation of the Latin American religious scene (e.g. Chesnut 2013; Freston 2008; Wingeier-Rayo 2011; Stoll 1990), the public significance of Christian faith in the region, and studies on Christianity and migration have appeared year after year (e.g. Medina and Alfaro 2015; Ramirez 2015). In other words, the timid interaction between the field of World Christianity and Latin American religious scholarship is not due the lack of production by the latter.[21]

3 Bringing Latin American Scholarship Back to the Table

Yet, the question about the Latin American contributions to method and theory in the field of World Christianity persists. As I noted earlier, World Christianity as a field of study emerged mainly in response to the boom of sub-Saharan African Christianity in the second half of the twentieth century (Hartch 2014: 1). The reflection on the characteristics of the African Christian boom, so central to the initial conceptualization of the field of World Christianity, cannot

religion, messianic movements, the path towards a Latin American Christianity, the reception of Vatican II, liberation theology, and awakening and religious plurality. On top of that, Latin America is equipped with a continent-wide network of historians who have produced a number of historical studies in various Latin American countries, a rich collection of resources resulting of the collective work done through the CEHILA, the Comisión para el Estudio de La Historia de las Iglesias en América Latina y el Caribe. Information on CEHILA can be found at http://www.cehila.org/.

20 Here is a brief list of some resources with the emphases above, available in English. On matters of race and religion, see Burdick 1998, 2013 and González 2006. Among the studies revisiting historical contributions made by women to Latin American Christianity, see González 2003. On the resurgence of indigenous religions and their interaction with Christianity, see Cleary and Steigenga 2004; Cook 1997.

21 Two issues are important here: the engagement with the Latin American experience (not necessarily only documented by Latin Americans) and interaction with Latin American scholars. The first one is not the main point of concern in this chapter, since one can find a growing corpus of literature written by scholars of World Christianity which takes into consideration Latin American experiences with Christianity (even though one wishes that a greater variety of Latin American religious experiences were taken into account, including more nuanced studies of indigenous and African-derived religions in the region, as well as the so-called new religious movements). This chapter hopes to encourage greater interaction between scholars of World Christianity and Latin American scholarship (particularly but not exclusively as it pertains to religion and theology).

be simply replicated everywhere else, or universalized. Not everything in it is translatable. Latin America, for instance, blurs commonly assumed distinctions between Western and non-Western cultures. To complicate matters, the Latin American experience of colonization differs from that of Asian and African societies. The distinctive conjuncture of life in Latin America needs to be taken into account in any interpretive analysis of Latin American Christianity.

An emphasis on the specific conjuncture of Latin America does not entail the abandonment of transnational, intercultural, and inter-contextual analytical tools. For instance, the many migratory and transnational Christian experiences in the region cannot be fully understood without consideration of transnational networks. Of particular interest are south-south connections. Afe Adogame has pointed out that "One cannot fully understand Africa without its diaspora, neither can we understand the African diaspora in isolation" (Adogame 2016). If that is true, one cannot understand the religions of Brazil, Colombia, or Cuba without examining African religions. In the past couple of decades, a number of Brazilian universities have created departments and programs focusing on African and Afro-Brazilian cultures and traditions. In that same period, scholarly interaction on both sides of the Atlantic focusing on African religions and African-derived religions has significantly increased.[22] New religious and scholarly networks have been formed as a result of those relations. In the case of Latin American indigenous or original peoples, they are also increasingly networking with other indigenous peoples around the world, forming important forums for self-understanding, mutual support, and advocacy.

These forms of human networking and mobility are setting the agenda for academic research on religion in Latin America and elsewhere in the twenty-first century. In Latin America, the past few decades have seen a profound transformation in the study of religion vis-à-vis the significant change in the region's self-understanding. At the time CEHILA was created in the early 1970s, Latin America still saw itself as a Christian continent (Catholic for the most part). That conviction is noticed in the CEHILA's name itself, 'Commission for the Study of Church History in Latin America.' In the course of the past forty-five years, although keeping the same name, CEHILA has changed significantly. On top of increasingly admitting Protestant historians in its membership,[23] it has decisively shifted its focus away from ecclesiastical history to the study of the history of religions in Latin America more generally (Bidegain 1996). These shifts reflect the growing awareness of the religious plurality and interreligious

22 The same can be said about the rise of Atlantic Studies more widely.
23 All its founders were Roman Catholic.

relations in Latin America. It is not only the Evangelical and Pentecostal boom in the region that deserves scholarly attention. The unsung phenomenon of the revitalization of indigenous traditions is also worth noting. The 500th anniversary of colonial Christianity in Latin America, in 1992, provided the occasion for Latin American indigenous peoples to speak up, using the commemoration as a platform for the public display of their memories. These indigenous narratives reminded both scholars of Latin American religion and Latin American political leaders that the first nations, the original or indigenous peoples of the continent, and their traditions remained alive and well (Barreto 2017: 111).

Likewise, a revitalization of African-derived cultures and religions is happening in different Latin American and Caribbean countries. Along with the re-emergence of African and indigenous traditions, the persistence of Latin American popular religion shows that the colonial project of Christianizing the continent was a two-way route. Colonial Christianity was subverted in the process, giving birth to popular Christian expressions, which continued to manifest important elements of indigenous and African-derived cultures. These cultural and political changes are reshaping the agenda for the study of Christianity in the region.

4 From Liberation to Decoloniality

Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako resisted the idea of adopting postcolonial theory as an analytical tool for the interpretation of African Christianity for two reasons: (1) The fear that a postcolonial framework would inhibit the "long pre-colonial history that continues to be part of African societies," and (2) the suspicion that postcolonial studies in fact represent a postmodern and neoliberal Western agenda, intent on imposing its own values on formerly colonized societies, even if by other means (Dinkelaker 2017: 22). Whereas for scholars such as Bediako colonization should not be considered a defining moment in the construction of African identity, in the case of Latin America, the extreme violence of the conquest and colonization undeniably makes it a defining moment in the life of all peoples of Abya-Yala.[24] Most first nations or indigenous peoples in the region have faced physical and cultural genocide, which continues to impact their lives.

24 Abya Yala is one of the various indigenous names that refer to the territory known today as the American continent. It is the term used by the Kuna people, who live in today's Colombia and Panama, meaning Mature Earth, Living Earth or Earth in Blossoming. See Maldonado & Romero (2016: 12).

The survival of indigenous traditions in Latin America is an expression of resistance and resilience on the part of indigenous peoples and cultures, and a sign that the colonial project that aimed at eradicating indigenous cultures and ways of life failed to domesticate their will. Kuna theologian Aiban Wagua affirms that the retelling of "the marginalization, the violence, the genocide or ethnocide perpetrated against our indigenous communities of Abia Yala," as painful as it is, is a remembrance of "our indomitable will" (Wagua 1990: 49).

From the perspective of both indigenous peoples and the descendants of enslaved Africans trafficked to Latin America and the Caribbean it is not possible to disassociate the violence of European colonization from the violence of evangelization (see e.g. Rivera-Pagan 1992). In the minds of both conquerors and conquered, the sword and the cross were intertwined. K'aqchiquel Maya theologian and Protestant minister Vitalino Similox Salazar has referred to the encounter of his Maya people with European Christianity as "the invasion of Christianity into the world of the Mayas" (Similox Salazar 1997: 35). For him, without understanding indigenous religion and theology, European missionaries wrote them off "as pagan, idolatrous and polytheistic" (Similox Salazar 1997: 36). Not only the European *conquistadores* undervalued Maya religion and spirituality, but, by systematically demeaning, marginalizing, and exploiting them, they also forced the Maya to relinquish their own culture and remain silent (Similox Salazar 1997: 37). Guillermo Cook referred to this process as a cultural genocide, based on underlying racism and the misconception of cultural superiority, connecting Christian evangelization with the colonial project aimed at erasing indigenous ways of life (Cook 1997: 15).[25] Colonial evangelization demanded a break with one's indigenous past. As William Hanks (2010: 5) puts it, "For the missionaries … the focal object of conversion clearly was Indian behavior and beliefs, as is evident from their actions … By combining conviction with repentance, conversion designates a voluntary turning away from past and current ways, to take on different, better ways."

Enslaved Africans transported to the Americas went through a similar process to separate them from their cultural and religious roots. In Portuguese

25 Although Cook may be referring to the pre-modern and pre-Enlightenment Spain where the separation of religion and politics has not yet occurred, as I have demonstrated elsewhere, modern European Christianity continued to legitimize colonial and imperial practices that shaped the modern racial discourse, affirming the superiority of the religion and culture of the European colonizers over the indigenous and African-derived traditions. Such practice was not restricted to Spanish and Portuguese invaders in the sixteenth century, but also to colonial practices and laws in the following centuries, regulating relationships in a racialized manner, including the treatment of body and soul of enslaved Africans and indigenous peoples (Barreto 2019a: 76ff).

territories, for instance, that process included the Christianization of enslaved Africans to de-socialize and culturally uproot them. As Moacir de Castro Maia notes,

> The entrance of the enslaved Africans in the (…) Portuguese territories was made (…) through evangelization and the reception of baptism. They received a new name, the water of baptism and salt as a sign of liberation from original sin, while the baptismal minutes recorded their condition as captives and the name of their owner (…) The process of making the new slave included the individual's de-socialization (…) In this long process of enslavement of Africans, baptism was a central criterion in the making of a new slave.
>
> Castro Maia 2011:1 (translated from Portuguese, RCB)

The lasting impact of such experiences cannot be neglected and has not been forgotten. That is why it is difficult for indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants in Latin America not to treat the conquest and colonization as a defining moment in their history. On one hand, is no longer possible to move fully back to pre-Columbian forms of existence. On the other hand, pre-conquest ways of life have persisted and survived, even if many times combined with elements of other cultures and traditions.

In spite of centuries of subjugation and suppression, indigenous and African-derived religions not only found ways to survive, but they have also managed to rise again both in their own right and as constitutive of a popular Christianity practiced across the continent. As a result of the revitalization they have experienced in the past three decades, indigenous religions have begun to speak for and about themselves in ways not known earlier. Writing in the late 1990s, Similox Salazar (1997: 37) says, "The time has now come for my people to become aware of our own history, to be critical subjects of it; we need to practice a faith that is as free as possible from foreign influences." This rise of indigenous spirituality and theology is key for the understanding of decoloniality in Latin America. Decoloniality is a theoretical approach deeply ingrained in indigenous, Afro, and other minoritized experiences and narratives.

Although for most countries in Latin America colonialism ended in the course of the nineteenth century, its impact and structural domination continue to be felt today. Neocolonialism is a concrete reality afflicting Latin American peoples, through the impact of U.S. political, economic, and military policies in the region since the end of the nineteenth century (González 2011: 3–4). Neocolonialism is an imperial strategy, and as such it has been resisted by a number of grassroots movements in the region.

The coming-of-age of Latin American Christianity, a time when it began to rise from the shadows of colonial Christendom to see itself primarily as Latin American, began to take shape in the early 1950s, through an incipient liberationist movement that would rise in the following decades to impact church and society in all countries in the region. The worldwide impact made by that incipient form of Christianity, which was just beginning to formulate its own voice, can be felt in the references made to it by liberationist theological movements in Africa, Asia, and in other parts of the world.[26] That impact, above all, has been strongly felt in the agenda of EATWOT.

Latin American liberation theology (as a distinct theological method) initially emerged in the late 1960s. Sensitized by the cry of a multitude of impoverished people in the continent, liberation theologians sought to speak about God in a way that made sense to contexts marked by colossal socioeconomic disparity. This response initially took the shape of Latin American political theologies. Trying to understand Latin American's place in the global conjuncture, historians such as Dussel (1975: 24) asked the question: "What is the meaning of Latin America in world history?" For him, it was important to make clear that the history of Latin American Christianity could not be detached from the general history of Latin America, and such a connection was extremely significant for the emergence of a Christianity that could understand itself as, above all, Latin American. On the other hand, such approach allowed the entire history of the Latin American peoples to be interpreted theologically. Thus, while theology was historicized, history was theologized. According to Dussel, "The Christian historian, faced with the task of interpreting the event, does it inevitably in the light of faith … the historical-scientific interpretation is part of a unified theology as a methodical Christian interpretation of the history of the Christian people" (Dussel 1975: 24). This methodological Latin American contribution to Christian historiography deserves further attention—although I cannot do it in the scope of this chapter.

An aspect of Latin American liberation theologizing that is often overlooked is the dynamics of its changes and evolution. While it initially emerged as a response to the political and economic crisis that impacted the lives of most Latin Americans, its understanding of the poor (the impoverished person

26 Such references should be perceived as forms of dialogue and exchange rather than unilateral movements. One case in mind is Aloysius Pieris' *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (1988). While acknowledging the contributions from Latin America and drawing from its methodology, Pieris develops a distinctly Asian liberation theology, which by its turn challenges Latin American liberation theologians to broaden their theologies to include people of other faiths. Such challenge has encouraged the more recent development of a pluralistic theology of liberation in Latin America (See Tomita et al 2006).

and community), for instance, evolved over the years to include other experiences of oppression, vulnerability, dispossession, and injustice. In its inception, liberation theology focused mostly on socio-economic injustice. Later on, other forms of oppression—based on race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality—were incorporated into Latin American theologizing. That process coincided with the rise of a number of popular movements and struggles, including women, indigenous, black, and LGBTQ+ movements, which complexified the binary oppression-liberation of the 1960s. Indigenous peoples, Afro-Latin Americans, and women, in special, began to find their own loci of enunciation as religious actors and their own theological voices, fulfilling in unanticipated ways Gustavo Gutierrez's prophetic insight about the "irruption of the poor" in history.[27] In Latin America, even the Pentecostal boom among the poor in the last few decades has been read through such hermeneutical lenses (Shaull 1996: 48–50).

5 Decoloniality and Interculturality as Tools for the Study of Latin American Christianity

By engaging those multiple voices and experiences, Latin American scholars have identified a more nuanced matrix of power, knowing, and being that continues to inform not only social, political, and economic relations but all aspects of life.[28] In an important essay in 2000, Peruvian philosopher Anibal

27 In his introduction to the fifteenth anniversary revised edition of *A Theology of Liberation*, Gustavo Gutierrez (1988: xxi) acknowledged the limitations of the almost exclusively socio-economic categories the first liberation theologians used to address oppression and injustice, and welcomed the contributions made by black, Hispanic, Amerindian, and feminist theologies to expand the views of liberation theologians. For him, "The world of the poor is a universe in which the socioeconomic aspect is basic but not all-inclusive."

28 I am referring here to the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group, and the decolonial theory that emanated from its dialogues starting in the late 1990s. Whereas previous liberationist thinking privileged economic and political relations (and, consequentially, class analysis) over other social relations to explain concentration of power and oppression, Latin American and Latinx decolonial thinkers began to consider a broader geopolitics of power, moving beyond the understanding of the colonial enterprise as "an economic system of capital and labor for the production of commodities to be sold for a profit in the world market," realizing that "what arrived in the Americas was a broader and wider entangled power structure that an economic reductionist perspective of the world-system is unable to account for" (Grosfoguel 2007: 216). That broader matrix of power was Eurocentric, capitalist, military, Christian, patriarchal, white, heterosexual and male. All these entangled hierarchies of power needed to be taken into consideration.

Quijano coined the term "coloniality of power" to describe that complex matrix of domination (Quijano 2000: 536ff).

Quijano uses the term "coloniality of power" to refer to the epistemological and cultural dimension of modern/colonial oppression, which outlives colonialism and very often goes unchecked. On top of the colonial power that continues to impact the political and economic spheres, there is an aspect of coloniality that affects knowledge production and forms of being in the world. While liberation operated on the political level, decoloniality presents an epistemological response to the coloniality of power, operating on the subjective level of knowledge production (Mignolo 2007: 451). Decoloniality denounces the complicity of modernity/rationality and an exclusionary notion of totality "that negates, excludes, occludes the difference and the possibilities of other totalities," (Mignolo 2007: 451) uplifting alternative forms of knowledge and knowing—particularly those that have been previously suppressed and silenced, as in the case of the cosmologies of the various indigenous peoples in the Americas.

For most brown and black peoples in Latin America, the negation they have been subjected to, which Christian structures have been complicit with, is not a simple memory of the past. There are still visible marks of military, political, social and cultural domination which continue to inform their existence, codified in terms of gender, race, and ethnicity.[29] Quijano's critique of this Eurocentric paradigm of modernity/rationality, and the language of decoloniality that he and other decolonial theorists have advanced, form a helpful framework for contributing to the revitalization of the suppressed knowledge of formerly colonized peoples.

Epistemological decolonization, or decoloniality, is also key "to clear the way for new intercultural communication, for an interchange of experiences and meanings, as the basis of another rationality which may legitimately pretend to some universality" (Quijano 2007: 177). In fact, the move from totalizing universality to intercultural universality (or pluri-versality) is not an easy one. Before making such a move, it is necessary to "liberate intercultural communication from the prison of coloniality," freeing "all peoples to choose, individually or collectively, such relations" (Quijano 2007: 178). While interculturality is a concept used in different parts of the world, in Latin America, its use, in

29 Marks of violence and domination are everywhere. In Brazil, a recent research showed that illiteracy is twice as much present among black and dark-skinned Brazilians than among those who claim to be white. Statistics retrieved from http://www.dw.com/pt-br/brasil-tem-duas-vezes-mais-analfabetos-entre-n%C3%A3o-brancos/a-41895241. Accessed on Dec 21, 2017. For the idea of subalternization, see Rutuva 2016.

connection with decolonial thinking, has given birth to what I call a liberating decolonial interculturality, which takes power disparities—the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being—into account, thus turning intercultural relations into a liberating praxis.

Such liberating interculturality stems especially from the shift in Latin American studies of Christianity, as seen above in the case of CEHILA, from a historiography focused on Christianity—through its ecclesiastical structures—to an intercultural approach that cannot understand Christianity apart from the non-Christian religions/traditions in the continent; i.e., a shift from ecclesiastical history to a history of religions. Interculturality is not liberating in itself; that is, integrating religious and cultural difference is only part of the equation. On top of that, it is also crucial that different cultures become full participants in the production of intercultural knowledge.

The Christian story can be more fully appreciated if told from multiple perspectives. Princeton historian Afe Adogame uses Chinua Achebe's analogy of the masquerades in the Igbo festivals in Nigeria to explain the importance of a multifaceted perspectiveness. According to Achebe,

> there's no way you can tell that story in one way and say, this is it. Always there will be someone who can tell it differently depending on where they are standing; the same person telling the story will tell it differently. I think of that masquerade in Igbo festivals that dance in the public arena. The Igbo people say: If you want to see it well, you must not stand in one place. The masquerade is moving through this big arena. Dancing. If you're rooted to a spot, you miss a lot of the grace. So you keep moving, and this is the way I think the world's stories, and the story of Christianity should be told—from many different perspectives.
>
> cited as in Adogame 2016

While the message conveyed in this rich imagery speaks primarily to an African self-understanding, its lessons can apply to other contexts in World Christianity, reinforcing the idea that shifts in the theological loci of enunciation in World Christianity lead to its constant recreation (Aguilar 2007).

The relocation of previously ignored and sometimes suppressed theological voices to the centerstage in contemporary theological debates allows for what used to be the peripheries of Eurocentric modern Christianity not only to fuel fresh scholarly agendas but also to propose alternative ways of being Christian—and of being human—in the world (Aguilar 2007: 324). The polycentricity of World Christianity allows for an increasing number of subjects to speak in their own voices, sharing in the first person previously

unheard, overlooked, unexplored Christian stories, narratives, and theological perspectives. Listening to and examining these multiple voices and the interactions among them is part of the task of World Christianity as a field of study. Although overlooked and under-explored, Latin American decolonial narratives not only contribute to challenge and deconstruct hegemonic dominant narratives, but also make room for creative reconstructions and reinventions of, among other things, Latin American religious identities. Moving beyond hegemonic perceptions of 'Latin America' constructed through Eurocentric scholarly eyes under the pretense of universal and scientific knowledge, decolonial thinking has shifted attention to the location of the subject that speaks from multiple locations in the territory called by many names, including Abya Yala. Such indispensable connection between subject and discourse, while rejecting homogenizing understandings of Latin America, legitimizes the *otros saberes* (alternative forms of knowledge) connected to the experiences and histories of subalternized peoples in the region.[30]

The 'discovery' of the Americas—and the concurrent creation of a world system with Europe as its self-proclaimed center—is a foundational event in the formation of what we have come to know as modernity (Dussel 1993).[31] While modern/colonial narratives have privileged Western thought and tradition as standard and central, relegating other rationalities and epistemologies to a secondary role, liberating interculturality privileges the interweaving of different rationalities and epistemologies, emphasizing respect, solidarity, conviviality, dialogue, and collaboration, without overlooking matters of cultural asymmetry and injustice (Zwetch 2013: 32–49, 2015: 18). The production of a liberative intercultural knowledge requires the retelling of collective stories and the subverting of hegemonic narratives. It is not enough for subalternized communities to relearn and retell their own stories. Of equal importance is the task of resituating themselves in the context of broader narratives, which, if unchecked, tend to reinforce epistemological and cultural disparities.

As part of this process, philosophers from the Global South must, as Dussel urges, claim a protagonist role in designing new methods and setting the agenda for an intercultural dialogue "that is critical of and goes beyond the European 'I' which, by virtue of its colonial history, has asserted itself as the universal standard of humanity and philosophy" (Dussel 2013a: 3). Such

30 See for instance, Otzoy 2013: 21ff.

31 Enrique Dussel argues that modernity is not exclusively a European phenomenon, being instead inclusive of the non-European other. According to him, "Modernity appears when Europe affirms itself as the 'center' of a World History that it inaugurates; the 'periphery' that surrounds this center is consequently part of its self-definition." Dussel 1993: 65.

a dialogue has its starting point among the formerly colonized peoples, taking their traditions and stories as a starting point.

Likewise, theology must also be decolonized, as Dussel suggests, through the inversion of imperial inversions. He names two hegemonic inversions that have distorted the history of Christianity. The first one was the inversion from the Jewish messianic community formed around the life and story of the Nazarene Jesus, which appealed to subaltern peoples in the Hellenistic-Roman empire, to the religion of the empire. Dussel considers the inversion of this shift on the status of Christianity, from marginal to "triumphant Christianity," in the course of the fourth century, key for a decolonial reinvention of Christianity (Dussel 2013b: 23).

The second important inversion that must be challenged was geopolitical, with direct consequences for Latin America. In the sixteenth century, the world underwent a shift from an interregional system that had the "west of China, in Hindustan and the Islamic world" as its center to a "world system" whose center moved to Western Europe. Prior to that, Latino-Germanic Europe was a peripheral world, "isolated from the Asiatic-Mediterranean system" (Dussel 2013b: 23). Columbus' discovery of the Atlantic world created a "new geopolitical center of navigation and trade" that un-cloistered Europe, making it the center of "colonial Christendom" (Dussel 2013b: 23).[32] Colonial Christendom, as Dussel (2013b: 23) states, rejected Inca, Maya, and Aztec cultures as inferior, claiming "a fetishized universality for modern European culture."

Although different forms of Latin American Christianity existed under the shadow of colonial Christendom, only in the second half of the twentieth century, several people's movements—some of which born within the ranks of the Christian churches—found room to rise back to the public sphere, showing visible signs of indigenous resistance and resilience, but also pointing to alternative ways of living in the world. In the 1960s, movements such as Iglesia y Sociedad en America Latina (ISAL)—among Protestants—and the Christian Base Communities (CEBs)—primarily among Catholics—emerged, proposing alternative Christian responses to the structural sins that put Latin American countries among the most unjust and violent economies in the world—especially for indigenous peoples, people of African descendance, women, and LGBTQ+ persons. In the 1980s and 1990s, decolonial faces began to resurface in the form of black, indigenous, and women movements. In the Christian communities, such responses took the form of the so-called

32 In the 16th century, European metropolitan Christendom gave birth to colonial Christendom. For Dussel, though, the centrality of Hispanic America and of Latin-Germanic Christendom to the formation of the "new world" that began to take shape in the end of the 15th century is often neglected.

'contextual' theologies—women, black, indigenous, queer, and so forth. Whereas such theological reflection has not yet gotten much attention from World Christianity scholars, they are by no means insignificant to the understanding of Latin American Christianity.

Some of these theologies played a role in the formative experience of Latin American social movements such as the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (*PT*) and the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem-Terra* (*MST*) in Brazil. Others have impacted the societal structures of Latin America in different ways. For instance, insights from Brazilian black theology have encouraged a larger number of Afro-Brazilian Christians to work in collaboration with the Brazilian Unified Black Movement on actions for racial justice and reparation.[33]

The recent development of *teologia india* (Latin American indigenous theology) has coincided with a growing awareness among indigenous Christians of who they are and of their struggle for the survival of their culture and way of life, both under continuous attack. Father Eleazar Lopez Hernandez, a Zapotec from Mexico, identified as the midwife of the current movement called *teologia india*, for instance, is a militant of the indigenous causes in a number of ecumenical indigenous organizations on the national, continental and international levels, including the EATWOT (Hernandez 2018: 65).

In Ecuador, the *Consejo de Pueblos y Organizaciones Indigenas Evangelicas de Ecuador* (*FEINE*), founded in 1980, has grown into a well-structured federation of Indigenous Evangelical organizations that has played in the past two decades a protagonist role in popular mobilizations—including the uprisings of 2001, against the dollarization of Ecuadorian economy, leading to the resignation of President Jamil Mahuad, and the protest of the 7th Summit of the Free Trade Areas of the Americas (FTAA), in 2002. FEINE sees itself as part of a broader emergent international indigenous movement, articulating, at the same time, its religious identity as a Christian Evangelical movement (Guaman 2006).

These few examples suffice to show an unfolding decolonial movement, which is growing not only in the academia, but also among different sectors of society, including a number of grassroots movements organized by those whose voices were silenced in the context of colonialism and coloniality. The picture painted above certainly does not represent the whole—or even of the

33 Some of the organizations founded around the matter of racial justice within Brazilian Protestantism in the past three decades include Comissão Ecumênica de Combate ao Racismo—CENACORA; Associação Evangélica Palmares (1987); Grupo Evangélico Afro-brasileiro (1988), Coral de Resistência de Negros Evangélicos (1988), and Sociedade Cultural Missões Quilombo (1988). More information on this development can be found in Burdick 2005 and Da Silva 2011.

majority—of Latin American Christianity. Instead, it seeks to unveil a perspective that remains marginal in the study of World Christianity. It is nonetheless one of key importance, particularly when one considers the increasing number of impoverished, discriminated against, marginalized, and oppressed peoples who are asking why they continue to be on the underside of highly unjust and hierarchical societies, after more than 500 years have passed since the original violence of the conquest. Latin American decolonial theory can be a helpful partner of conversation to bring the uniqueness of the Latin American experience in the World Christian milieu to the fore, modelling a way to enrich the tapestry of this still incipient field of study.

6 In Lieu of a Conclusion

A limited understanding of the complexity and varied expressions of Latin American liberationist movements has contributed to hasty criticism against them. The intellectual contributions highlighted in this chapter, along with their impact on grassroots movements, are yet to be fully engaged in the context of World Christianity scholarship. Although still young, World Christianity has in the past few decades established itself as a thriving field of study—something that can be attested by the numbers of chairs, departments, and centers of world Christianity that have been created over the past few decades with a focus on the study of the phenomenon of the worldwide presence of the Christian faith, its multiple forms, and the demographic and cultural shifts it has experienced (Cabrita and Maxwell 2017: 3). The field, however, is still burgeoning. New questions, tools of inquire, and perspectives continue to emerge as a result of increasingly sustained conversations among scholars of World Christianity from all six continents.

This chapter has argued that studies of World Christianity must pay closer attention to the 500 year history of the experiences with Christianity in Latin America, particularly the perspectives of those who have been pushed to “the underside of history” (Gutierrez 1996: 40). Furthermore, it has shown how new interpretative keys and frameworks for the study of Latin American Christianity are being forged (Lopez Hernandez 2018), suggesting that the engagement of Latin American decolonial thinking, and the interculturality that stems from collaborative efforts involving the academia, popular movements, religious actors, and indigenous perspectives can provide significant analytical tools, opening new windows for scholarship in the region, with implications for broader theoretical exchanges in the field of World Christianity.

Bibliography

Adogame, Afeoseimime (2016). 'Mapping African Christianities within Religious Maps of the Universe.' *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 33. Available at: http://psb2016.ptsem.edu/mapping-african-christianities-within-religious-maps-of-the-universe/#_edn1.

Aguilar, Mario I. (2007). 'Public Theology from the Periphery. Victims and Theologians.' *International Journal of Public Theology* 1: 321–337.

Appiah-Kubi, Kofi and Sergio Torres, eds (1979). *African Theology en Route. Papers from the Pan African Conference of Third World Theologians, December 17–23, 1977, Accra, Ghana*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Barreto, Raimundo (2017). 'Beyond Contextualization. Gospel, Culture, and the Rise of a Latin American Christianity.' In Raimundo Barreto, Ronaldo Cavalcante and Wanderley Pereira da Rosa, eds. *World Christianity as Public Religion*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press: 97–117.

Barreto, Raimundo (2019a). 'Brazil's Black Christianity and the Counter-Hegemonic Production of Knowledge in World Christianity.' *Studies in World Christianity* 25,1: 71–94.

Barreto, Raimundo (2019b). 'The Epistemological Turn in World Christianity. Engaging Decoloniality in Latin American and Caribbean Christian Discourses.' *Journal of World Christianity* 9,1: 48–60.

Bediako, Kwame (2011), 'Andrew Walls as Mentor.' In William R. Burrows, Mark R. Gornik and Janice A. McLean, eds. *Understanding World Christianity. The Vision and Work of Andrew F. Walls*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books: 7–10.

Bidegain, Ana Maria (1996). 'De la Historia Eclesiastica a la Historia de las Religiones. Breve Presentacion sobre la Transformacion de la Investigacion sobre la Historia de las Religiones en las Sociedads Latinoamericanas.' *Historia Critica* 12: 5–16.

Bidegain, Ana Maria (2009). *Participación y Protagonismo de las Mujeres en la Historia del Catolicismo Latinoamericano*. Colección Generando. Buenos Aires: Editorial San Benito.

Burdick, John (1998). *Blessed Anastácia. Women, Race, and Popular Christianity in Brazil*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Burdick, John (2005). 'Why is the Black Evangelical Movement Growing in Brazil?' *Journal of Latin American* Studies 37,2: 311–332.

Burdick, John (2013). *The Color of Sound. Race, Religion, and Music in Brazil*. New York: New York University Press.

Burlacioiu, Ciprian (2016). 'Expansion Without Western Missionary Agency and Constructing Confessional Identities. The African Orthodox Church Between the United States, South Africa, and East Africa (1921–1940).' *Journal of World Christianity* 6,1: 82–98.

Cabrita, Joel & David Maxwell (2017). 'Introduction. Relocating World Christianity.' In Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood, eds. *Relocating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*. Leiden: Brill: 1–44.

Castro Maia, Moacir Rodrigo de (2011). 'Uma Nova Interpretação da Chegada de Escravos Africanos à América Portuguesa (Minas Gerais, século XVIII).' Lecture at *Anais do XXVI Simpósio Nacional de História*—ANPUH (São Paulo, July 2011); available at: http://www.snh2011.anpuh.org/resources/anais/14/1308192610_ARQUIVO_TextocompletoANPUHjunho2011.pdf.

Chesnut, Andrew (2013). *Competing Spirits. Latin American New Religious Economy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cleary, Edward L. and Timothy J. Steigenga, eds (2004). *Resurgent Voices in Latin America. Indigenous Peoples, Political Mobilization and Religious Change*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Cook, Guillermo, ed. (1997). *Crosscurrents in Indigenous Spiritualities. Interface of Maya, Catholic and Protestant Worldviews*. New York, NY: Brill.

Cook, Guillermo (1997). 'Introduction. Brief History of the Maya Peoples.' In Guillermo Cook, ed. *Crosscurrents in Indigenous Spiritualities. Interface of Maya, Catholic and Protestant Worldviews*. New York, NY: Brill: 1–31.

Coutinho, Sérgio Ricardo (1999). 'Os 25 Anos da CEHILA. Da História da Igreja à História do Fenômeno Religioso na América Latina.' Lecture at the *Simpósio sobre História das Religiões* (1999). Available at the CEHILA website: http://www.cehila.org/art-culos-.html.

Da Silva, Hernani (2011). *Movimento Negro Evangelico. Um Mover do Espirito Santo?* São Paulo: Selo Negritude Cristã.

Dinkelaker, Bernhard (2017). *How is Jesus Christ Lord? Reading Kwame Bediako from a Postcolonial and Intercontextual Perspective*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Dussel, Enrique (1967). *Hipóteses para una História de la Iglesia en America Latina*. Barcelona: Estela.

Dussel, Enrique (1975). *Para uma Historia de La Iglesia em America Latina*. Barcelona: Editorial Nova Terra.

Dussel, Enrique (1993). 'Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures).' *Boundary 2* 20,3: 65–76.

Dussel, Enrique (1992). *Historia Liberationis. 500 Anos de História da Igreja na América Latina*. São Paulo: Ediçoes Paulinas/ Cehila.

Dussel, Enrique (2013a). 'Agenda for a South-South Philosophical Dialogue.' *Human Architecture*, 11,1: 3–18.

Dussel, Enrique (2013b). 'The Epistemological Decolonization of Theology.' *Concilium* 2013,2 [Postcolonial Theology]: 21–31.

Freston, Paul, ed. (2008). *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Latin America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

González, Justo L. (2002). *The Changing Shape of Church History*. St. Louis, MO: The Chalice Press.

González, Juan (2011). *Harvest of Empire. A History of Latinos in America*. New York, NY: Penguin Books (revised edition).

Gonzalez, Michelle (2003). *Sor Juana. Beauty and Justice in the Americas*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Gonzalez, Michelle (2006). *Afro-Cuban Theology. Religion, Race, Culture and Identity*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.

Grosfoguel, Ramon (2007). 'The Epistemological Decolonial Turn. Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms.' *Cultural Studies* 21, 2–3: 211–223.

Guaman, Julian (2006). *FEINE, La Organizacion de los Indigenas Evangelicos en Ecuador*. Quito: Ecidiones Abya-Yala.

Gutierrez, Gustavo (1988). *A Theology of Liberation*. 15th Anniversary Edition. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Gutierrez, Gustavo (1996). 'The Limitations of Modern Theology. On a Letter to Bonhoeffer.' In *Gustavo Gutierrez. Essential Writings*, edited with an introduction by James B. Nickoloff. New York: Orbis Books: 35–42.

Hanks, William F. (2010). *Converting Words. Maya in the Age of the Cross*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Hartch, Todd. (2014). *The Rebirth of Latin American Christianity*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hermann, Adrian and Ciprian Burlacioiu (2016). 'Introduction. Klaus Koschorke and the "Munich School" Perspective on the History of World Christianity.' *The Journal of World Christianity* 6,1: 4–27.

Hoornaert, Eduardo (1994). *História do Cristianismo na América Latina e no Caribe*. São Paulo: Paulus.

Irvin, Dale T. (2008). 'World Christianity. An Introduction.' *Journal of World Christianity* 1,1: 1–26.

Irvin, Dale T. (2016). 'What is World Christianity?' In Jonathan Y. Tan and Ahn Q. Tran eds. *World Christianity. Perspectives and Insights. Essays in Honor of Peter C. Phan*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books: 2–27.

Joseph, M.P. (2015). *Theologies of the Non-Person. The Formative Years of EATWOT*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Kollman, Paul (2014). 'Understanding the World-Christian Turn in the History of Christianity and Theology.' *Theology Today* 71,2: 164–177.

Koschorke, Klaus (2014). 'New Maps of World Christianity. Current Challenges and Future Perspectives.' *Theology Today* 71,2: 178–191.

Koschorke, Klaus, Frieder Ludwig and Mariano Delgado, eds (2007). *A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, 1450–1990*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Lopez Hernandez, Eleazar (2018). 'Experiencia Teologal Indigena. Aporte a la Humanidad y a las Iglesias.' In Jean-Francois Roussel, ed. *Decoloniality and Justice. Theological Perspectives*. S. Leopoldo, Brazil: Oikos: 65–72.

Maldonado, Beatriz C. and Zara R. Romero eds (2016). *Abya Yala Walgeykuna. Artes, Saberes Y Vivencias de Indígenas Americanos*. s.l. [Spain]: Acer-VOS, Patrimonio Cultural Iberoamericano.

Mignolo, Walter D. (2007). 'Delinking. The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-coloniality.' *Cultural Studies* 21,2–3: 449–514

Medina, Néstor and Sammy Alfaro, eds (2015). *Pentecostals and Charismatics in Latin America and Latino Communities*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Otzoy, Antonio (2013). *Escuchando a Dios desde las Culturas Indigenas*. San Jose, Costa Rica: Editorial SEBILA.

Pieris, Aloysius (1988). *An Asian Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Prashad, Vijay (2007). *The Darker Nations. A People's History of the Third World*. New York/London: The New Press.

Quijano, Anibal (2000). 'Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America.' *Nepantla. Views from South* 1,3: 553–580.

Quijano, Anibal (2007). 'Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality.' *Cultural Studies* 21,2–3: 168–178.

Ramirez, Daniel (2015). *Migrating Faith. Pentecostalism in the United States and Mexico in the Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Ratuva, Steven (2016). 'The Subalternization of the Global South. Critique of Mainstream "Western" Security Discourses.' *Cultural Dynamics* 28,2: 211–228.

Rivera-Pagan, Luis (1992). *A Violent Evangelism. The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press.

Sanneh, Lamin (2003). *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Sanneh, Lamin (2005). 'Introduction. The Changing Face of World Christianity. The Cultural Impetus of a World Religion.' In Lamin Sanneh and Joel A. Carpenter, eds. *The Changing Face of Christianity. Africa, the West, and the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 3–18.

Shaull, Richard M. (1996). 'New Voices, New Visions. Liberation Theology is Alive and Well.' *The Other Side* 32,1: 48–50.

Similox Salazar, Vitalino (1997). '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: Brill: 35–48.

Shenk, Wilbert R. (2002). *Enlarging the Story. Perspectives on Writing World Christian History*. Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Stoll, David (1990). *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Tomita, Luiza, Marcela Barros and J. Maria Virgil (2006). *Teologia Latino-Americana Pluralista da Libertação*. São Paulo: Paulinas.

Torres, Sergio and Virginia Fabella, eds (1976). *The Emergent Gospel. Theology from the Underside of History*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Wagua, Aiban (1990). 'Present Consequences of the European Invasion of America.' In Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo, eds. *The Voice of the Victims*. London: SCM Press: 47–56.

Walls, Andrew F. (2002). *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History. Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

Wingeier-Rayo, Philip D. (2011). *Where are the Poor? A Comparison of Ecclesial Base Communities and Pentecostalism. A Case Study in Cuernavaca, Mexico*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications.

Zwetsch, Roberto E. (2013). 'Teologias da Libertação e Interculturalidade. Aproximações e Avaliação Crítica.' *Protestantismo em Revista* 30: 32–49.

Zwetsch, Roberto E. (2015). 'Apresentação.' In Roberto E. Zwetsch ed. *Conviver. Ensaios Para uma Teologia Intercultural Latino-Americana*. S. Leopoldo, Brazil: Editora Sinodal/EST: 17–23.

CHAPTER 4

The Interpretations, Problems and Possibilities of Missionary Sources in the History of Christianity in Africa

Emma Wild-Wood

1 Introduction

Studies in World Christianity have often analysed a variety of religious expression by attending to local responses under-represented in global church structures. Many historians of World Christianity emphasise the plurality within Christianity by seeking indigenous perspectives on the processes of religious change, Christian development and transnational influence. Frequently, much historical evidence for the activities and reception of early Christian converts, church workers and religious movements is found in the vast corpus of documentation produced and preserved by western missionary societies in Europe, North America and the Antipodes. This literature has been considered flawed evidence, focussed upon the concerns of missionaries, their societies and supporters, and therefore unrepresentative of the social, political and economic dynamics of communities that missionaries were working amongst and dismissive of their cultural norms. From around 1990, however, approaches to World Christianity studies have been influenced by a renewed use of missionary archives by historians and anthropologists. This chapter starts by reviewing the variety of theoretical perspectives produced through the use of mission sources to understand historical processes of social and religious change. The second section of the chapter provides a detailed study of an event described in a missionary source in order to enquire in depth into the problems and possibilities of the sources. The final section of the chapter furthers this enquiry by examining the nature of missionary sources. This chapter illustrates its discussion of the problems and possibilities of missionary literature largely with reference to nineteenth and twentieth century European and Protestant sources in sub-Saharan Africa. Nevertheless, it shows that missionary sources are particularly informative about the participation of indigenous Christians in a global movement which comprised common threads as well as distinct, local practices.

© EMMA WILD-WOOD, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004444867_006
This is an open access chapter distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

2 Interpretation

The rise in the use of missionary archives has been influenced by a transnational turn in history and social science and an acknowledgement of a strong link between religious activity and transnationalism (Harries and Maxwell 2012; Manktelow 2013; Porter 2004; Sivasundaram 2005). Christianity has spread across the globe since its inception and the missionary movements of the early modern and modern periods took advantage of the increased speed of travel, communication and trade of their eras. Christians in the Global South are, therefore, part of a quintessentially globalized or transnational phenomenon. Identifying their role—or lack of it—in shaping the early reception of Christianity has been of interest to historians and anthropologists. Missionary archives have been used to support two broad, and at times overlapping, assessments regarding cultural change which are examined below. The first, often influenced by postcolonial theories, holds that Christian mission is a form of cultural assault often associated with colonial practice or assumptions and, furthermore, that mission activities marginalise and alienate indigenous populations and increase the inequitable distribution of resources and power. The second view, more common in World Christianity studies, considers that mission is a form of cultural exchange. In this view, conversion not only changes the convert but also the missionary. The result of this change is a new form of Christianity that is embedded in a new situation. What follows is a review of this literature to demonstrate how the interpretation of missionary sources—often combined with other evidence and theorisation—has developed a number of views on Christianity worldwide.

Missionary sources were initially avoided by those who understood missionary activity as an iconoclastic assault on indigenous cultures. V-Y Mudimbe (1988) claimed that the missionary was 'an agent of a political empire, a representative of a civilisation, and an envoy of God,' intent upon 'the conversion of African minds and space.' Africans converted not through choice but as a technique for survival. Missionaries' commitment to learning language and culture—their 'softening influence' (Tiberondwa 1998: vii–viii)—only made their imposition more effective. An engagement with missionary sources did not change this view. The seminal work of anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff prompted a renewed attention to missionary activity as a site of enquiry into social and cultural change and their assumptions of missionary influence were similar to those of Mudimbe. *Of Revelation and Revolution* (1991) examined the response of the Tswana to the London Missionary Society (LMS). Drawing on Foucault's comprehension of the normalisation of social power,

and Gramscian notions of hegemony, it presented the colonial and missionary encounters with Africans as being intrinsically bound together, resulting in a colonisation of the very consciousness of Africans. The Comaroffs' focus on encounter collapsed the conceptual boundaries between monolithic interpretations of 'African' and 'Imperial' and examined the cultural changes—through foreign influence in their language and thought forms—wrought among Africans as a result of colonialism. However, the lack of agency accorded to Africans in the Comaroff study, the limitations of describing the encounter as single rather than seeing it from a number of angles, and the failure to engage with African texts and oral narratives have all been widely criticised (Peel 1995; Peterson 2011). Nancy Rose Hunt, utilising post-colonial studies on subalterns, is better able to discern African agency whilst remaining attentive to the asymmetries of power that are maintained through social relations. In *A Colonial Lexicon* (1999) she uses Baptist Missionary Society archives to provide historical evidence for the dismantling of African orders and the construction of syncretistic colonial orders. She studies those Africans who mediated knowledge, who mimicked or mocked missionary and colonial practices in order to make meaning, who invested in linguistic and cultural change. Ultimately, for Hunt, however, transnational forces are always negatively intrusive: technologies introduced in the colonial era were insuperably infused with imperial meaning, cultural change was coercive and arose from mutual misunderstanding and distrust. The foreign assault on indigenous cultures, as presented by Hunt and the Comaroffs, has raised issues of power and alterity, through analysis of unequal relations, coercion, uncomfortable encounters, misconceptions, cultural difference and through interpreting the silences as awkward reminders of imbalances in missionary sources.

Views of Christian mission as a form of cultural exchange have critiqued hegemonic constructions of Empire. Until recently, however, this scholarship in World Christianity studies was ambivalent about missionary sources. It considered that exchange was most successful when indigenous populations created a distinct Christian church, independent of missionary control or western practice. It researched the rise of locally initiated churches and autonomous Christian movements using oral history methods where possible in order to seek 'authentic' African voices (Kollman 2010: 19). The approach has been critiqued as one which 'dismissed metropolitan influences as of no more than minimal significance.' (Porter 2004: 3–4). Yet the concentration on locality emerged from a concern that metropolitan sources and interpretations would unduly influence, even corrupt, the indigenous motives and processes that can be obscured in the colonial record.

More recently, this stream of literature has utilised missionary sources and has turned attention towards mission initiated Christianity. Anthropologist, Birgit Meyer, for example, deliberately examined both mission and independent churches as examples of the local appropriation of Christianity. In *Translating the Devil* (1999) she used the archives of the Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft to analyse ideas about the personification of evil as a product of the encounter between German missionaries and the Ewe. By taking this approach she critiqued the assumption of total colonial suppression of Africans, preferring to analyse the ways in which internal motivations for change prompt negotiation and challenge of inequalities within missionary settings. JDY Peel in *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (2000) demonstrated the value of missionary resources for examining cultural encounter by mining the CMS archives on the Yoruba. Peel examines the correspondence of CMS personnel from the Krio population of Sierra Leone, who often had Yoruba heritage and who returned to the Yoruba lands to work as Christian missionaries (Peel 1996). Using these missionary sources Peel demonstrates the role of missionary work in the contested introduction of new ideas and practices for the Yoruba that promoted wider units of belonging and which aided the creation of ethno-national entities. The Krio and Yoruba personnel were fully involved in cultural change which they considered to be advantageous and desirable. Furthermore, Peel showed how missionary work encouraged a trans-temporal belonging in which converts read themselves into the biblical stories of the Ancient Middle East, often producing interpretations which challenged those of Europeans.

The mission station as site of cultural exchange has drawn the attention of a number of historians interested in the transnational flows of ideas, values and artefacts and emerging Christianised cultural forms. They are influenced by changes in World History which have complicated the narrative of imperial imposition by a reading of the imperial metropole and the colony as a single analytic field in which there is a mutual shaping and reordering (Cooper and Stoler 1997: 1; Bayly 2004: 470). Some examine the "construction of subjectivities in the colonial setting" through complex interactions which allows a "unique site of observation for the study of modern societies" worldwide (Morier-Genoud and Péclard 2007: 2). Some have focused on European constructions of knowledge about Africans as mediated by missionaries desirous of producing an African voice for European audiences (Harris 2007). Some have emphasized the local encounters within transnational mission movements (Hielssen, Okkenhaug and Skeie 2011). Others have examined power-relations beyond written discourses, observing the ordered and timed routine of the mission

station or scrutinising the constructed physical space of the mission station to ask how Christianity shapes space and is shaped by it (Skeie 2012). They unearth the complexities of social-cultural transformations *in situ* and in communication with 'home'. Missionary sources are vital in these works, but although all authors assert African influence and agency as local carriers of transnational religious ideas and practices, some authors are less successful at maintaining a focus on the African participation in cultural change. Furthermore, a familiar periodization is re-enforced when the starting point of these narrative is often the arrival of missionaries which means that prior healing, renewalist or resistance movements can be overlooked.

Another stream of literature critical of post-colonial readings examines the role of converts and evangelists as 'cultural brokers' (Brock 2005; Grimshaw and May 2010; Brock, Etherington, Griffiths, Van Ghent 2016; Wild-Wood 2016, 2020), rather than as agents of colonialism (Tiberondwa 1998). Missionaries depended on indigenous Christians to broker relationships across cultures and negotiate mutual exchange being between a missionary or European culture and the evangelist's own culture (Etherington 2005: 1–18). Knowledge of local society, language and customs gave African evangelists influence with European missionaries who wished to obtain knowledge and gain the trust of local people. This form of power could be operated successfully, and its execution undermined notions of perpetual victimhood for indigenous people living within a colonial state. An examination of Africans who were instrumental in the propagation of Christianity has also encouraged the production of biographies of prominent indigenous Christians, many of which utilise missionary sources as part of an archival repertoire (Ajika 2008; Brock 2011; Olabimtan 2013; Ekebuisi, 2015).

The two broad and competing interpretations of missionary religion via missionary sources that have been elucidated here are not necessarily mutually exclusive. It is quite possible that missionary activity, in general terms, can be both assault and exchange. Examining particular historical circumstances reveals the extent to which any given incidence is destructive or supportive of any particular cultural aspect. In an attempt to explore relations beyond these binaries the next section of the chapter shows how missionary sources reveal encounters between European missionaries and local clergy and teachers in which common commitments and shared ideas are prominent, and in which a vision of belonging to an international, trans-temporal community was attractive to both parties. One obscure and humorous missionary story unearthed when researching the religious encounter in western Uganda will serve to raise questions of interpretation in order to illuminate the need for careful study of missionary documents which contain information about

African Christians and their role in bringing trans-regional ideas to sites of local cultural change.

3 Bicycles and Wisdom: A Case Study

Ruth Fisher (née Hurditch) arrived in Toro in 1900, one of the first two female missionaries of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to work in the district. Fisher wrote a number of published and unpublished sources in different genres which include descriptions of local people and Ganda evangelists. She recounts in some detail an extended safari in 1901 organised and led by Apolo Kivebulaya to acquaint her and Edith Pike with the peoples of Toro. In her description is the following amusing vignette.

> We steamed along on our machines, under sun-hats and big shades, over ridges and through mud. Apolo insisted on keeping pace with the ladies' bicycles, and as small batches of natives passed on the road, gazing with blank astonishment at these "running snakes," he called out with pride and elation, "Look at the wisdom of the white man!"' Just as he shouted this for a third-time my bicycle tumbled clean into an ant pit and was irreparably smashed. The people did not evince any concern or surprise: they evidently considered it part of the show. One of the onlookers was chartered to shoulder the fragments back to Kabarole. Once more I was without my bicycle and I felt sure that the natives must have wondered where the wisdom came in.
>
> 'Grandmother's Tracks' 54. *On the Borders of Pigmyland*, p.109

The vignette can be read in a number of different ways in order to examine the role of African teachers and their relationship with missionaries. The gaze of bystanders could be interpreted as uncomprehending and bewildered or as resentful and mistrusting towards overdressed white women propelling themselves on strange constructions. Kivebulaya's adulation of missionary methods of transportation could be understood as a tool in a complex kit for indigenous survival in an oppressive missionary regime. His praise could be understood as that of a colonial collaborator displaying false consciousness, or the unconscious propagator of malevolent, exterior influence, or the social go-between copying the ways of missionaries and promoting novel technologies. Perhaps Kivebulaya's exclamation was a tongue-in-cheek comment, whose sarcasm was overlooked by a proud and ignorant European. Or maybe it was made in envy for a vehicle that Hunt sees as "colonial commodity, a

symbolic marker of middle status" (Hunt 1999: 176). In contra-distinction to these possible readings and having studied other documents, I understand that Fisher and Kivebulaya both participate in a sense of excitement, novelty and adventure—although not always about the same things. The journey they take is an example of collaboration on a shared—but differently perceived—commitment to a common cause. It is in those differences of perception that the less obviously documented elements of cultural exchange, the perspectives of African teachers, may be found. In this reading, an amusing, incidental event provides us with a glimpse into shared activities of a Ugandan Christian and a European missionary who understood intercultural relations and novel technologies to be tangible symbols of a global Christian community. An understanding of Fisher's writing and recourse to other sources are required in order to be confident of such an interpretation. As they are deployed below the possibilities and problems of some missionary sources are revealed.

Fisher's story is found in two sources. It was published in *On the Borders of Pigmyland* (1904), a travelogue composed from a much longer journal, made available by Fisher's family with biographical notes as 'Grandma's Tracks.' There are references to the journey in the published CMS *Annual Letters 1901* and in Kivebulaya's diary.[1] The description of events in both versions is very similar and shows how closely Fisher adhered to private notes in describing events. However, there are some additions and subtle changes which are more than merely stylistic. Reading these sources allows us to understand Fisher's context and her values and opinions. The person of Kivebulaya is partially revealed but only by knowing about the background of the Fisher. A comparison with other documents further permits a deeper reading of missionary sources.

Fisher's writing is set within late Victorian Anglican evangelicalism and in the perpetually negotiated emancipatory roles it provided for women. Her bicycle had given her freedom of movement in London. To avoid being carried by porters she took it to Uganda where she had ridden it successfully on the wide Buganda roads. Her bicycle establishes her credentials as a modern missionary woman: credentials she mocks in this vignette. She does not record Kivebulaya's awe from a position of condescension or superiority. She is as equally excited as Kivebulaya about her bicycle and ruefully she accepts the flaws in her beloved mode of transport on Toro tracks unfit even for a 'boneshaker.' The vignette is embedded in a description of the safari which begins with Fisher's praise of Kivebulaya. He is the experienced traveller, he is her 'protector and overseer'. She describes his bravery and good work, bestowing upon

1 The CMS archives are housed at the University of Birmingham. Kivebulaya's diary is kept in the Africana Collection at Makerere University.

him the epithets 'noble' and 'faithful'. Faithfulness has complex meanings in this context. It can be used of an inferior, like a loyal dog or servant. However, it is also a virtue expected of committed Christians in response to God's prior faithfulness. Fisher's misplaced faith in technology reminds her that she is not so wise or able and she must look elsewhere for dependability. She relies on Kivebulaya's knowledge of local people and places, and his interpretation of their societies in order to navigate the journey beyond the Kaberole mission station. Furthermore, Kivebulaya's experience persuades the male European missionaries that the 'ladies' may undertake a potentially hazardous trip. Thus Kivebulaya acts as both chaperon and liberator, enabling the women to both subvert and conform to Victorian social expectations of their class which they were already redrawing by being missionaries. In reading missionary texts in this way the gendered relations are foregrounded and the interaction between Fisher and Kivebulaya is infused by social, and cultural forces from missionary's background.

Relationship between missionaries and indigenous peoples are often illuminated in missionary writings that articulate both lofty aspirations and stern criticism of local cultural practices. Fisher provides much greater commentary in the published book as she interprets her travels for a wider audience. In the same chapter that recounts the bicycle incident and praises Kivebulaya, Fisher describes the 'fascination' of her encounter with the peoples to whom Apolo introduces her and she takes to task European 'biased opinion,' by countering what she believes to be commonly held assumptions. She blames European mistrust for poor relations between African and Europeans.

> Dispel all preconceived ideas, study the people's environment, the external and internal influences that sway them, approach them not as "niggers" but fellow creatures, and the European will never need to complain of the black man's presumption, but will find it even possible to accept the inspired statement, "God … hath made of one blood all nations of men."
>
> *On the Borders of Pigmyland*: 110

Her reference to Acts 17:26 (Authorised Version) in this context is an attack on assumptions of racial superiority and a statement of belief in a common humanity. The dependence on Kivebulaya which Fisher displays also indicates the way in which their relationship bore out Fisher's biblically-based aspirations. Similar respect is also present in Fisher's popular anthropological account, *Twilight Tales of the Black Baganda* (1911) in which royal customs are carefully recounted, as explained by the kings of Toro and Bunyoro. Yet

Fisher, like other missionary writers, strains at the categories she has at her disposal to explain her experiences to British audiences and she often presents Africans in ways which are conflicted. She sensitively describes character, events and customs that she admires whilst also criticizing ways of life. For example, Fisher distains the lack of motivation for material improvement. She sees lethargy, laziness and lack of interest in the gospel in a disregard for cotton clothing or durable building material among some people she visits. These people are placed in stark contrast to the native teachers who worked for calico, and gazed wistfully at bicycles. Fisher mocks herself for being overdressed and she asserts that there is no material benefit in Christianity but, nevertheless, she understands the aspiration for cotton and other material novelties as denoting an interest in Christianity. Assumptions about cultural superiority hover through her writings whilst she attempts to hold up a vision of human equality. In passages in which Fisher appears to entirely disregard her own advice and criticises the peoples she meets, can be glimpsed a distorted view of the many who remained hostile or indifferent to missionary programmes. In Toro, the royal household and its associates accepted Christianity with some rapidity and sought to propagate it throughout the fragile kingdom. A careful reading of Fisher's writings gives us some indication of the variety of cultural responses to Christianity in the kingdom that informed what were also political decisions.

Where possible, missionary sources should be read with other sources in order to examine a number of perspectives at work and construct ways in which expectations crossed or not. Below we will compare Kivebulaya's diary account with Fisher's account, as an example. Kivebulaya kept brief notes of many of his journeys, including travels with other CMS missionaries over three decades. Diary entries confirm that Kivebulaya's role as a teacher—and later as an Anglican priest—included much itineration, that he enjoyed visiting places to preach the gospel or support new churches and that he relished the role of guide to missionaries and mediator between them and indigenous people. For example, in 1931 Kivebulaya records an itineration with Bishop Willis and Revd Russell who both wrote their own accounts available in the Church of Uganda archives in Mukono. Further comparison could be made with records of journeys of explorers, colonial administrators and other missionary groups (like the White Fathers operating in Toro) to examine patterned behaviour of journeying. Along with anthropological work, such comparison is able to place missionary itinerations in a longer history of hospitality and hostility. Chiefly guests and wealthy traders moved in style and were greeted with great ceremony (Stoner-Eby 2003: 160–162). The expectations of ritual courtesy were respected during missionary itinerations. The using of comparative sources

permits the identification of events that in any one account might appear incidental, or be described as idiosyncratic, so that the transnational encounters are seen to be infused by African social and cultural forces.

Kivebulaya's diary entries for his itineration with Fisher and Pike in 1901 are typically terse and statistical. He lists the ten destinations they visited and notes the numbers of people that gathered to meet them during their itineration. Kivebulaya also indicates that he considered industrious manual labour to be a virtue, but in contrast to Fisher's attention to idleness, he says that he encouraged those people they met who were working hard. They were road constructors, doing the same work in which Kivebulaya had been previously employed by the ruler of Buganda. In 1913, Kivebulaya bought his own bicycle. A broken bike may well have demonstrated the foolishness of the European in 1901 but its possibilities for efficient travel were much greater when the labourers had made the Toro roads better suited for wheels. For Kivebulaya, journeying with Fisher and Pike (and other missionaries) provided the signs of what he has been preaching: his message of eternal life in Christ was bound up in the material novelties and the benefits of belonging to an international movement in which strangers became siblings. His pale, overdressed fellow-missionaries balanced on strange contraptions provided a spectacle and a talking point. They lent Kivebulaya credibility amongst those prepared to countenance his teaching. Even the embarrassment of a broken bicycle became an opportunity to draw attention to road construction. He and other evangelists relied on performative elements surrounding travel and hospitality in order to draw attention to their message. When read with other documents Kivebulaya's diary shows the agency of indigenous people and demonstrates that novelties brought by westerners need not be understood as necessarily homogenising. Novelties could be vehicles—literally in this case—by which some local actors chose to engender change on translocal levels.

This section started with an amusing vignette found in a description of missionary itineration. The examination of a single story and related sources has demonstrated in microcosm some problems and possibilities in the use and interpretation of missionary sources. Missionary sources facilitate a number of overlapping enquiries: the missionary endeavour itself, the mediating role of church teachers, glimpses into communities who were uninterested by the Christian gospel, and ways in which the transnational adoption and adaption of Christianity worked in early encounters. Further insight into missionary writing requires an understanding of the variety of the sources. With reference to some documents already mentioned above, the final part of this chapter examines the nature and genre of missionary sources.

4 Missionary Sources

The analysis of possible interpretations of an amusing story has introduced some of the documents that are available to the researcher. It has also demonstrated that it is important to know what kind of source—its audience, genre and conceptual frames—is being used. Many missionary societies, including the CMS for whom Fisher worked, had a vast range of communications. This final section of the chapter analyses the range of genre and publications in which missionaries wrote in order to argue for two points: first, the importance of comprehending the nature and rationale of sources at historians' disposal for effective interpretation (even when missionary concerns are not central to the history of indigenous Christianity under investigation); second, the utility of a comparison of different sorts of missionary writing in order to gain a deeper understanding of the context. These points hinge upon two important issues: missionary writers were conscious of various audiences and they wrote according to their audiences' interests. They wrote for missionary societies requiring statistics and demonstrations of diligence, the general public and learned societies seeking different forms of knowledge about Africa, the supporters desirous of information for prayer and financial assistance, and close confidantes who expected frank accounts. The missionary sources categorised below were influenced by the perceived interests of potential readers and viewers. The way in which the sources are organised, archived and conceptualised also plays a role in our understanding of their historical significance (Stoler 2009: 32–38, 52; Burton 2005: 6–9).

The official publications of missionary societies have gained particular attention as interest in missionary sources has increased. They have been studied as a genre in their own right called 'missionary literature,' which is characterised by a propagandist intent and highly-regulated content (Johnson 2003: 6–7). This formal literature is extensive, well-known and provides valuable information. The accessibility of this literature has played a role in its use. Large missionary societies of mainline churches in Europe and the USA have often been studied because they have housed their archives in academic institutions or provided funding for their maintenance, cataloguing and, increasingly, their digitisation.[2] Smaller, independent societies have not always provided the same resources for generating, maintaining or making accessible their literature and

2 Two databases of British missionary archives and periodicals are useful finding aids: Mundus Gateway to mission archives & resources http://www.mundus.ac.uk/links.html#uk. Missionary Periodicals Database http://divdl.library.yale.edu/missionperiodicals/Default.aspx.

correspondence and have consequently received less attention to date. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) provides a good example of this official missionary literature. The archives housed at the University of Birmingham are a vast collection of institutional papers and correspondence with missionaries. The daily concerns of the institution do not always reflect the intercultural encounters of missionaries. CMS also produced a variety of periodicals intended to promote its aims and increase its support in Britain and targeted at different audiences and changing tastes over its two-hundred-year history. They include the *Intelligencier* (1846–1906) which aimed to provide detailed and informative articles, the *Gleaner* (1841–1921) which had a more popular approach, special interest periodicals (like the *Mission Hospital* 1922–1939) and periodicals for children (like *Children's World* 1891–1900). Missionary correspondence was reproduced for the volumes of *Annual Letters* and edited by staff in London for the society's annual reports, *Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society*. Like the publications of other mission agencies these were predominantly written by male European missionaries. Nevertheless, they include letters of female missionaries (including Fisher and Pike) and occasional reports from indigenous leaders. *Outlook* 57 [September 1930], includes translated letters from the King and Queen Mother of Toro and Apolo Kivebulaya). The volume of material produced and stored by large missionary societies has meant that scholars have often limited their attention to official publications of a single mission. These sources provide a huge quantity of reportage of events, characters, strategies and statistics. Nevertheless, a study which relies upon this kind of 'missionary literature' for its sole insight into missionary activity is liable to emphasise the institutional concerns of the organisation in the metropole, the interests of the missionary supporting public, and the way in which the mission field was conceived in the metropole. Missionary writing is much wider than the literature published by the headquarters of any society.

Missionaries published books of their experiences, not all of which were published by missionary presses. Missionary literature has been criticised for focussing on positive stories of foreign missionary success and ignoring indigenous agency (Johnston 2003: 7). Missionary struggles were part of a larger Christian expectation of sacrifice and suffering for the propagation of the gospel. Such narratives can form tropes of heroism, persecution and martyrdom that glorify the missionary endeavour. However, book-length treatments can reveal more complex narratives. Longer memoirs can discuss death, lack of converts, friendships and loneliness in less stylised manners that missionary periodicals. CMS publications included several biographies of Kivebulaya by AB Lloyd presenting Kivebulaya as a figure whom British Christians should emulate (1923, 1929, 1934). Fisher's two books include self-deprecatory

incidents and descriptions of the daily lives and roles of indigenous co-workers and political leaders (1904; 1911). By publishing with Marshall Brothers Fisher reached a Christian audience wider than CMS supporters with her travel narrative and evangelical critique of assumptions of racial hierarchy. In contrast, AB Lloyd's travelogues which were published by secular publishing house, Unwin, are replete with 'Boy's Own' style adventure (Wild-Wood 2010: 285–288) and show a closer imbrication of colonial and missionary perspectives and a greater acceptance of imperial ideals that were often critiqued elsewhere within missionary circles (Griffiths 2005: 53–55).

Regional publications are sometimes overlooked. They often contain greater local detail than was considered necessary in general publications. Nancy Hunt made use of *Yakusu Quarterly Notes* to access the letters of Congolese Baptists. CMS's *Uganda Notes* has contributions from an emerging lay Christian elite as well African church leaders and European missionaries. Regional publications show that the authorial boundaries of 'missionary literature' were porous, extending to Africans who identified with the missionary enterprise. Furthermore, missionary printing presses were often used for indigenous newspapers and magazines. In Uganda, two vernacular publications emerged in the early twentieth century to address the concerns of the growing literate and Christian public. *Ebifa mu Buganda* (est. 1907) was supported by CMS and *Munno* (est.1911) by the Roman Catholic White Fathers, copies of which can be accessed in Makerere University, Kampala. The contributions within these Luganda periodicals include discussions of religious and social affairs, poems, proverbs, obituaries of Church leaders and accounts of customs and traditional ways of life. Kivebulaya, for example, contributed to *Ebifa* and in its pages he is eulogised after his death. These periodicals contributed to information dissemination in the wider East African region. Henry Wright Duta, an early Ganda clergyman and prominent Bible translator, wrote for *Ebifa* and for *Msimulizi*, the Swahili magazine of St Andrew's Kiungani, the Universities Mission to Central Africa school in Tanzania, where he had studied (Stoner-Eby 2003: 173). The information sharing and knowledge production by Christian elites in print-media provides historians with accounts of current events and interpretations of the past. These periodicals also illuminate three developments influenced by the spread of Christianity. First, they show the asymmetries of influence among African populations in which particular languages and their speakers gain prominence. Second, they demonstrate multidirectional transnational connections beyond a familiar north-south trajectory (Koschorke 2016: 42). Third, they demonstrate the development of a Christianised ethno-nationalism and the inculcation of pan-African and transcontinental identities as Christian elites shared stories of

Christian expansion and examples of greater autonomy across nations and continents (Koschorke et al. 2016: 11–20).

Missionaries contributed to the production of knowledge in a variety of *academic disciplines* and so there are porous borders between what might be called missionary writing and anthropology, geography, medicine and so on (Harries and Maxwell 2012: 1–29). Ruth Fisher wrote the first anthropological work on the Nyoro, which was admired by later anthropologists despite its popular style because of her interviews with local authorities on traditional ways of life (Fisher 1911). The second anthropological work on the Nyoro, *The Bakitara* (1923), was also written by a missionary, the Revd John Roscoe, better known for his classic work, *The Buganda* (1911), in which he collaborated with another amateur historian and anthropologist, Apolo Kagwa, the Prime Minister of Uganda. Fisher's husband, A.B. Fisher, became a member of the Royal Geographic Society after submitting a lengthy report on the Rwenzori Mountain Range. Missionaries provided descriptions of indigenous societies as they encountered them, and as they learnt about them through relations with local people. The African involvement in these collaborations deserves further study. Careful reading of these missionary investigations of the pre-Christian past can indicate the shifting concerns of healing cults and the influence of African rulers on rituals of prosperity. Missionary commentary on these societies was infused with Christian assumptions, but even these assumptions do not conform to one understanding—some saw continuity between Christianity and African beliefs and practices, others saw profound differences.

A final source of missionary writings is private papers. Missionaries were often encouraged to keep journals in preparation for official accounts to be written for headquarters. They wrote private and round-robin letters to friends, family, home-churches and corresponded with other missionaries and African colleagues. These letters often contain more local detail and describe events incidental to that required by mission agencies. They have a warm, even intimate, quality and are frequently frank in their accounts and opinions. The comparison between private letters, diaries and published records of the same events can be illuminating, as a study of Fisher's bicycle story demonstrates. Private papers may be the most difficult to access because they are not always held with the institutional archive. The Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide, for example, has an archive of private missionary papers donated by family members. The largest holding in its possession is 33 boxes of the Joe Church archive. From the 1920s, Church, a Ruanda Mission (CMS) doctor, kept a rich and varied collection of correspondence, diaries, press cuttings, minutes, reports, audiotapes, photographs, annotated books and pamphlets. The collection provides insights into the history of the East African Revival and its

international impact, and prominent African and European figures, women in the movement, relations with colonial officials (Barringer 2012). The Joe Church collection offers just one example of the way in which private papers add to the variety of missionary sources.

Missionary sources are not limited to published and manuscript writings. They include the visual and the material. Photographs are found in considerable quantities in many mission archives.[3] The art of skilled missionary photographers demonstrates how photography allowed missionaries greater liberty than did their official written reports to examine indigenous cultures (Jenkins 2001: 73) and it reveals the complexity and ambiguity of the intercultural encounter (Maxwell 2011: 73–74). For example, photographs taken by missionaries in Toro in the first forty years of the twentieth century depict the natural environment, and also show social change through the construction of churches and schools, the gathering of Christians for worship, schooling and training and individual Europeans and Africans. Some photographers, including Fisher, capture members of the royal family in traditional regalia or participating in rituals. Kasagama's willingness to pose and the warmth and respect that is apparent in the photographs demonstrate the mutual trust between Fisher and the household of King Kasagama. They also indicate Fisher's commitment to the Toro monarchy and her desire to preserve tradition and custom, whilst confining its place to occasional pageantry distinct from daily Christian occupations. Most of the Kasagama's court were members of the Anglican Church and were constantly recalibrating the extent to which they understood Christianity as a novelty or as a reconstruction of traditional values and customs. John Roscoe also took photographs and he collected objects from rituals and daily life as part of his anthropological enquiry, gifting his collection to the University of Cambridge museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Apolo Kagwa also gave Ganda royal and traditional objects to the museum in Cambridge during a visit to England in 1903, presenting himself as a partner in the anthropological endeavour (Hand 2015: 75–76). The artefacts that missionaries collected from around the globe and their use in displays and museums have been studied as examples of networks of global exchange (Sivasundaram 2005: 179), as a source of metropolitan knowledge and as providing information on pre-Christian religious practice (Wingfield 2016).

---

3 Images from Protestant and Catholic missionary societies of Britain, Norway, Germany and the USA can be found at http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/topics/collection/p15799coll123.

In providing a list of missionary sources a number of problems have been exposed. First, the sheer volume of the missionary sources means that researchers may only examine one set of archives. They may also neglect the careful work of scrutinising a variety of texts and triangulating them with other sources in order to perceive the indigenous encounter. Second, many missionary sources are written with metropolitan audiences in mind: understanding those audiences and their perspectives permits researchers to interpret more effectively what missionaries say about the indigenous people amongst whom they work. A third difficulty should be added: access to sources can present a significant problem for researchers. Some archives are better maintained or more easily accessible than others. Archives are dispersed across the globe and, as indicated above, it should not be assumed that all documentation pertaining to missions is found in the western world. Nevertheless, the majority of missionary literature is held in the country of origin of the missionary societies. It is usually best understood, however, in conjunction with sources from the country of missionary encounter.

This chapter has also revealed the possibilities of missionary archives. Historians of World Christianity who wish to give priority to indigenous sources in an attempt to provide a polyvocal perspective on historical events will find in missionary sources a rich seam of historical material. They encompass a great deal of material beyond that which was produced by the headquarters of missionary societies, and cannot be understood as a single genre with a master narrative. They include scientific writing, photographs and artefacts. They also include publications to which indigenous Christian elites contributed who were—to one extent or other—engaged in the missionary project. A careful reading of these publications begins to collapse grand post-colonial narratives and to show that, even in situations where the asymmetries of political power loomed large, there was between foreign missionaries and indigenous people trust and friendship. Nevertheless, in order to achieve a polyvocal perspective, missionary sources require triangulation with other sources—oral history data, the work of local historians, student dissertations, the private records and letters of early Christians. The diaries, letters and short autobiography of Apolo Kivebualaya have provided just one example of the perspectives of one who embraced religious change and who recorded his work of preaching and church planting. If they are judged on the intent of the author, then Kivebulaya's writings are every bit as much missionary sources as the records of European societies and their agents. His record illustrates the extent to which indigenous and foreign missionaries collaborated in a shared endeavour.

5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined recent studies of religious encounter in sub-Saharan Africa in order to demonstrate the use of missionary sources. Their problems and possibilities were explicated through a sustained example and an examination of the variety of sources available. The reading of missionary sources presented here rejects the view that missionaries' record of events was always laughably at odds with the African perception of missionary endeavours and that missionary documents at best hold a distorting mirror to change which they could not perceive clearly (Hunt 1999: 3–4). Missionaries had a conflicted and changeable relationship with colonialism influenced by status in their home societies, the church and mission agency to which they belonged and their theological and cultural perspectives (Porter 2004:13). Thus the missionary record may elucidate changes in the metropole when it appears to represent indigenous voices. Nevertheless, information on indigenous populations can be gleaned from missionary sources. Missionaries wished to instigate change—individual, spiritual change through conversion, medical and educational change. They also wished to protect societies from too much change or the wrong kind of change, and so were interested in the cultures in which they worked. Careful analysis is necessary in order to provide a layered comprehension of events. The evidence contained in missionary sources can be triangulated with other sources in order to gain indigenous perspectives. They reveal that some indigenous views were regional, national and transnational and that some indigenous people were drawn to be part of a global community.

Comprehension of missionary sources is essential if the transregional and pluriform nature of Christianity is to be explored: indeed, it is here that the strength of a fresh approach to missionary archives lies. If a World Christianity approach has attended to the polycentricism of Christianity, then the use of missionary sources is a reminder of the global and translocal connectivities that informed particular Christian expressions. They provide one way of tracking commonalities in different parts of the globe by showing larger-scale connections, networks, and cultural exchange. Missionary sources can indicate the local appeal of a vision of human cosmopolitanism and Christian universality.

Bibliography

Ajika, M. Sjalbonyo (2008). *Daudi Lyenga. Premier Catéchiste de l'Ituri*. Evêché, Mahagi-Nioka.

Barringer, Terry (2012). '"Recordings of the Work of the Holy Spirit".' In Kevin Ward and Emma Wild-Wood, eds. *The East African Revival. History and Legacies*. Surrey, Ashgate: 177–186.

Bayly, Christopher (2004). *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914. Global Connections and Comparisons*. Oxford: Blackwells.

Brock, Peggy, ed. (2005). *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change*. Leiden and Boston: Brill.

Peggy Brock (2011). *The Many Voyages of Arthur Wellington Clah. A Tsimshian Man on the Pacific Northwest Coast*. UBC Press: Vancouver.

Brock, Peggy, Norman Etherington, Gareth Griffiths, Jacqueline Van Ghent (2016). *Indigenous Evangelists and Questions of Authority in the British Empire, 1750–1940. First Fruits*. Leiden: Brill.

Burton, Antoinette (2005). 'Introduction. Archive Fever, Archive Stories.' In Antoinette Burton, ed. *Archive Stories. Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press: 1–24.

Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff (1991). *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Vol. 1. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Cooper, Frederick and Laura Anne Stoler (1997). 'Between Metropole and Colony. Rethinking a Research Agenda.' In Frederick Cooper and Laura Anne Stoler, eds. *Tension of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*. Berkeley: University of California Press: 1–56.

Ekebuisi, Chinonyerem C. (2015). *The Life and Ministry of Prophet Garrick Sokari Braide. Elijah the Second of Niger Delta, Nigeria* (*c.1882–1918*). Bern: Peter Lang.

Etherington, Norman (2005). 'Introduction.' In Norman Etherington, ed. *Missions and Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1–18.

Fisher, Ruth R (1904). *On the Borders of Pigmyland*. London: Marshall Brothers.

Fisher, Ruth R (1970 [1911]). *Twilight Tales of the Black Baganda*. London: Frank Cas.

Fisher, Margaret, ed. (2010). *Grandmother's Tracks*. Private publication.

Griffiths, Gareth (2005). 'Popular Imperial adventure fiction and the Discourse of Missionary Texts,' In Jamie S. Scott and Gareth Griffiths, eds, *Mixed Messages. Materiality, Textuality, Missions*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Grimshaw, Patricia and Andrew May (2010). *Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Exchange*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press.

Hand, Rachel (2015). 'Brass Necklet, Uganda.' In Karen Jacobs and Chantal Knowles, Chris Wingfield, eds. *Trophies, Relics and Curios? Missionary Heritage from Africa and the Pacific.* Leiden: Sidestone Press: 75–76.

Harries, Patrick (2007). *Butterflies and Barbarians. Swiss Missionaries and Systems of Knowledge in South-East Africa*. Oxford: James Currey.

Harries, Patrick and David Maxwell, eds (2012). *The Spiritual in the Secular. Missionaries and Knowledge about Africa*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Hilde, Hielssen, Inger Marie Okkenhaug, Karin Hestad Skeie, eds (2011). *Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Unto the Ends of the World*, Leiden: Brill.

Hovland, Ingie (2013). *Mission Station Christianity. Norwegian Missionaries in Colonial Natal and Zululand, Southern Africa, 1850–1890*. Leiden: Brill.

Hunt, Nancy Rose (1999). *A Colonial Lexicon of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Jenkins, Paul (2001). 'On Using Historical Missionary Photographs in Modern Discussion.' *Le Fait Missionnaire* 10,1: 71–89.

Johnston, Anna (2003). *Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800–1860*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Olabimtan, Kehinde (2013). *Samuel Johnson of Yorubaland, 1846–1901. Identity, Change and the Making of the Mission Agent*. Oxford, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Kollman, Paul (2010). 'Classifying African Christianities. Past, Present and Future.' *Journal of Religion in Africa* 40,1: 3–32.

Koschorke, Klaus (2016). 'Transcontinental Links, Enlarged Maps and Polycentric Structures in the History of World Christianity.' *The Journal of World Christianity* 6,1: 42–59.

Koschorke, Klaus, Adrian Hermann, E Phuti Mogase, Ciprian Burlacioiu, eds. (2016). *Discourses of Indigenous Christian Elites in Colonial Societies in Asia and Africa around 1900. A Documentary Sourcebook from Selected Journals*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.

Lloyd, Albert B. ([1923] 1934). *Apolo of the Pygmy Forest*. London: Church Missionary Society.

Lloyd, Albert B. (1929). *More About Apolo*. London: Church Missionary Society.

Lloyd, Albert B. (1934). *Apolo the Pathfinder. Who Follows?* London: Church Missionary Society.

Maxwell, David (2011). 'Photography and the Religious Encounter. Ambiguity and Aesthetics in Missionary Representations of the Luba of South East Belgian Congo.' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53,1: 38–74.

Manktelow, Emily (2013). *Missionary Families. Race, Gender and Generation on the Spiritual Frontier*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Meyer, Birgit (1999). *Translating the Devil. Religion and Modernity Among the Ewe in Ghana*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Morier-Genoud, Eric and Didier Péclard (2007). 'SSM. A Twelve-Year-Old "New Journal".' *Social Sciences and Missions* 20: 1–3.

Mudimbe, Valentin-Yves (1988). *The Invention of Africa. Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Peel, J.D.Y. (1995). '"For Who Hath Despised the Day of Small Things?" Missionary Narratives and Historical Anthropology.' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37,3: 581–607.

Peel, John D.Y. (1996). 'Problems and Opportunities in an Anthropologist's Use of a Missionary Archive.' In R. Bickers and R. Seton, eds, *Missionary Encounters. Sources and Issues*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press: 70–94.

Peel, John D.Y. (2000). *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Peterson, Derek R. (2011). 'Conversion and the Alignments of Colonial Culture.' *Social Sciences and Missions* 24,2–3: 207–232.

Peterson, Derek R. (2012). *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival. A History of Dissent, c.1935–1972*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Porter, Andrew (2004). *Religion verses Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Roscoe, John (1911[1965]). *The Baganda. An Account of their Native Customs and Beliefs*. London: Frank Cas.

Roscoe, John (1923). *The Bakitara or Banyoro. The First Part of the Report of the Mackie Ethnological Expedition to Central Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sivasundaram, Sujit (2005). *Nature and the Godly Empire. Science and the Evangelical Mission in the Pacific, 1795–1850*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Skeie, Karin Hestad (2012). *Building God's Kingdom. Norwegian Missionaries in Highland Madagascar, 1866–1903*. Leiden: Brill.

Stoler, Ann L. (2009). *Along the Archival Grain. Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Stoner-Eby, Anne-Marie (2003). 'African Leaders Engage Mission Christianity. Anglicans in Tanzania 1876–1936.' Unpublished PhD, University of Pennsylvania.

Tiberondwa, Ado K. (1998 2nd ed). *Missionary Teachers as Agents of Colonialism in Uganda*. Kampala: Fountain.

Wild-Wood, Emma (2010). 'The Making of an African Missionary Hero in the English Biographies of Apolo Kivebulaya (1923–1936),' *Journal of Religion in Africa* 40,3: 273–306.

Wild-Wood, Emma (2016). 'The Travels and Translations of Three African Anglican Missionaries, 1890–1930.' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 67.4: 781–798.

Wild-Wood, Emma (2020). *The Mission of Apolo Kivebulaya. Religious Encounter and Social Change in the Great Lakes* (*c.1865–1935*). Woodbridge: James Currey.

Wingfield, Chris (2016). '"Scarcely More Than a Christian Trophy Case"? The Global Collections of the London Missionary Society Museum (1814–1910).' *Journal of the History of Collections* 29,1: 109–128.

On-line Data Bases

Missionary Periodicals Database http://divdl.library.yale.edu/missionperiodicals/.

Mundus Gateway to mission archives & resources http://www.mundus.ac.uk/links.html#uk.

University of Southern California International Mission Photography Archive: http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/topics/collection/p15799coll123; http://crcc.usc.edu/initiatives/impa/.

Archives Mentioned in the Article

Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide
Church Missionary Archives, University of Birmingham
Church of Uganda Archives, Uganda Christian University
Africana Collection, Makerere University
Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) Archives, Rome and http://www.mafrome-archivio.org/misafrarchives_fr.html#

CHAPTER 5

Methodological Reflections on the Study of Chinese Christianities

Joseph Tse-Hei Lee and Christie Chui-Shan Chow

1 Introduction

To stage a meaningful dialogue between China area studies and Christianity worldwide, this chapter draws on the changing landscape of Chinese Christianities to reframe certain parameters and norms in the study of global Christian movements. By focusing on the interplay between global religious forces and local conditions, this chapter argues that the Chinese concern about global-local church ties is largely defined by the very question of church-state relations. The voices and narratives of Chinese Christians throw light on their own understanding of the global Christian body and on their ongoing struggles to define an authentic religious identity in a state-centric society.

The existing debate about what constitutes Christianity in China is fraught with two misconceptions. First, there has been a tendency to define an indigenous church against Euro-American missionary Christianity. This nationalistic narrative of Christianity in China was derived from the post-1949 ideological environment, where separating the ties between Chinese and global churches has been a political agenda of the Communist state. Second, Christian groupings in China are diverse and fragmentary. Analytical terms like 'Chinese Christianity' and 'popular Christianity' are too simplistic and ignore many transnational, intra-/inter-church boundaries arising from doctrinal, liturgical and political disagreements. Today most of the missionary-founded churches such as the Anglicans, Baptists, Presbyterians and Seventh-day Adventists as well as indigenous movements like Watchman Nee's Little Flock and the True Jesus Church, and recently, some zealous Christian groups like The Church of Almighty God, have not only survived persecution but also become an integral part of global Christianity, exporting their own doctrines and faith practices worldwide. To locate China's rich and diverse Christian experience within the broader landscape of Christianity, this chapter proposes an alternative way to rewriting the state-centered church history. It shows that the Chinese Protestant expressions of Christianity took root in resistance to

© JOSEPH TSE-HEI LEE AND CHRISTIE CHUI-SHAN CHOW, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004444867_007
This is an open access chapter distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

missionary efforts during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that failed to win the hearts and minds of the people, and to decades of concentrated persecution of churches and believers under the Communist rule. However, the question of state domination continues to shape scholarly understanding of Christian experience in China. The production of knowledge about Chinese churches is affected by the state's control over access to the official archives. It is not just the Christian communities who fear the mighty state; the state fears them, knowing the importance of historical memory in shaping collective consciousness of the churches. To explain the creative tension of these complex church-state encounters, this chapter highlights a number of methodological issues arising from archival research and fieldwork in the study of Protestant Christianity in China. Integrating archival research with multi-site fieldwork may be the best way to circumvent official censorship and move beyond the state-centered historical narrative. This interdisciplinary approach places the historical process of Chinese-Christian interactions at the heart of discussion.

Beginning with an overview of the latest research on Christianity in China, this chapter reviews different types of archival materials and explores the problems of using these primary sources such as how reliable they are, how they shed light on the historical reality of the churches and the ideological climate during which the sources were produced, and how they permit the exploration of new themes not yet covered in previous research. It is followed by a discussion of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of conducting fieldwork among Chinese Christian communities. In particular, it addresses the challenge of interacting with different groups of informants, the varieties of ethnographic data collected, and the scholarly insights of these data. It concludes with an analysis of new possibilities for further research into the Christian experience in today's China.

2 The Study of the Christian China in Christianity Worldwide

The first Chinese encounter with Christianity dates back to the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–907), a period of cosmopolitan openness when foreign religions such as Buddhism, Syriac Christianity, Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism were permitted in China. Evidence from the classical Chinese manuscripts has shown that under the imperial support, the Syriac-speaking Church of the East took the initiative to Christianize the Daoist teaching of Way (*dao*) and turned it into the idea of the Trinity. They also appropriated the Buddhist teaching on human sufferings and presented an alternative interpretation by stressing the

deception of Satan, the fall of human beings and, at the same time, the suffering and salvation of the Messiah for the world. The same pattern of cross-cultural interaction can be seen in the Ming and Qing dynasties (A.D. 1368–1911) when European missionaries arrived. Because of the state's persecution during the eighteenth century, the Catholic communities went underground, escaped the direct control of European Catholic missionaries, and developed into a localized network of family cells in coastal and inland provinces (Lee and Laamann 2019). Thus, without a strict surveillance of missionaries, Chinese Catholics had much autonomy to integrate popular religious traditions into their faith practices. This popular and unconscious form of syncretism still characterizes many Catholic communities in China today. What the followers of the Church of the East in the Tang dynasty and of Catholicism in the Ming and Qing periods found in Christianity was the fulfilment of the Confucian ethics and the Buddhist and Daoist ideals. Ordinary converts subscribed to the idea of universal salvation and employed sacred Christian symbols such as crucifixes, icons and Bibles to struggle against evil forces. When the first Protestant missionary Robert Morrison (1782–1834) set foot on Chinese soil in 1807, he built on the previous successes of the Syriac-speaking Church of the East and European Catholic missionaries. He could never have imagined that Christianity would transform itself from a mistrusted and, at times, persecuted 'foreign' religion into a fast-growing and fully indigenized spiritual movement in the twenty-first century.

Today Catholics and Protestants combined make up between 4 and 6 percent of China's total population of 1.4 billion. This figure represents a significant increase since the Communist Revolution of 1949, when Christians accounted for one percent of the national population, with only three million Catholics and one million Protestants (Bays 2003; Lee 2007; Madsen 2003). The long history of China's encounter with Christianity problematizes what Philip Jenkins describes a "shift of the center of Christianity" from Europe and North America to Asia, Africa and Latin America (Jenkins 2002). In the sixth and seventh centuries, there were more Christian churches in what is now perceived as the 'South' (i.e., China, Inner Asia, Western Asia and Northern Africa) than in the 'North' (i.e., Europe). But the demographic changes in today's Christian population do not necessarily lead to the shift of Christian influences from global North to global South. According to Robert Wuthnow (2010), American churches have utilized the force of globalization to play a significant role in evangelistic and leadership training programs abroad. This explains why contemporary Chinese churches are keen to reconnect with the American counterparts in order to access external theological resources for faith consolidation and funds for program development.

There has been a heightened awareness among scholars of the need to reconstruct the lived experience of foreign missionaries and native believers, partly because of the sheer size and diversity of the country, and partly because of the long history of Chinese-Christian encounters. Two interpretative angles have shaped their scholarship (Chow forthcoming). The first is to analyze the indigenization of Christianity in the light of Western modernity. This analysis departs from the conventional focus on Western missionary enterprises to the role of conscientious missionaries in indigenizing the gospel and that of native converts as active initiators of faith and practices (Ling 1999; Lutz 2008). Rather than being subordinate recipients, the Chinese proved to be competent church administrators and learned theologians from the beginning, making the gospel more relevant to fellow countrymen, and in doing so, surpassing the Western missionaries (Bays and Widmer 2009; Wang 2007; Wu 2005; Yang 2014). Some Chinese church leaders went so far as to separate themselves from their missionary supervisors and to adapt the theologies and liturgies of Western Christianity into local culture (Bays 1996: 265–366; Constable 1994; Lian 2010).

The second is a China-centered approach that juxtaposes foreign missionary enterprises with home-grown Protestant independent congregations, thereby highlighting the Chinese reception of the gospel, and their unique contributions to the Church (Austin 2007; Clark 2011; Harrison 2013; Sweeten 2001). The biographical studies of home-grown revivalists such as Dora Yu (Yu Cidu 1873–1931), John Song (Song Shangjie 1901–44), Watchman Nee (Ni Tosheng 1903–72) and Wang Mingdao (1900–91) illustrate this trend. These leaders were once affiliated with the denominational churches, but they broke away from the mission institutions and reinvented themselves as faith-based evangelists. Some eventually created independent congregations like Watchman Nee's Little Flock and Wang Mingdao's Beijing Tabernacle. Dora Yu and John Song were praised for their revivalist teachings and assumed greater spiritual authority than missionaries (Harvey 2002; Roberts 2005; Wu 2002). The importance of native agency in localizing the gospel stands out as the signature focus of this trend (Bays 1996: 309).

However, some limitations can be discerned from these interpretative perspectives. First, there has been a tendency towards the teleological assumption that Christianity first came to China as a foreign religion and only gradually transformed itself into a truly Chinese religion, after separating itself from a Euro-American denominational matrix. A complete discontinuity between missionary Christianity and Chinese Christianity is thus assumed to be inevitable. Second, Chinese Christian groupings turn out to be more diverse than one can imagine, and analytical categories such as 'independent Christianity',

'indigenous church' and 'popular Christianity' are all-encompassing frameworks that simplify Chinese churches into a homogeneous entity, ignoring numerous intra-church boundaries arising from differences in doctrinal teachings, liturgical practices and socio-political ethics. Third, these trends overlook the living reality of denominationalism within the Chinese Church. Denominationalism has been and is an integral part of Christianity in China, even though Watchman Nee's Little Flock and the True Jesus Church still manifest the respective contours of global Brethren and Pentecostal movements (Inouye 2019; Woodbridge 2019). R.G. Tiedemann has commented on the failure of indigenous churches—the True Jesus Church, the Jesus Family and the Little Flock—to transcend their differences and form a Protestant coalition in response to the rise of (anti-missionary) Chinese nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s. As Tiedemann (2012: 8) asserts:

> [W]hen foreign missionary operations ended in China in the middle of the twentieth century, the Protestant movement was far more divided than it had been at the beginning of that century. Indeed, in spite of the best efforts of the authorities in the People's Republic of China to create one unified post-denominational faith, deep divisions persist to this day within indigenous Protestant Christianity.

His remark captures lucidly the paradox of Chinese Protestantism. Along the same reasoning, Christie Chui-Shan Chow states that "the more independent the Chinese Church becomes, the more unlikely that they identify with the secular authorities, transcend their respective group differences, and contribute to the Communist state's discourse of a post-denominational faith" (Chow 2015: 7–8). In the Communist official rhetoric of today, the Chinese Church is characterized as a post-denominational entity loyal to the state, a discourse promoted by the late Chinese bishop of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, K.H. Ting (1915–2012) (Wickeri 2007). This ideological construct has discouraged scholars from taking seriously the resilience of denominationalism among Chinese Protestants (Wickeri 2015).

An emphasis on the Euro-American denominational features and ecumenical ties of Chinese Christians does not mean that contemporary scholars endorse a reorientation of the Chinese Church to the old mission-led religion. Daniel H. Bays highlights the central role that Chinese Christians played in constructing "a vibrant and firmly grounded Christian community", something which foreign missionaries did not fully achieve during their time in China (Bays 2013: 14). In placing the emphasis on indigeneity, we should not dismiss foreign Christianity as an obsolete phenomenon without any influence.

Whatever global ideas, institutions and practices the Chinese acquired from the missionaries, they contextualized these and made them their own. Whenever circumstances permitted, they appropriated the foreign influence at hand. In this light, the interplay between global religious currents and local conditions should be the focus of discussion, and the 'Chinese-ness' of Christianity was concerned with the freedom to actualize the gospel and to engage with the surrounding environment, local politics, and overseas mission institutions.

The coexistence of global currents and local vitality resonates with the focus on the unity of Christians across temporal and spatial boundaries in the study of Christianity worldwide. This conceptualization challenges the teleological view that Christianity came to China as a foreign religion and transformed itself into a purely local belief system. As Ryan Dunch (2014) points out, this linear framework is derived from the ideological environment of the early twentieth century, where separating Chinese from global churches was part of the call for the indigenization of the gospel, and this became a key component of the Communist anti-religious policy after 1949. This leads to a scholarly investigation of when Christianity became wholly indigenous and by what criteria that can be assessed. Instead of dichotomizing the global and local ties of Christianity, it is important to acknowledge a symbiotic relationship between localizing Christian faith practices and maintaining fellowship with church communities outside China. The next section historicizes Western missionaries and Chinese Christians as effective forces in maintaining the global-local religious ties and state-society balance.

3 The Study of Christianity in China

Christians in modern China faced a world that was destabilizing on multiple fronts. Globally, the First World War led to international entanglements facilitated by modern developments in transportation, communication and military technology. Internally, the twentieth century saw the collapse of the Qing dynasty, the establishment of a weak Republican state, the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War and the Communist Revolution. Not only were the governing institutions plagued by severe violence, but the traditional foundations of Chinese morality, including popular religions and Confucianism, were attacked by the state makers. The dire conditions left a tremendous void in Chinese society (Lee 2018: 1–14). Christianity flourished in areas suffering profound dislocations amid regime change and warfare. This is true for South China's Chaoshan, a region notorious for its long tradition of collective

violence. The Christian century of South China (1860s–present) was characterized by a reciprocal movement involving foreign missionaries and native agents. Local Christians were responsible for spreading the faith through transnational migration routes and kinship ties. Before the rise of nationalism, a Chinese Christian religious sphere was largely defined by linguistic and social networks. These networks were outside the state control and provided additional resources that empowered the church in times of crisis. In areas with little government control, Christianity became a new potent element across China. In an autonomous managerial public sphere, the Chinese Christians assumed the role of a quasi-state, channelling aid from afar and rehabilitating severely affected localities during emergencies (Lee 2014). These faith-based initiatives not only laid the basis for a cohesive and legitimate grassroots authority beneath a fragmented state structure, but also offered valuable spiritual, material and organizational resources to people seeking to make sense of a dangerous world from the late Qing to the 1950s.

The 1950s saw a new era of mission-church relations. After the outbreak of the Korean War on June 25, 1950, the Communist state forced China's Protestant communities to sever their ties with global churches, placed the diverse Protestant denominations under the control of a Leninist mass organization, and purged any church leaders critical of the state-controlled Three-Self Patriotic Movement, a mass organization designed to legitimatize the state's intervention into Chinese church affairs. The Maoist decades of hostile persecution of churches and believers raised important questions about faith and politics in a state-centric society. When the state reasserted its influence in the religious sphere, Christians either participated in the state's quest for legitimacy or resisted the forces of ideological conformity that secular authorities imposed on them (Lee 2017).

What happened to ordinary Christians who were not jailed and persecuted during the darkest moment of the Maoist era (1949–1976)? Christie Chui-Shan Chow (forthcoming) has charted the revival of Adventist Christians in East China's Wenzhou. She observed that rural Adventists developed a localized network of clandestine cells to continue religious activities during the 1960s, and they resurfaced as a fully indigenized spiritual movement in the 1980s. These Wenzhou Adventists believed not only that they were called out of this world to follow Jesus Christ and serve humankind, but also that they coexist with any political regime. Several thousand kilometres away, house churches in South China's Chaoshan relied on the Overseas Chinese Christian networks for support and protection. Remittances sent by missionaries, friends and relatives from Hong Kong and Southeast Asia greatly benefited the local Christians (Chow and Lee 2016: 579–599).

Against this backdrop, the problem of state domination continues to shape our understanding of Christian experience in China. State censorship makes it difficult for people to conduct genuine research on Chinese church history. The construction of scholarly knowledge about Chinese churches is affected by the state's arrangements for and restrictions on access to the archives. The state recognizes the influence of historical memory in shaping collective consciousness of the churches. Accordingly, draconian control of historical knowledge and memory is accompanied by strict supervision of the officially confiscated church archives for research. No historiography exists in a political vacuum. In Maoist China, the reinstatement of a state-sanctioned, triumphalist narrative of the Communist victory against foreign imperialism constrained independent historical investigation. At that time, archives were off limits to church historians, and church documents confiscated or destroyed. Chinese universities and research institutes were instructed to uphold the official Marxist ideological paradigm, and school textbooks outlined official perspectives on the past. These obstacles present a number of methodological issues about archival research and fieldwork in the study of Christianity in China today.

4 Archival Research in China

What information do we find in the archives about Christianity in China? As John D.Y. Peel (1996) has argued, the great bulk of the Christian missionary archives consists of first-hand accounts of missionary activities and impressions of native evangelistic agents. Of these records, there are countless reports of evangelization: preaching in markets and villages, religious discussions with people from all walks of life including faith seekers, visitors, farmers, merchants, artisans, and traditional religious specialists, all at different levels of formality and informality. As Christian congregations began to take shape on native soil, there are many accounts of religious activities and interactions. These missionary archives document the social and religious life of Christian communities. There is much information about the persecution of converts by non-Christians. Apart from the Sunday services, sermons and hymns, the missionary reports contain much data on the material side of running a mission station: the acquisition of landed property for building churches, missionary residences, schools and hospitals, the erection, maintenance and repair of churches, problems in getting supplies, hiring workers and distributing resources. Interaction with native workers is another interesting issue in the reports. Finally, there are rich ethnographic data and historical photographs about the social environment in which the foreign missions

operated. Most of what missionaries talked about local society and culture is supplementary to reports of their evangelistic works, and conveys to readers a vivid impression of rural society in specific contexts: the dynamics of popular religious activities, the frequent outbreaks of resource conflicts, the manifestation of intra/inter-village violence, and the impacts of Christianity on local politics.

In addition to missionary archives, which are usually located outside China, there are also archival resources on Christianity in China. One example of such valuable resources are the Chinese state archives. The archival system of the Maoist state was a powerful instrument of control used by the officials in all major political purges. After 1949, the Maoist government implemented the aggressive Three-Self Patriotic Movement to co-opt all Protestants and take over their churches. The authorities confiscated and transferred most of the church records to all the municipal departments of united front, and the purpose was to enable Communist officials in charge of religious affairs to better understand the profile of native church leaders and persecute them. Ironically, this official decision saved the church materials from being destroyed by the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Once China implemented the open-door policy of economic development in the 1980s, many provincial and municipal authorities transferred these confiscated church records to the state archives, which then declassified the materials for the public in the late 1990s.

Much has been written about the challenge of conducting archival research in China (Dubois and Kiely 2020; Kraus 2016; Ye and Esherick 1996; Wagner 1998, 2002). How should church historians get access to an official archive in China? Getting a letter of introduction (*jieshao xin*) from a Chinese academic institution or an affiliated work unit (*danwei*) is the first step. The letter simply mentions the name of a researcher and the length of one's affiliation with the local work unit. International scholars and research students should work with Chinese universities that have exchange agreements with their home institutions. It is a formality to obtain this letter before applying for permission to do research in any national, provincial and municipal archives.

Upon receiving the official approval, navigating the catalogues is the second challenge. The Chinese archival catalogues broadly divide the collections of historical materials (*lishi ziliao*) into the pre- and post-1949 era. Any materials that were produced before the Communist Revolution of 1949, known as the period of pre-Liberation, are usually open for research. Yet, archival sources after 1949 could be problematic because the documents reflect badly on the political, social and economic failures of the Maoist regime, and the intense persecutions of Christian communities.

Accessibility to post-1949 materials impacts the ability to construe comprehensive appreciation of the twentieth-century Chinese Christian experience. During the 1990s and 2000s, a wider accessibility to source materials deepened research on the Chinese churches. At that time, it was easier for foreigners and Chinese to access archival sources on religious affairs. When the ideological climate once more became restrictive, these archives were close to the outside world. Before the Beijing Olympics in 2008, Joseph Tse-Hei Lee visited the Beijing Municipal Archives and found many official reports on the persecution of Wang Mingdao during the mid-1950s. When he revisited the same institution in 2012, the staff had removed any references to these reports and the catalogues were filled with empty white space.

On many occasions, archival officials could remove a scholar's access to declassified materials based on ambiguous reasons. One should pay attention to the written archival regulations in order to defend one's right to research. As China embraced advanced strategies of online and offline control, a researcher should be aware of the visible and invisible surveillance systems. In the past, most of the user-friendly archival staff did not want to be burdened with too many photocopying requests, and they often allowed a researcher to photocopy, scan and take photographs of the documents. When the Chinese state tightened ideological control at the higher level, a researcher had to take time to cultivate friendship and earn trust from the staff. In 2013, the senior officials in the Wenzhou Municipal Archives found Christie Chui-Shan Chow consulting the reports on local religious affairs through a surveillance camera, and immediately told the staff to suspend her access. Having spent a few weeks at the archives, Chow gained much respect and trust from the staff. The sympathetic staff eventually allowed Chow to read and copy some of the reports by hand, as long as she did not photograph materials.

Nevertheless, one should never feel discouraged by not getting access to the archival folders on religious affairs. Because the Chinese Communist state penetrated all aspects of public life, many provincial and municipal administrative units were involved in the mass campaigns against foreign missionaries and native churches. These units included the Communist Youth League and the respective bureaus of united front, foreign affairs, healthcare, education and commerce. The archives of these units contain information related to former missionary enterprises and churches in the spheres of medical care, education, commerce and foreign affairs. When these bureaus took over the missionary-run institutions in the 1950s, the first step was to confiscate the archives of local Christian hospitals, schools, universities and welfare agencies. This enabled the officials to gather intelligences and organize anti-Christian rallies against the existing church leadership. The officials later transferred the

materials to the provincial and municipal archives, and historians have come across many of these former church archives in the provinces of Guangdong, Guangxi, Fujian, Zhejiang, Shandong, Sichuan and Yunnan. Though framed in Marxist, anti-religious tone, these official reports have much data about church-state tensions, and profiles of anti-Communist church leaders. When comparing such reports with ethnographic data about clandestine church activities, one often finds the defiant church staff to lead the house church movements during the 1960s and 1970s.

During his research, Joseph Tse-Hei Lee discovered extensive collections of the American Baptist, Scottish Presbyterian and French Catholic church documents in several municipal and district archives in Guangdong Province during the 1990s and 2000s. These church documents contain many volumes of the minutes of the Shantou Presbyterian Synod of Chaozhou and Huizhou, Baptist and Presbyterian churches' account books, congregational rolls, correspondence between city and rural churches, conversion testimonies, and records of intra- and inter-church disputes. Some of the declassified Cultural Revolution-era folders include a "secret" (*jimi*) public security report on Watchman Nee's Little Flock Movement, and the report was circulated across different bureaucratic networks of provincial officials in charge of religious affairs (Lee 2005). Together with the foreign missionary archives, these documents allow scholars to reconstruct the grassroots history of Chinese Christian communities, focusing on the issues of conversion, church governance and mission-church relations, the institutionalization of the training program and mission schools, as well as the formation of Christian lineages and their growing regional and transnational networks.

Moreover, these documents reveal that both foreign missionaries and Chinese workers had put in place a coherent system of church hierarchy before 1949. This institutional trend can be seen in the increasing use of written records, formulaic surveys, and statistical records, the correspondence between different levels of the church hierarchy, the professionalization of native church ministers, and the active involvement of the laity in church governance. The documents enable researchers to map the organizational mechanisms and community resources that foreign missionaries and native church leaders deployed to evangelize the local society. Because the church was staffed by Chinese, their social networks and native knowledge helped to make the system work, shaping the religious hierarchy and allowing it to influence the widely scattered congregations. The best way to get things done was to go directly to the most qualified persons on the ground. Many documents reveal who these persons were and who were better equipped to deal with certain practical problems than the missionaries, to advance the evangelistic

agenda, and to undertake specific pastoral and mundane tasks. As the church hierarchy was linked through social networks among members of the clergy and laity, the complicated relationship between documentations and actions contains rich data about native knowledge and personal ties. The variety of church practices in different localities, the localization of Anglo-American church management methods, and the need to go with the grain of local society add a new dimension to understanding the actual operation of Chinese churches.

Furthermore, the grassroots Chinese Christians' experience highlights the importance of the church as a major building block and a viable civic institution in the midst of widespread chaos and unrest. When dynastic collapse and intense warlord conflicts shattered the pre-existing socio-political order, the church stepped in and partnered with local authorities in the realm of disaster management. Many urban and rural Christians emerged socially autonomous and economically independent. Last but not least, both the Nationalists and Communists first experimented with the tactic of mass mobilization against Chinese Christians and formalized a revolutionary strategy of co-opting, infiltrating, and subverting the church during the Anti-Christian Movement (1925–1926). This laid the foundation for hostile attitudes and norms that greatly impacted church-state conflicts in the Maoist era and even in contemporary China. These features provide key threads—the impacts of regime change, the Christians' encounters with the secular forces of state-building, the church's involvement in transforming local religious and socioeconomic landscapes, and the importance of religious agency—that have shaped the making of Chinese Christianities.

It is worth mentioning that the research conditions in each Chinese archive vary from place to place and from time to time. The Shanghai Municipal Archives is considered by scholars to be the most user-friendly institution because its outstanding staff is headed by professional historians, who try to make archival materials easily accessible to researchers. In Shanghai, Lee discovered several accusation reports against the Seventh-day Adventists and the Roman Catholics during the 1950s. These reports were labelled as "highly confidential" (*mimi*) but researchers could access them in print and online. The political nature of these reports presents a methodological problem for research. Written in the orthodox Maoist discourse and intended for Communist Party officials in charge of public security and religious affairs, the accusation materials characterized these Christian leaders as "counterrevolutionaries," "reactionary forces," and "class enemies." Communist authorities, however, applied these accusatory terms to both Christians and non-Christians to justify their persecution by all available means, including state violence. The indiscriminate use

of these terms is just one example of the anti-Christian biases that color the official sources. What are missing in these archives are the subtle relationships that had shaped the encounters between Christians and non-Christians. Nor is there any data on local Christians' feelings of many complex and different subjects in connection with the origins of their communities. Lack of ethnographic perspectives is another methodological problem to be encountered. The only way to overcome this problem is to do fieldwork among Christian communities.

5 Field Research Conditions in China

The personal dimension and the unique political conditions in China make the field research and ethnographical work among Christian communities particularly challenging. There are several elements affecting the fieldwork conditions in China. First is the high level of literacy. As a literate society, there are numerous written materials produced by Chinese Christians in every locality: genealogies, account books, land deeds, Sunday school textbooks, religious pamphlets, sermons and diaries. After many years of fieldwork in the New Territories of Hong Kong and the Pearl River delta, David Faure (1998: 14–15) urges anthropologists and historians to pay attention to the value of these written materials in the study of literate cultures in rural China. Faure's suggestion ought to be taken seriously by scholars researching the Chinese church history because despite many decades of political turmoil in twentieth-century China, local Christians often keep their congregational accounts, baptism records, sermons, hymnals, church deeds, foundation stones of old church buildings and Christians' gravestones, all of which are seldom found in the Western missionary and Chinese official archives.

The second element is the size and diversity of China. Although Han Chinese constitute 91% of the population of 1.4 billion and inhabit a vast landscape, almost 10 million square kilometers of terrain, they speak a variety of dialects at the local level. The other 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities, called *shaoshu minzu* in Chinese, have their own languages and reside in China's northern, northwestern, western, and southwestern frontiers. In Lee's fieldwork experience, the northeast of Guangdong Province was characterized by great dialectal diversity where the native tongues are the Chaozhou-dialect on the coast and the Hakka-dialect in the interior. The same can be said of Fujian Province and Zhejiang Province's Wenzhou, widely called "China's Jerusalem" due to the high concentration of Protestants in the city (Cao 2010). Without a good knowledge of the dialects, it is hard to conduct long-term field

research because the pre-1949 generations of inhabitants are not educated in the Mandarin and often perceive Mandarin speakers as suspicious outsiders.

The third element is the political structure of China. The People's Republic of China is a one-party state in which the real authority lies with the Chinese Communist Party. The country is governed by a dual system of tight control, with two imposing bureaucracies coexisting side by side. The interests of the state and the Communist Party are intertwined. The state institutions control the ideological, political, social, economic and religious spheres, and the Communist Party runs the state. Because of China's centralized bureaucracy, researchers who do not have personal connections may need to go through all the political, social and religious hierarchies in preparation for field research. That is to obtain approval from government officials and church leaders at the provincial, municipal and district levels before visiting some Christian villages and neighborhoods. Similar to those nineteenth-century missionaries, any outsiders have to claim some identities and renounce others at different moments of the field research.

During Lee's field study among rural Christians in South China, the most important task was to establish his credibility as a trustworthy researcher. He found himself in a complicated web of social relations with his informants, who were the local government officials in charge of religious affairs, patriotic and unregistered church leaders, and ordinary church worshippers. His relations with them highlighted the comparative advantages and disadvantages of being an outsider and semi-insider, and the cross-cultural communication problems involved. Though being a Hong Kong Chinese of Chaozhou origin, he encountered many identity problems and power relationships that troubled native ethnographers doing fieldwork in their own societies rather than scholars from the West.

Speaking the local dialect, Lee assumed that local people and their ways of life would be easily accessible to him, but he was proven wrong because of the following reasons. First, being a Hong Kong Chinese of Chaozhou descent was not always to his advantage. In China, the stereotypes of Hong Kong Chinese are wealthy merchants and successful professionals like doctors, engineers and accountants. Being neither of those professions put him outside the stereotypes and placed him in an obscure situation. Having learnt about his family background and scholarly interests, the local officials helped him in the fieldwork. Among themselves, they referred to his as "an Overseas Chinese student visiting his parents' homelands." Neither a complement nor a criticism, the statement simply implied that they considered him an outsider.

Secondly, while asking for the official approval and assistance, Lee realized that his Christian background and academic interest in the local church

history would cause problems. Deliberately positioning himself as a patriotic son in search of Chaozhou cultural roots, he utilized the Marxist discourse to frame his research as the study of Western imperialism and Chinese Christian patriotism to avoid suspicion. He also avoided any criticism of church-state relations after 1949. These tactics created an ideological common ground with the officials. While most officials connected him with their colleagues in rural townships, they wondered why he wasted time among "ignorant peasants" rather than working comfortably in the air-conditioned archives and libraries. Underlying this question is the officials' perception of peasants as superstitious, backward and inert. According to Myron L. Cohen (1993), such attitude reveals more about the official prejudices towards peasant communities than the living conditions in the Chinese countryside. Lee replied by citing Chairman Mao Zedong's famous remark, "Unless one investigates a problem, one has no right to speak of it" (Mao 1930). Mao, in 1930, urged his comrades to conduct in-depth investigation before organizing any class struggle in rural society. Lee explained to the officials that without seeing the physical conditions of Christian settlements, he would not be in a position to comment on the history of Christianity in South China. Clearly, Chairman Mao's insight is still relevant to the study of China today.

It was a good start to secure the officials' approval but their help was not enough. The next step was to obtain the assistance of the patriotic church leaders. The situation became more complicated when Lee met different generations of local Christians. Many local Catholic and Protestant patriotic church leaders criticized the late-nineteenth-century Western missionaries as cultural imperialists. However, seeking to cultivate good relations with Overseas Chinese Christians, they downplayed any church-state tensions after 1949. Besides the patriotic church leaders, Lee met a number of elderly ministers who commanded much respect among the ordinary believers. While they joined the religious patriotic institutions, they were critical of the Communist government's intervention into native church affairs. Having told them about his kinship connection with the Baptist communities, they immediately accepted Lee as a friend and took him to rural congregations.

In the countryside, the idea of a person being not part of a community or being alone was totally inconceivable. Lee was in a unique situation of being simultaneously a Hong Kong-born, British-educated and US-based researcher, a Chaozhou-speaking investigator by virtue of his family upbringing, and a Protestant (Lutheran) by his church affiliation. He was an insider because of the kinship connection and religious faith; he was a semi-insider due to his distant kinship connection with the Catholics there; and to the worshippers of popular Buddhist and Daoist deities, he was a complete outsider. These

multiple identities were imposed upon him by both historical circumstances and the informants' perceptions. When he was aware of these identities, he employed them as best as he could in order to gain trust from different groups of informants.

During the fieldwork, Lee accepted church tours organized by the rural congregations. The sequence of each tour—beginning from those households directly related to his tour guides and ending at the church buildings—projected the guide's dual kinship and Christian identities, be they Catholic or Protestant. It was extremely difficult to find people available to give first-hand accounts of the events in the late nineteenth century. In view of this problem, he visited old church buildings, Christian households, lineage halls, temples, village walls, watch towers and schools. He took pictures of these architectural remains, enquired about the backgrounds surrounding these constructions, and investigated the material culture of local Christian movements. Through these visits, he sketched those villages where the Christian congregations were located, and mapped the settlement areas of different lineage factions and religious groups. On various visits, he brought the local church membership records that he photocopied from the Chinese state archives. He asked some elderly people to identify the lineage factions to which these Christians belonged, and the locations of their former and present households. Whenever possible, he interviewed the descendants of the local church founders who reconstructed what their religious communities had been like in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and what had changed after 1949. On other occasions, Lee's Protestant identity proved to be an obstacle, especially when he met Buddhist and Daoist monks. Their suspicion had much to do with the longstanding hostility between Christians and non-Christians at the village level. Even nowadays, many Christian leaders assert that Christianity is superior to Buddhism, Daoism and other folk religions, and that temple worshippers are "profane" (*shisu*) and doomed to eternal death on the Day of Judgment. Underlying this remark is a continuity of the late-nineteenth-century Western missionary worldview that divided the world in good and evil, and believed in a religious battle between a Christian God and evil spirits. This sense of Christian superiority is only a cultural concept, and Lee decided not to use the language of superiority in conversation with temple managers. While visiting temples, he respected popular religious rituals and tried to avoid being seen by Catholics and Protestants.

When he revisited these Christian settlements in the early 2010s as part of a longitudinal research into the changing Chinese religious landscape, these rural congregations were greatly impacted by the inflows and outflows of migration. Younger Christian families moved to metropolitan cities to seek

better education and career opportunities, and the congregations were made up of elderly worshippers. The wealthy villages attracted migrant laborers from inland provinces like Anhui and Sichuan. Some migrants were Christian. Though they did not always speak the southern Chinese dialects, they attended church services. The rural congregations sought new resources and hired educated pastors to minister to the newcomers. Meanwhile, the elderly villagers provided contacts of their relatives in the cities, and this allowed Lee to carry out multi-site research and examine the cross-regional networks of these churches.

These challenges notwithstanding, taking field notes and keeping a diary enables the researcher to stabilize one's position in times of uncertainties. Throughout his stay at the Christian communities, he employed the anthropological approach of participant observation. By attending church events, he realized that Christianity had become an important part of the cultural identity and social practices. Welcoming him as a guest, the local Christians discussed the history of their family connection with the late-nineteenth-century Baptist and Presbyterian missions, their memory of religious persecution during the Maoist period, and their role of reviving Christian activities in the recent decades. They challenged the Chinese Communist version of the church history by arguing that nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries had empowered their ancestors. Their personal insights draw attention to the complex meanings of history and memory as well as to the use of oral history and remembrance as a source for historical research among these believers in South China (Jing 1996; Wang 2020; Weigelin-Schwiedrzik 2009). Clearly, it was impossible for them to safeguard their churches against state-imposed Three-Self Patriotic Movement after 1949. Despite their powerlessness, they would seize any opportunity to express their outrage against the Maoist state. The opportunity eventually came in the 1980s when they were permitted to rebuild the churches across Chaozhou. The significance of the church reconstruction efforts lies in the fact that local congregants took advantage of the changing political climate in Beijing to re-establish their Christian strongholds during the Reform era. Upon the end of the field study, researchers can make use of social media technologies to ask informants further information. For example, after finishing her fieldwork among Seventh-day Adventists in Wenzhou, Christie Chui-Shan Chow turned to WeChat and QQ, the Chinese equivalents of Facebook and Twitter, to obtain ethnographic data, policy documents and photographic evidence about the recent cross demolition campaigns. It was through these Chinese social media platforms that Chow interviewed Christian informants and traced the origins, development and impacts of cross removal incidents in rural Wenzhou (Chow 2016).

6 Prospects for Further Research on Christianity Worldwide

The interplay between the global and local forces in Christianities in China has taught us three important lessons. The first lesson concerns the exploration of multiple source materials. Church historians should pay attention to a wide range of primary sources such as foreign missionary archives, native church records deposited in state and municipal archives (as shown in China), private papers of prominent church leaders and Christian families, oral history and ethnographic evidence about the material culture of Christianity in unique local settings. At least in China, combining archival research with multi-site fieldwork and social media technologies allows scholars to conduct a longitudinal research into the transformation of Christian religious landscape in any locality.

The second lesson is a methodological one. Scholars should address the question of how the changing religious and political landscape has shaped both the accessibility of archival sources and the way these sources are conceived within the larger narratives of official historiography. In an authoritarian state like China, it is always a challenge for researchers to access church archival materials in state-controlled national and municipal archives (Reny 2016). After overcoming the institutional barriers and accessing the primary sources, scholars have to be critical of the ideological settings in which these materials were produced, catalogued and preserved by government officials, and the anti-religious biases that were mobilized to interpret the faith experience of individual believers and church communities. As Chloë F. Starr (2017: 234) asserts, because Chinese church-state relations are as much influenced by political forces as by theological discussions, the analytical discourse should take into account the corrosive effects of state fiats, official slogans, and secular ideologies on the churches. Perhaps collaborations with native church historians will enable international researchers to bypass state censorship, develop genuine academic partnerships, and access a great deal of historical, ethnographic and theological data produced by local Christians. These collaborations will also advance global knowledge exchange and raise awareness about transnational church networks.

The third lesson is a thematic one. Global theologies and denominations have been as influential as local evangelistic agents and faith practices in shaping the development of wider Christian landscape. The global Christian inputs were embedded into the Chinese ecclesial and theological orientations. In fact, abstract discussion about global-local church ties mattered little to Chinese Christians when it came to defending their faith and constructing a meaningful worldview in times of chaos and instability. Their Christian faith provided them with strong spiritual capital to sustain themselves. By emphasizing the

centrality of the Bible in shaping their identity, they went through a gradual process of coming to terms with the meaning of being a faithful Christian in times of persecution. This reflected their spiritual transformation through the support they received from their families and congregations towards a more personal relationship with the Christian God, and kept them from abandoning their faith.

In a nutshell, the generalizations of 'World Christianity' and 'Chinese Christianity' only make sense in analytical terms because Christianity always adapts to the cultural conditions of any locality. The indigenization of Christianity has never been unidirectional, and this requires a closer look at the concrete circumstances in which religious interactions take place. This chapter calls on scholars to conduct archival and library research, fieldwork, and social media communication as new viable approaches to studying the history of Christianities worldwide. In an authoritarian country like China where the state controls the researcher's access to the archives, using such mixed methods should yield important findings on the complexity of Chinese Christians' experience and their everyday interactions with government officials of all levels. In particular, fieldwork affords an intimate encounter between the researcher and informants in contextual settings such as church meetings, worships and communal praying, allowing the researcher to critique misconceptions and biases displayed in written church archives and official documents, and to synthesize the data, both written and oral, from the believers' perspectives. In his recent study of the proliferation of Christian evangelistic movements, Brian Stanley remarks, "The battle for the integrity of the gospel in the opening years of the twenty-first century is being fought not primarily in the lecture rooms of North American seminaries but in the shanty towns, urban slams and villages of Africa, Asia, and Latin America" (Stanley 2013: 247). Since the dynamics of Christianity worldwide are evolving in ordinary believers' real life situations, the researcher has to go native, being 'on the ground', observing the congregations upfront and participating in their life. Only by testing traditional archival sources against fieldwork can the researcher humanize the wide varieties of Christian movements and study their historical experiences in greater depth.

Bibliography

Austin, Alvyn (2007). *China's Millions. The China Inland Mission and Late Qing Society, 1832–1905*. Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans.

Bays, Daniel H. (1996). 'The Growth of Independent Christianity in China, 1900–1937.' In Daniel H. Bays, ed., *Christianity in China. From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press: 307–316.

Bays, Daniel H. (2003). 'Chinese Protestant Christianity Today.' *The China Quarterly* 174: 488–504.

Bays, Daniel H. (2013). 'Reflection of Protestantism and Modern China. Problems of Periodization.' *The Chinese Historical Review* 20,1: 5–15.

Bays, Daniel H., and Ellen Widmer, eds. (2009). *China's Christian Colleges. Cross-Cultural Connections, 1900–1950*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Cao, Nanlai (2010). *Constructing China's Jerusalem. Christians, Power, and Place in Contemporary Wenzhou*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Chan, Kim-Kwong (2019). *Understanding World Christianity. China*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Chow, Christie Chui-Shan (2015). 'Vision and Division. Christian Schisms in Contemporary China.' Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary.

Chow, Christie Chui-Shan (2016). 'Demolition and Defiance. The Stone Ground Church Dispute (2012) in East China.' *The Journal of World Christianity* 6,2: 250–276.

Chow, Christie Chui-Shan, and Joseph Tse-Hei Lee (2016). 'Covert and Overt Activism. Christianity in 1950s China.' *Frontiers of History in China* 11,4: 579–599.

Chow, Christie Chui-Shan (forthcoming). *Schism. How Adventism is Reshaping Post-Denominational China*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Clark, Anthony E. (2011). *China's Saints. Catholic Martyrdom during the Qing (1644–1911)*. Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press.

Cohen, Myron L. (1993). 'Cultural and Political Inventions in Modern China. The Case of the Chinese "Peasant".' In Tu Wei-Ming, ed., *China in Transformation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 151–170.

Constable, Nicole (1994). *Christian Souls and Chinese Spirits. A Hakka Community in Hong Kong*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Dubois, Thomas David, and Jan Kiely, eds. (2020). *Fieldwork in Modern Chinese History. A Research Guide*. New York: Routledge.

Dunch, Ryan (2014). 'Review of *The Missionary's Curse and Other Tales from a Chinese Catholic Village*, by Henrietta Harrison.' *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 74,2: 336–337.

Faure, David (1998). 'The Historical Uses of Ethnography.' *Hong Kong Anthropology Bulletin* 1: 14–15.

Harrison, Henrietta (2013). *The Missionary's Curse And Other Tales from a Chinese Catholic Village*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Harvey, Thomas A. (2002). *Acquainted with Grief. Wang Mingdao's Stand for the Persecuted Church in China*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

Inouye, Melissa Wei-Tsing (2019). *China and the True Jesus. Charisma and Organization in a Chinese Christian Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jenkins, Philip (2002). *The Next Christendom. The Coming of Global Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jing, Jun (1996). *The Temple of Memories. History, Power, and Morality in a Chinese Village*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Kraus, Charles (2016). *Researching the History of the People's Republic of China*. Cold War International History Project Working Paper No. 79. Retrieved on February 16, 2018 from https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/researching-the-history-the-peoples-republic-china.

Lee, Joseph Tse-Hei (2005). 'Watchman Nee and the Little Flock Movement in Maoist China.' *Church History* 74,1: 68–96.

Lee, Joseph Tse-Hei (2007). 'Christianity in Contemporary China. An Update.' *Journal of Church and State* 49,2: 277–304.

Lee, Joseph Tse-Hei (2014). 'Faith and Charity. The Christian Disaster Management in South China.' *Review of Culture* 45: 127–138.

Lee, Joseph Tse-Hei (2017). 'Faith and Defiance. Christian Prisoners in Maoist China.' *Review of Religion and Chinese Society* 4,2: 167–192.

Lee, Joseph Tse-Hei (2018). 'Christianizing Maritime Chaozhou-Shantou.' In Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, ed., *Christianizing South China. Mission, Development, and Identity in Modern Chaoshan*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 1–14.

Lee, Joseph Tse-Hei and Lars Peter Laamann (2019). 'Christianity and Community Governance in Modern China.' In Lars Peter Laamann and Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, eds. *The Church as Save Haven. Christian Governance in China*. Leiden: Brill: 1–16.

Lian, Xi (2010). *Redeemed by Fire. The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Ling, Oi-Ki (1999). *The Changing Role of the British Protestant Missionaries in China, 1945–1952*. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Lutz, Jessie G. (2008). *Opening China. Karl F.A. Gutzlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1927–1852*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Madsen, Richard (2003). 'Catholic Revival during the Reform Era.' *The China Quarterly* 174: 468–487.

Mao, Zedong (1930). 'Oppose Book Worship.' Retrieved on February 16, 2018 from http://www.maoism.org/msw/vol6/mswv6_11.htm.

Peel, John D.Y. (1996). 'Problems and Opportunities in an Anthropologist's Use of a Missionary Archive.' In Robert A. Bickers and Rosemary Seton, eds. *Missionary Encounters. Sources and Issues*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press: 70–94.

Reny, Marie-Eve (2016). 'Authoritarianism as a Research Constraint. Political Scientists in China.' *Social Sciences Quarterly* 97,4: 909–922.

Roberts, Dana (2005). *Secrets of Watchman Nee*. Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos.

Stanley, Brian (2013). *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism. The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.

Starr, Chloë F. (2017). 'Maintaining Faith in the Chinese Church.' In Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood, eds. *Relocating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies in Local and Universal Expressions of Christianity*. Leiden: Brill: 213–237.

Sweeten, Alan Richard (2001). *Christianity in Rural China. Conflict and Accommodation in Jiangxi*. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan.

Tiedemann, Rolf G. (2012). 'Comity Agreements and Sheep Stealers. The Elusive Search for Christian Unity among Protestants in China.' *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35,1: 3–8.

Tiedemann, Rolf G., ed. (2010). *Handbook of Christianity in China*. Volume Two: 1800–Present. Leiden: Brill.

Wagner, Vivian (1998). 'The Management of Memory in the PRC. How to Keep Pandora's Box Tightly Closed.' Paper presented at the VII European Association of Chinese Studies Conference in Edinburgh, September 10–13.

Wagner, Vivian (2002). 'Class Struggle and Commerce. Utilizing the Archival Heritage of the PRC.' Paper presented at the XIV European Association of Chinese Studies Conference in Moscow, August 26–28.

Wang, Peter Chen-Main, ed. (2007). *Contextualization of Christianity in China. Evaluation in Modern Perspective*. Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica.

Wang, Xiaoxuan (2020). *Maoism and Grassroots Religion. The Communist Revolution and the Reinvention of Religious Life in China*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, Suzanne (2006). 'In Search for a Master Narrative.' *The China Quarterly* 188: 1086–1087.

Wickeri, Philip L. (2007). *Reconstructing Christianity in China. K.H. Ting and the Chinese Church*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Wickeri, Philip L., ed. (2015). *Christian Encounters with Chinese Culture. Essays on Anglican and Episcopal History in China*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Woodbridge, David (2019). *Missionary Primitivism and Chinese Modernity. The Brethren in Twentieth Century China*. Leiden: Brill.

Wu, Silas (2002). *Dora Yu. Harbinger of Christian Church Revival in 20th-Century China*. Boston, MA: Pishon River Publications.

Wu, Xiaoxin, ed. (2005). *Encounters and Dialogues. Changing Perspectives on Chinese-Western Exchanges from the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*. Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica.

Wuthnow, Robert (2010). *Boundless Faith. The Global Outreach of American Churches*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Yang, Huilin (2014). *China Christianity and the Question of Culture*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Ye, Wa, and Joseph W. Esherick (1996). *Chinese Archives. An Introductory Guide*. Berkeley, CA: Center for Chinese Studies, Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California.

CHAPTER 6

Interfaith Relations within the Emerging Field of World Christianity

S. Wesley Ariarajah

1 Introduction

"The interdisciplinary area, 'world Christianity,' investigates the histories, practices, and discourses of Christianity on six continents. It examines local forms of Christianity as well as global interconnections that make Christianity a world religion," says the introduction to *The Journal of World Christianity* (2017.1). It states further that "As a field of study, world Christianity emerged historically from mission studies, ecumenical theology, and the academic study of world religions," and adds that "While it is not reducible to any of these three, they each continue to play an important role in informing its work."

I begin this chapter with this definition of World Christianity, which is helpful, but still needs further refinement, because it is no secret that the phrase 'World Christianity' has been understood in many ways; there has been a gradual evolution in the understanding of what the phrase actually meant and what needs to be included in it. Some uncertainty continues to persist as to what areas of study should feed into this emerging field. There is a good reason for this uncertainty. Although the academic world is aware that Christianity today is a global phenomenon, centuries of association makes it difficult to disassociate the Western Hemisphere, Christian theology that emerged within it, and its cultural ethos from what is considered 'Christian' and Christianity.

When churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America began, at the end of the colonial era, to do a new phase of theological work of their own, which included challenging the theological tradition received from the Western theological heritage, there was considerable wavering on their part on how to relate their work to the received Western theology. There was also ambiguity on the part of theological educators, both in the East and West, on how to incorporate the new theological impulses into the theological curricula in the seminaries. This uncertainty is reflected even today in the way many seminaries organize their courses on theology.

Most seminaries have a required course or 'Christian Theology' or 'Systematic Theology', where the classical theology of the Western tradition is taught. The

© S. WESLEY ARIARAJAH, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004444867_008
This is an open access chapter distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

new awareness that Christianity is no longer and never was only a Western phenomenon is responded to by the offering of other, elective courses on 'Third World Theologies', 'Asian Theologies', 'African Christologies', 'Liberation Theologies' and so on. This simple fact shows how far we need to go before the word 'Christian' assumes the dimensions it needs to assume in today's world.

The initial interest in looking at Christianity as a global phenomenon to be reckoned with arose within missiology. Over the decades the influence of Christianity and church membership began to fall within the Western world, especially in a number of European countries, while many forms of Christian missions recorded increasing numbers in other parts of the world, especially in Africa and some parts of Asia. This reality led to the sentiment that the 'centre of gravity of Christianity' has moved, or in the process of 'moving to the South', drawing particular attention to the growth of Christianity in the non-Western parts of the world. Although serious ambiguities plague the nature of the growth of Christianity in these parts of the world, especially on the kind of gospel message that is promoted, the apparent success of the 18th and 19th century types of missions in the 21st century was sufficient to arouse an interest in a new field of study under the rubric of 'World Christianity'. Although Christianity was an unacknowledged global reality long before these developments, the assumed 'moving of the centre of gravity to the South', supported by statistics and maps within the mission constituency, was mostly instrumental in bringing this field to the forefront (Gallagher 2009; Tan and Tran 2016).

However, once the concept of 'World Christianity' caught on, the other fields of study have also begun to pay attention to the great variety of theological, spiritual, prophetic, and socio-economic dimensions of Christian faith and forms of Christian discipleship that is manifest in the non-Western world (Tennent 2007; Tan and Tran 2016).[1] Although the seminaries both in the North and South still treat the classical Western theological tradition as the 'Christian' tradition, there is sufficient awareness of its limitations and of the need to prop up the course on Christian Theology with additional courses. It may take several decades before meaningful changes would begin to appear in this area, where the study of Christian Theology would take full account of the diverse and multifaceted nature of the Christian theological reflections in the world.

Much more can and needs to be said in this area, but let me turn to the subject of this contribution, which is on the place and role of interfaith relations within the emerging field of World Christianity.

---

1 The volume edited by Jonathan Y. Tan and Anh Q. Tran (Orbis 2016) carries analyses by twenty leading scholars on the implications of the demographic changes and growth of Christianity to the understanding of Christian faith.

2 Some General Characteristics of Christianity in the Non-Western World

Although the growth and spread of Christianity in the Western world was gradual, subjected to the vicissitudes of historical events, the rise and fall of empires, and the emergence of Islam, by the time organized 'world missions' were directed to Asia and Africa, Christianity had become the dominant religion of Europe and North America. Four characteristics need to be taken into account in understanding the missionary movement's encounter with the non-Western world, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries:

– Many of the countries to which the Christian message was taken were under colonial rule. The power imbalance that this reality created made a significant impact on the nature of the mission directed to the peoples of Asia and Africa.
– The Western world had emerged out of the Middle Ages and had undergone many revolutions: Renaissance, Enlightenment, Reformation, Scientific Revolution, and so on. This led the Western world to develop an uncritical belief in the superiority of the Western culture over all other cultures.
– Having not yet integrated the benefits of the Industrial Revolution, much of the non-Western world was in comparative poverty, and had entrenched traditional social structures that discriminated against large sections of its people, which opened up significant points of contact for missionary work. Commenting on this reality, David J. Bosch says: "The Enlightenment … together with the scientific and technological advances that followed in its wake put the West at an unparalleled advantage over the rest of the world. Suddenly a limited number of nations had at their disposal 'tools' and know-how vastly superior to those of others. The West could thus establish itself as master of all others in virtually every field. It was only logical that this feeling of superiority would also rub off on the 'religion of the West', Christianity." (Bosch 1996: 291)
– Most of the counties had strong and vibrant religious traditions that had lasted for centuries and had shaped the faith, culture and ways of life of its people. But the philosophical and religious/mythical dimensions of the so-called 'Asian religions' made little sense at that time to those who brought the Christian message to these countries.

To these observations one should add an additional fifth reality, relevant to our current discussion: Despite the centuries of contact with Christianity, and the Christian attempts to displace other religions and plant itself as the dominant religion, as it did in Europe and South America, the Asian religious traditions persist; Christianity in almost all Asian countries (with the exception of the Philippines and East Timor) remains a minority religion.

In-depth study of the nature of these realities and how the Western theological traditions and missions dealt with each of these aspects, the nature of the Christian communities they created, their present situation, and the relationship they maintain with the rest of the Christian world are areas that are being explored today within the field of World Christianity. However, since religions play a central role in shaping the life of the peoples of Asia and Africa, it is important to have a closer look at the place of interfaith relations in the study of World Christianity. Although much can be said on the way these realities played out in Africa, I would limit this presentation to South Asia, with which I am more familiar.

Speaking about the major role other religions has played and continues to play on the Christian reality in Asia, Felix Wilfred says:

> Asian Christianity presents many new prospects and hope for global Christianity, especially through its encounter with the ancient religious traditions of the continent, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Daoism. The development of Asian theology in the last few decades has demonstrated that it has the potential to open up new horizons and vistas for global theological thinking.
>
> Wilfred 2014a: 2

Pointing out that the interaction between Christianity and other faith traditions is only at its beginnings, he holds that not only the impact of other religious traditions on Christianity but also the impact of Christianity on Asian religions and social realities of Asia should be matters of study in World Christianity:

> The impact of Christianity in Asia cannot be overestimated: it led to intellectual revolutions, religious-cultural confrontations, and social conflicts but also to fundamental transformations of Asian societies. In the process, Christianity has also been transformed, leaving us not only with a rich legacy of theological controversies but also substantial contributions which are of importance for Christianity worldwide.
>
> Wilfred 2014a: 2

Having said this, Wilfred agrees with the observation with which I have begun this essay that "Although the importance of Asian Christianity is being recognized, with the exception of a few general statistical compilations and missionary encyclopedias that often suffer from confessional bias, there are still relatively few scholarly studies available that can claim to cover the whole region and serve interested scholars in other disciplines." (Wilfred 2014a: 3)

From the observations above it is clear that there are two major areas of exploration that can be usefully pursued within the field of World Christianity as it relates to Christian engagement with the religious traditions and cultures of Asia: The first is how the reality of other religions in Asia has impacted the arrival and the continued presence of Christianity in Asia. And the second, how the arrival and presence of Christianity impacted and continues to impact the religious, cultural, and social realities of Asia. Studies on the impact of the Asian religious traditions on Christianity need to begin with the recognition that there are four significant phases in Christian encounter with Asian religions. These are the 'early encounters' before the missionary era, the encounters with Christianity brought by the Roman Catholic and Protestant Missions during the colonial era, the post-colonial interactions between the churches and other religions, and the current adversarial encounters as the result of evangelical movements that come into Asia, supported by financial resources from other parts of the world. In this discussion I would deal mainly with the first two phases.

3 The Impact of Asian Religions and Cultures on Christianity

3.1 *The Early Encounters*

It is far too common to associate Christian presence in Asia with the missionary expansion during the colonial era when Roman Catholic and Protestant missions began to plant Christian communities on Asian soil. In reality, there is a fascinating relationship between Christianity and Asia from the very early stages of Christian history. It is difficult to determine when exactly Christianity first came from what was considered West Asia (the Middle East today) to the other parts of Asia. But it is known that already during Jesus' time there were trade routes via sea connecting the Middle East to India and beyond. There was also a land route leading all the way to the provinces of China, later to be called the 'Silk Road'. These trade routes had led to the establishment of Arab, Jewish, Persian, and Armenian settlements in different parts of Asia (Moffett 1998).

What is of significance is that these trade relations had resulted in the presence of Syrian, Nestorian, Armenian and Chaldean Christian communities in Asia. There is evidence to suggest that Christians lived in this very early period of Christian history in several Asian countries, including China, Tibet, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Java in Indonesia, and perhaps in Korea and Japan via China (Moffett 1998; Moffett 2005). It is unfortunate that we have very little information on most these communities except on the Nestorians in China and on the Syrians, who reached the Western coast of India known as Malabar, which is

today called Kerala. Happily, the Syrian tradition that struck roots in Kerala is a vibrant community today, with a strong oral tradition that the Apostle Thomas himself came with the gospel message to Malabar in 52 C.E, established a number of churches and was martyred in the latter part of his life. Although the historicity of St. Thomas' visit is difficult to prove, there has been a Christian community called "St. Thomas Christians" in the western coast of India at least from about 200 C.E. (for details see England 1996).

Evidence suggests that both the Nestorians and Syrians who brought Christianity to China and India had developed cordial relationship with the rulers, the peoples, and their religious traditions. St. Thomas Christians' accommodation to the religion and culture of the Hindus was such that they were considered "Hindu in culture, Christians in religion, and Oriental in worship" (Podipara 1973: 107–112). Although studies exist on the early Christian movement towards Asia and of the two specific traditions mentioned above, the content of the Christian message taken to these Asian countries, the nature of the Christian communities that were established, and the kind of the interaction between Christianity and the religions of that period should be of intense interest to the field of World Christianity (Rae 2012; Winkler 2013). Apart from the very early movement of the Christian faith into the Diaspora Jewish communities of Asia Minor and to the Gentiles who surrounded them, these early movements into Asia were, in fact, the first faltering infant steps of the early Christianity's eventual emergence into 'World Christianity'.

3.2 *Encounter with the Missionary Movement*

The second period of Christian relationship to Asian religions relates to the Roman Catholic and Protestant Missions that came into Asia along with the colonial powers. We shall see the impact of Christianity on Asian religions at a later stage. First we need to consider the impact of the Asian religions on Christianity and on those who brought the Christian message into Asia (Ariarajah 1991).[2] Some of the missionaries who had come with the hope of bringing 'the light of the gospel message' to those who lived in 'ignorance and darkness' underwent spiritual and theological transformations by their encounter, for instance, with Hinduism.[3] They were awakened to the reality that these religious traditions were not superstitions or paganisms, as they had

2 I have done a detailed study of this question in my volume, *Hindus and Christians. A Century of Protestant Ecumenical Thought*. Amsterdam: Rodopi and Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991.

3 The familiar examples are those of Roberto de Nobili in India and Matteo Ricci in China who entered into dialogue and conversation with the religious traditions of the land that challenged and changed their theology and spiritual practices.

been led to believe, but genuine spiritual traditions that gave spiritual vitality to their adherents. As a result the missionaries had to re-examine the assumptions and presuppositions about other religious traditions that were behind the missionary enterprise and of the missionary message and methods.

One of the useful resources I have used to study this are the materials related to the first World Missionary Conference, called under the leadership of John R. Mott, in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1910. Mott's intention was to bring together all the Western missionary societies and mission agencies, to pool the missionary resources and to develop common strategies by which the rest of the world would be evangelized during that generation, even as Europe and Latin America were evangelized earlier (Ariarajah 1991: 17ff). Much has been said and written about this first World Missionary Conference, especially during its Centenary celebration in 2010 (Stanley 2009). Although I have recalled this discussion in my earlier writings, it is important to re-visit one of the aspects of this conference in order to have an understanding of the nature of the impact Hinduism, for instance, had on missionaries who had come with the vocation to preach the Christian message to the Hindus.

3.3 *Work of Commission IV of the World Missionary Conference*

The Edinburgh Conference (from 15–23 June, 1910) carried out its work through a number of Commissions, and the title of Commission I, "Carrying the Gospel to all the non-Christian World," which constituted a survey of the "progress of evangelization" and the areas "yet to be occupied", indicates the primary focus of the Conference. Among the other topics related to mission work, Commission IV was asked to reflect and report on the "Missionary message in relation to non-Christian religions."

In preparing for its work, Commission IV followed a methodology that would make all the difference to its work. In order not make its work purely theoretical, the Commission decided to call upon missionaries working in the mission fields to share their experiences and thoughts on the missionary message in relation to other religions. A questionnaire was prepared, asking questions on what should be the attitude and approach of the missionaries to other religions, the points of contact for the presentation of the Christian message, what aspects of Christianity appealed to non-Christians and what aspects of the Christian message were a hindrance to its reception. My intention here is not to recount the work of the Commission, but to reflect briefly on a few of the sixty-one responses that the commission received that made significant impact on its work and report.

The respondents said that Christians should have a "sympathetic attitude" towards Hinduism, "based on prolonged and patient study, so that such

sympathy may be based on knowledge and not be the child of emotion or imagination" (Report Commission IV: 171). A respondent from Calcutta asked: "Is it not a reasonable demand to any man who tries to tackle so difficult a problem as that of changing other men's faith that he should know what he is talking about, not only his own religion, but also that which he desires to lead the people away from?" (Report Commission IV: 171).

S.W. Stanthal claimed that Christian knowledge of Hinduism should go beyond familiarity with its history, ritual, and philosophy, to the point of grasping, as far as one is able, the 'real life' that throbs within:

> Below the strange forms and hardly intelligible language lies life, the spiritual life of human souls, needing God, seeking God, laying hold of God so far as they have found Him. Until we have at least reached so far that under the ceremonies and doctrines we have found the religious life of the people, and at least to some extent have begun to understand this life, we do not know what Hinduism really is, and missing the essential connection with peoples' religious life.
>
> Report Commission IV: 172

Another missionary to India, Bernard Lucas, is typical of the overall attitude taken by a number of respondents:

> In answer to your question as to points of contact between Christianity and Hinduism I should put first and foremost the spiritual view of life as opposed to the materialistic conception of the West. Though the quality of this spiritual view may be very deficient, and though it may contain much which is erroneous, yet there can be no question that in Hinduism, religion is, and has always been, the supreme concern of the Hindu mind. The belief that the things that are seen are temporal, while the things which are not seen are eternal, is deeply ingrained in the Hindu temperament.
>
> Commission on the Missionary Message, 92–107

The intention here is not to give a full account of the responses received and the Report of Commission IV, which challenged the missionary assumptions about other religions, but to point out that the Christian encounter with other religions made significant impact of Christianity itself and its missionary enterprise. The unpublished bound volumes of responses from those missionaries who worked not only in the Hindu context but in the context of many of the religious traditions of Asia and elsewhere are a treasure trove hidden away in the WCC library shelves and the archive (Cracknell 1995).

The field of World Christianity needs to do studies on this dimension because it is very often forgotten that it is the missionaries themselves, based on their lived experiences, called for radical changes of the missionary assumptions. It was the missionaries, who had been sent into situations to preach the gospel, that began to speak back to their mission agencies against racism, against the destruction of the cultures and ways of life of the first peoples of North and South America, against crushing poverty of the masses, and against the dictatorships that subjugated peoples, often with the knowledge and support of the nations that had sent the missionaries. This is a field within 'World Christianity' that awaits fuller exploration.

4 The Impact of Christianity on Asian Religious Traditions and Cultures

This second area of interaction is one on which much research and writing has been done. However, we need to re-visit this area to underscore the fact that there are two dimensions to this question. On the one hand, much has been said about the insensitivities of the missionary movement to the religions and cultures they encountered in Asia (Bosch 1996: 293).[4] Since evangelization, colonization and westernization usually went hand in hand, this dimension of the encounter, based on the imbalances in power relations, has come under much scrutiny and criticism. Of particular concern was that the Christian missionary nervousness about relativism and syncretism led to the creation of Christian communities as alternate communities to the prevalent communities of Asia, thus drawing out and separating the new Christians from their families, cultures and communities (Baustista 2014: 221).[5] This also meant that Christian missions worked on a 'displacement' model of Theology of Religions, which

4 Bosch (1996: 293) illustrates the pervasive attitude of the missionary movement towards other cultures as follows: "'It is certainly not by accident that it is the Christian nations which have become the bearers of culture and leaders of world history' said Gustav Warneck (..) It is the gospel which made the Western nations strong and great; it would be the same for other nations. (..) The effect of the gospel on a nation was to 'soften their manners, purify their social intercourse, and rapidly lead them into the habits of civilized life' (John Abee in 1801)."

5 Julius Baustista in a study of the converted Christians becoming a separate community asserts that apart from the missionary nervousness about relativism and syncretism, the converts themselves saw new opportunities in becoming a separate community. Baustista says (2014: 221), "Conversions were entry points into colonial society, offering with it the opportunity to engage in trade and/or the acquisition of political and military favour. This was not an altogether unreasonable expectation, given that missionaries and colonial administrators drew very definitive geographical boundaries to demarcate the converted from pagans and heathens."

led not only to exclusivism but also to alienation and even enmity between Christianity and other religious traditions of Asia. What is important to note is that this attitude and approach to other religions were not that of the people that had been converted to Christianity but of those who brought the Christian message to Asia, the mission agencies that sent them, and the theological justifications provided by the Western theological traditions. It displays one of the ways in which 'World Christianity' was conceived during this period, and of the need to reconceive it in our day to deal with the multifaceted dimensions on what it is, what it seeks to explore, and the purpose thereof.

5 World Christianity and the Bible

Within this concern, there has been a narrower specialization on the role of Bible in colonialism and how it was interpreted in the colonial context to justify a particular relationship to other religious traditions. Postcolonial studies and interpretations of the Bible throw much light on some of the hidden factors at work in creating the nature of the interfaith relations at that time. R.S. Sugirtharajah, for instance, has written a number of volumes of 'postcolonial explorations' on the use and interpretation of the Bible which is instructive on this question, illustrating the need, within the study of World Christianity, to explore in depth, the way the Bible has been used in preaching and evangelization in the context of other religions, and how exegesis of some of the selected verses and passages from the Bible (like Matt. 28.19 and John 4.16) were used to deny the validity of other religious traditions and to promote exclusivist views towards them. It is significant that the translation and distribution of the New Testaments or one of the gospels was the primary mode of evangelization, both to pass on the gospel message as well as to deny any salvific value of other religious traditions (Sugirtharajah 2005). Further issues like the role of culture, identity, community, and belonging also provide scope for research because they have had ramifications not only in Asia but also in Africa and Latin America.

6 Positive Impact of the Missionary Movement

The negative dimensions of the missions during the missionary era have been rehearsed over the past several decades. However it is equally important to recognize the positive impact Christianity made both on Asian religions and especially the social structures that had evolved from them. The point need not

be laboured here, for the impact of Christian values on the status of women in Asia, the plight of the girl-child, and universal educational opportunities have been well documented. For instance, James Dennis, who wrote three volumes on *Christian Missions and Social Progress*, summarizes what he sees as the contribution of Christian Missions to the world of other religions in these words: "The missionary movement made a prime contribution to the abolition of slavery; spread better methods of agriculture; established and maintained unnumbered schools; gave medical care to millions; elevated the status of women; created bonds between people of different countries, which war could not sever; trained a significant segment of the leadership of the nations now newly independent." (cited as in Bosch 1996, 294).

As far as India is concerned, the greatest contribution Christianity made was to shake up the centuries old rigid caste system, especially as it relates to those of the lowest strata of the society, who were considered untouchables and ritually impure. Urbanization and impact of Christianity are the two important forces that began to make a dent on the caste system which still lingers on, even within church life, despite the legal provisions against its practice. Yet, providing education, employment, status, and dignity to this social class has been the most enduring contribution Christianity made to India, which also instigated several indigenous reform movements within Hinduism as well (Kopf 1979).[6]

Equally important are the theological initiatives of those who had been marginalized for centuries, like the Dalit in India, the Minjung of Korea and women's liberation movements in all Asian countries, some of which are located within the Hindu, Buddhist and Confucian religions, but draw their primary inspiration from the encounter of Asian religions and cultures with Christianity and the Christian-inspired liberation movements like the ones in Latin America.

The third phase of Christian encounter, as indicated earlier, is that between the churches and the newly independent nations of Asia, and the fourth phase is the contemporary reality, where Christians are encountering emerging fundamentalist and militant forms of religious expressions not faced earlier. Each of these periods has distinctive modes of Christian relationship to other religions that can be fruitfully explored within the field of World Christianity.

6 Among the Hindu reformers influenced by the gospel were Ram Mohan Roy, who published a booklet called "Precepts of Jesus" and Keshab Chandra Sen who spoke of "Oriental Christ". Cf: Kopf 1979. It is also significant that although Gandhi did not set out to reform Hinduism as his primary focus, he was deeply influenced by Jesus' teachings both for his personal life and for the principles on which he led the Indian independence struggle.

7 Theological Encounter

Enrique Dussel of Argentina, who combines philosophy, theology, and especially history into his work, argues that what is needed in Christian theological encounter with other religions is the "epistemological decolonization of theology." He holds that the metropolitan, colonialist, Latino-German theology has been the backbone of Eurocentrism. By presenting a theology that establishes Christianity "as religion *par excellence*, members of Christendom can deny other beliefs or religions their own claim to universal truth. Election and revelation as responsibility are confused with election and revelation as privilege, as property, as disqualification of other religions' truth" (Dussel 2013: 28). What is of interest is that Dussel holds that "Even the great twentieth-century theologians such as Henri de Lubac, Karl Rahner, Yves Congar or Jürgen Moltmann could not escape their Eurocentrism. They creatively renewed European theologies, but they could not set their subjectivity (or even their physical being) in the 'colonial space', in the world of the colonized other" (Dussel 2013: 28).

Dussel holds that the epistemological decolonization of Eurocentric theology is a fact that began in the second half of the twentieth century but that it will occupy the whole of the twenty-first century because this effort will eventually lead to the need "to redo all theology" (Dussel 2013: 29). What Dussel means by the call to "redo all theology" is that the Eurocentric theology cannot be elaborated, extended or modified to accommodate the theological impulses that arise from Christian encounter with other religions and cultures. He holds that one needs to undo many of the previous presuppositions, lay new foundations, and use different theological methodologies in order to do an adequate theology that takes religious plurality seriously (Ariarajah 2012).[7] But, is it possible? Is it necessary? How it can be done?

C.S. Song, a veteran of Asian theologies from Taiwan, accused Western theological traditions to be in "Teutonic captivity", and basically went all out to call for the contextualization of all theological reflections in Asia, with the conviction that it is possible to do Christian theology entirely with Asian resources. He attempted to show this in his own volumes (Song 1986). Contextual theology is the most popular, recognizable theology in most Asian and African countries, and many of the theologians, as C.S. Song did, do their theologies in parallel to the dominant Western tradition and not in conversation with it.

However, Sri Lankan theologian, Aloysius Pieris, working in the context of Buddhist-Christian relations, looks at the Christian and Buddhist theological/

7 I have attempted not to 're-do' all theology but to radically 'rethink' all the main doctrines of the church for a religiously plural world. See Ariarajah 2012.

philosophical traditions as complementary to each other. Recognizing that these traditions have evolved in different social, cultural and philosophical environments, it is no surprise that they, at first sight, appear to be irreconcilable. But Pieris is of the view that each in itself is incomplete and needs the other so that both can have a fuller understanding of 'Truth'. At the heart of Pieris' thesis is the conviction that the Semitic and Asian approaches to reality are not contradictory but complementary to each other. He goes even further to insist that these two idioms are not simply philosophical/ theological but are also psychological realities. He holds that they are "instincts" that arise dialectically from within the deepest zone of each individual irrespective of religious affiliation. Our religious encounter with God and humankind would be incomplete without this interaction.

To quote from his book *Love Meets Wisdom*, "A genuine Christian experience of God-in-Christ grows by maintaining a dialectical tension between the two poles: Between action and non-action, between word and silence, between control of nature and harmony with nature, between self-affirmation and self-negation, between engagement and withdrawal, between love and knowledge, between *karuna* and *prajna*, between agape and gnosis" (Pieris 1998: 27; Pieris 1988).

If there is any truth to Pieris' contention, then there is a significant field of work in World Christianity that goes beyond comparative religion and comparative theology to explore whether the other religious tradition provide resources for a fuller expression of the Christian theology for both East and West. It also means that Christianity and Christian theology should also become accessible to other religions in order to enrich them.

In this context one also needs to listen to the prophetic warning of Wilfred Cantwell Smith that we need to become more aware of the reality that religious traditions are increasingly "becoming strands of the common religious history of humankind" and that being a Christian or a Hindu are no longer such stark alternatives as they used to be. In his view,

> All human history is *Heilsgeschichte*. Not Israel's only, either the old or the new; but the history of every religious community, every human community. This has always been true; although we are the first generation of Christians to see this seriously and corporately, and to be able to respond to the vision. We are the first generation of Christians to discern God's active and splendid and ongoing mission to humankind in the Buddhist movement, in the Hindu, in the Amerind, as well as in the Jewish and the Christian.
>
> quoted as in Cracknell 2001: 200

In his introduction to the article above, Kenneth Cracknell says that, however cosmic salvation is pictured, Smith is sure that it is the same for all people whatever their religious tradition. "Ask him how he can be so sure of this, Smith replies again: 'I know the empirical dimension from my historical studies (and my friendships); and I know the theological dimension because of what I know of God: by what I find revealed to me of Him in Christ'." (Cracknell 2001: 199).

What Smith suggests is that if we believe God to be the God of the whole creation who cares for the whole creation, we cannot dismiss God's dealings with peoples of other religious traditions and their responses to God with the cultural and philosophical tools available to them. Any religious tradition that seeks to talk about God (do theology), without taking full account of the life others have with God, leaves out too much of the data needed to talk meaningfully about God. He holds that as human community draws closer together, theology must be from, about, and for the whole human community.

It would appear that Pieris and Smith are suggesting a new agenda for World Christianity that needs to move well beyond recognizing and articulating the forms of Christianity and Christian theologies in the world. They suggest that the emerging world community and the mutual knowledge, interactions, and shared life call for a much more inclusive theology than we have imagined so far. Smith's call "towards world theology" may make some nervous and others to see it as premature. My own sense, however, is that Smith is being prophetic and is able to discern not only what is coming, but also what needs to come. The question we face is: What will be the role of the field of World Christianity in tracking, facilitating, and nurturing this development.

8 World Christianity and Missions

In my own thinking the most underdeveloped field of Christian academic disciplines is missiology. No doubt, there is a long history of missiological thinking which is extensively documented and commented upon; there is no dearth of volumes on mission and missiology from numerous perspectives. They have been studied, for instance, in David Bosch's *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (1991). A number of concepts like 'Partners in Mission', 'Churches in Mission', 'Mission in the Six Continents', and 'God's Mission' (*Missio Dei*) had been conceived over the period of time, to correct, enhance and re-direct mission thinking. Also of significance are studies on mission as it relates to the poor and marginalized, and somewhat unsuccessful but concerted attempts to understand mission in different cultural contexts.

But despite of the long history of discussions, some of the basic assumptions on mission remain unchanged. The claim that the church has a missionary mandate to 'make disciples of all nations', based on a particular interpretation of the 'Great Commission' in Matthew 28, and the statement attributed to Jesus by John that "no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14.6) still play, in one way or another, a major role in shaping mission thinking. Only lip service is done to the reality that there are other understandings of what constitutes mission in the Hebrew Scriptures and in other parts of the New Testament. Again, in spite of the considerable advances in the discussions on the Theology of Religions and on interfaith relations and dialogue, the exclusive and inclusive positions are the ones that continue to inspire mission thinking. The latest statement on Mission and Evangelism by the WCC Commission on Mission and Evangelism was brought to the last Assembly of the WCC in Busan, Korea. It is a good and comprehensive statement, moving the focus of mission-thinking on to the Holy Spirit, and incorporates most of the contemporary thinking on mission. Yet, it is within the framework of an inherited understanding of mission (Together towards Life, 2012).

It is important to recognize that mission is not a new idea to Asian religions. Buddhism is perhaps the most successful missionary religion in the world. Although it had its humble origins in North India today most countries in Asia (Tibet, China, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, and Indochina) have embraced Buddhism, and in many of them it is the majority religion, and it has effectively changed the cultural ethos of the peoples of these nations towards Buddhism. It is significant that although Buddhism had royal patronage in many countries by first taking the Buddhist message to the rulers, it had this enormous success in mission without the help of an empire (Heirman and Bumbacher 2012; Horner 2016).

The success of Buddhism as a missionary religion can be analysed from many angles. I would highlight here three reasons that, in my thinking, contributed to its success. To begin with, Buddhism, like Christianity and Islam, is a founded religion with a founder and his core teaching on the human predicament and the way to overcome it. It is a common practice for founded religions, sometime after the demise of the founder, to gather up the teachings of the founder and to give to them some form of scriptural status. According to tradition the followers of the Buddha also made a concerted attempt to gather together the teaching the Buddha had given on many occasions and places. It is said that a council of monks carefully selected a body of teachings and the monastic disciplines that he had taught (Holm and Bowker 1994: 12–13). In the case of Islam and Christianity the scriptures were gradually given divine status as the words/word of God. Islam, in order to safeguard the original message,

was uncompromising in insisting that the Qur'an consists teachings directly given by Allah and that it should be followed by whoever embraces Islam, irrespective of their national and cultural location. In the case of Christianity, creeds, doctrines and dogmas were created, and monitored by the teaching authority of the church, to protect the purity of the faith as it moved across cultural boundaries.

In the case of Buddhism, however, when the tradition began to move into other countries and different cultural contexts there was no centralized control of the Buddhist canon or any attempt to lay down doctrines to safeguard the original faith. In the real spirit of Buddhism, it 'let go' of both the Buddha and the scriptures. This resulted in Buddhism adapting and syncretising with the cultures into which it went, resulting in many forms of Buddhism such as Tibetan, Chinese, Sri Lankan, Thai, Vietnamese and so on. Today there are a number of different Buddhist scriptural canons in different languages (loosely based on the basic teachings of the Buddha), and the images of Buddha are distinctly different between Sri Lanka, Tibet and Japan. The Pure Land Buddhism in Japan has moved quite far away from the teachings given by the Buddha in North India. As a result, while Islam and Christianity are treated as 'foreign religions', despite its origins in India, all the Buddhist nations treat Buddhism as their native religion.

The second significant reason is that Buddhism did not attempt to create an alternate religious community nor had initiation ceremonies to mark out the Buddhists from others. Buddhist priests lived a very simple life in the midst of the villagers, entirely depending on the people to sustain them, and simply preached the *dharma* in return; gradually it 'evangelized' the cultures and the nations instead of gathering individual converts or forcing the religion on the people through colonial power, as Christianity and Islam did in many contexts.

Third, by presenting Buddhism as a 'way of life' that is based on non-violence, renunciation, and compassion, it was able to win the support of the rulers to propagate its message among their people. Buddhism was never experienced as a 'threat' by the rulers or the people. Although Buddhism is based on a very radical philosophical analysis of the nature of reality and human existence, in practice it presented itself as a way of life that was easy to understand and follow.

A scholarly study of Buddhist expansion would, of course, have to deal with the historical, sociological, political, and cultural factors that contributed to its spread, and the ups and downs it experienced in the course of its expansion. The features mentioned above, however, give the reasons why Asian nations, while embracing Buddhism as their own, feel threatened by Christianity and Islam.

Although it is not common to associate Hinduism with missions, many missionary movements did originate and established themselves. The most prominent among them are the Ramakrishna Mission, and the Vedantic Centres both in India and all parts of the world. Even as Christianity grew out of Judaism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism grew out of Hinduism, attracted followers and established themselves as separate religious traditions as did Christianity. Missions, therefore, is not new to Asian religious traditions, and no doubt, some tensions, conflicts, and periods of persecution did appear when new religions came out of Hinduism. Yet, they soon settled down as sister religious traditions. In spite of this missionary heritage of their own, today Christianity and Islam are being accused, rightly so, as religions traditions that do not respect the concept of mission in Asian religions and cultures. What are the reasons for growing resentments against Christian and Muslim missions?

While Christianity and Islam, for the most part, work on a displacement model, creating alternate communities, Asian traditions have followed some basic principles on mission that have served them well in holding together religiously diverse nations. I would summarize here four of the principles of mission in Asian religions that Christianity needs to take note of. First, all missions in the Asian religious traditions happen within the basic principle of respect for plurality. Although this principle is violated in counties like India, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, where religion is turned into a political ideology or is abused for political purposes, a majority of the adherents of these traditions would themselves reject any intolerance of plurality which is enmeshed into Asian religious thought. While claims are made to the salvific value of a message, there is reluctance in Asia to claim that it is the 'only way', or to say that other ways of being and believing would lead to damnation.

Second, while some organized missions do take place, there is no sense of 'urgency' and there is no anxiety to 'win' converts to the faith. In Asian mission understanding while one has the privilege of sharing the message, the burden of responding or not responding to the message is placed on the hearers. The anxiety on the part of the messenger that there should be an overt and positive response to his or her mission is viewed with suspicion.

Third, Asian religious traditions are reluctant to engage in mission on the authority of scriptures. While the scriptures are important for spiritual growth and nourishment, the desire to share the message should come entirely out of one's own inner spiritual authority that comes out of an intensity of spiritual experience.

Last, missions, even when they promote different spiritual orientations, should not lead to alienation of the people from their cultural moorings and

the sense of belonging to the larger community. Missions that disrupt community are viewed with deep suspicion.

My own sense has been that while Christians have indigenized to varying degrees Christian theology, worship, art, architecture, and music, they have not truly indigenized their understanding and practice of mission, and are increasingly paying a heavy price for it. This is also the reason why I am not as excited with the growth of Christianity in the South as some others, because often the missions that are said to succeed today follow the 18th and 19th Century missionary practices, based on missiology of that time that has once been tried and found wanting. After all the missionary efforts put into India, for instance, with educational, social, health-care institutions, the colonial power that was behind them, and the thousands of missionaries that have given their lives in mission work, not even three percent of India has become Christians in the form that was intended—the creation of alternate Christian communities. As seen earlier, the gospel message did make a great impact and it has brought many forms of liberation to sectors within the Asian societies, but institutional dimension of the missionary enterprise has little to show in return for the efforts it had put in over the centuries.

This is an important issue for the discipline of World Christianity because mission has always been considered 'world mission'. Somewhere in the middle of mission discussions the concepts of 'mission in the six continents' and 'partners in mission' emerged, which by implication indicated that both missiology and mission practices are the burdens of the global Christian community. The emergence of new answers to such questions as: 'what is mission?', 'why are we in mission, who are the partners in mission, what we hope to achieve by mission?', and 'when is mission accomplished?' need to come from within the field of World Christianity. These are questions that baffle Christians both in the North and the South and answers to these questions will make lasting impact on Christian relationship to peoples of other religious traditions. Postcolonial theology can take us only to some distance; it is only a postcolonial missiology that would take us rest of the way in a world which, in the words of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, has gone "irreversibly interfaith."

9 Wider Ecumenism

Two other developments within Christianity have implications for Christian relationship to other religious traditions that transcend geographical boundaries. The first is a gradual, but increasing call, to reconsider what

should constitute ecumenism. Traditionally ecumenism was understood as a movement that seeks to serve the search for unity among Christians in faith, mission, and service to the world. However, with the growth in interfaith dialogue, and cooperation among religious traditions in meeting the growing challenges facing the global community, pressures are mounting to rethink what constitutes 'ecumenism'. The Greek word *oikoumene* from which ecumenism arose simply denotes the 'whole inhabited earth'. Although the word was appropriated already from the time of the early Ecumenical Councils of the church to serve the cause of Christian unity, today the word may have to be revitalized to denote the search of the unity of the whole human community, which includes the religious traditions. There is a sense in which such international interfaith organizations as the Parliament of the World's Religions and Religions for Peace are expressions of a new or wider ecumenism.

I had said the following in an article written earlier on the need for a wider ecumenism, especially for those who live among other religious traditions:

> At the global level, there is increasing recognition that the world's problems are not Christian problems requiring Christian answers, but human problems that must be addressed together by all human beings. We know today that whether it is the issue of justice, peace, human rights or the destruction of the environment, we need to work across boundaries of religions, nations and cultures.... So the question "how ecumenical 'ecumenical' should be" is no longer a question of semantics or inclusion; it is a theological question. It has to do with a reassessment of our understanding of God, of the scope of God's saving work, and of the agents of God's mission.
>
> Ariarajah 1998: 327

I have also argued that this is a particular problem for those Christians who live as minorities in multi-faith societies:

> Those Christians who live in contexts where the society is made up mainly of people who profess other faiths or live by other ideologies, and whose life and death issues are intimately related to their neighbours, refuse to believe that God's reconciliation and redeeming work in these societies is put on hold until the churches are able to overcome divisions that are part of another age and culture. (…) The call for "wider ecumenism", therefore, is a call to discernment. It is an attempt to make more

> sense than before of the conviction we hold that the Spirit of God is active in the world. It is an attempt to give more meaning than before to our belief that "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell in it." (Ps. 24:1)
>
> Ariarajah 1998: 327–328

What such a new ecumenism needs to look like, what is the nature of the relationship between the Christian ecumenism and the wider ecumenism, and how one could promote internal ecumenism within the factions and branches within other religious traditions are all questions that can fruitfully engage World Christianity.

10 Public Theology

The other area that is emerging within Christian presence in religiously plural societies is the concept of public theology. The field itself is not new, and it had grown out of the felt need to interact with public issues that arise within society that affect all communities irrespective of religion, culture or ethnicity. The need for this field was also precipitated by the forces of globalization which presented issues that were challenges to all faith communities. Since all public issues are multi-faceted, public theology needs to be multi-disciplinary to engage in dialogue with different academic disciplines such as politics, economics, cultural studies, and religious studies. There is today a global network of public theology and a journal associated with it: The *International Journal of Public Theology*. One of the proponents of public theology in India, especially in the context of Hinduism, is Felix Wilfred, who had done much to clarify it and to show the parameters of reflection that is called for (Wilfred 2014b: 558–574).

He makes two importance emphases. The first is that public theology should be of service to the concerns of the poor and marginalized masses of Asia. Second, that this theology, although arising out of Christian convictions, needs to be open to the participation of peoples of other religious traditions and ideologies who would bring in their own resources to the task. This means public theology will not be theology done only to open up and enliven Christian interest and meaningful participation in public issues, but also one that is done with peoples of other religious traditions and ideologies in the interest of the common good of the whole community. Here interfaith relationship is raised to a new level of engagement that may help to bring religious communities closer together than other forms of dialogue.

Faced with the problems raised by the more assertive entry of religions into the public space and having to deal with religious extremism, militant forms of religious expressions, and fundamentalist interpretations of religions, public theology is not only a local or national concern but one that needs explorations at the global level. World Christianity thus is entering a phase where, beyond statistics and demographic studies, it needs to become a space where contemporary issues raised by the interfaith realities are addressed from multi-disciplinary perspectives. Here is a challenge and an agenda for World Christianity that needs to be further examined and implemented.

11 Future of the Discipline

The foregoing consideration may appear to be placing many more burdens and unrealistic expectations on the emerging field of World Christianity. The intention here, however, is to open up the many avenues that can and needs to come under its purview if it is to carry the full import of the word 'world' in its name. Mapping the demographic changes and its consequences to our understanding and practice of mission is only part of this task. Greater challenge is to study the theological consequences of these changes, even as Christians in non-Western parts of the world call for the decolonization of theology, make their own input, and seek to discover those things that can still hold the global Christian community together as part of the one body of Christ. This task is further complicated as Christians living as minorities in religiously plural societies seek both to make theological sense of other ways of believing and being and attempt to take religious plurality seriously in their own theological task.

We have also seen that the closer relationship between religious traditions challenges the narrow understanding of ecumenism as the search for unity of the churches in faith, witness and service. Christians in all parts of the world are being challenged to find ways of seeking the unity of human community—understood as a call for a Wider Ecumenism. Related to it is the increasing voices from both the East and the West that discern the need to place all theological thought at the service of the world, in order to find values and principles of living together in justice and peace. Even as religions enter the public space from many different perspectives and for different purposes, there is also the call for a robust discipline of 'public theology' that draws from all what religions and secular movements have to offer towards finding, advocating, and practicing life-centred values to govern our common public life. In other words, the discipline of World Christianity is being challenged to become the forum, the space, the stage and the locus to advocate, facilitate and foster the

emergence of Christianity as a religion that is responsive to diversity, inclusivity and plurality.

Bibliography

Ariarajah, S. Wesley (1991). *Hindus and Christians. A Century of Protestant Ecumenical Thought*. Amsterdam: Rodopi & Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans.

Ariarajah, S. Wesley (1998). 'Wider Ecumenism. A Promise or a Threat?' *The Ecumenical Review* 50,3: 321–329.

Ariarajah, S. Wesley (2012). *Your God, My God, Our God. Rethinking Christian Theology for Religious Plurality*. Geneva: WCC Publications.

Baustista, Julius (2014). 'Colonialism, Nationalism and the Caveats to Conversion.' In Felix Wilfred, ed. (2015). *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia*. New York: Oxford University Press: 215–230.

Bosch, David J. (1996 [1991]). *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis.

Commission on the Missionary Message. *Hinduism II*. Bound manuscripts (catalogue number 280.215w893c). WCC Library: 92–107.

Cracknell, Kenneth (1995). *Justice, Courtesy and Love. Theologians and Missionaries Encountering World Religions, 1846–1914*. London: Epworth Press.

Cracknell, Kenneth, ed. (2001). *William Cantwell Smith. A Reader*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

Dussel, Enrique (2013). 'The Epistemological Decolonization of Theology.' *Concilium* 2013,2: 21–31.

England, John C. (1996). *The Hidden History of Christianity in India. The Churches of the East before 1500*. Delhi: ISPCK & Hong Kong; CCA.

Gallagher, Robert L. and Paul Hertog, eds (2009). *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books.

Heirman, Ann and Stephen P. Bumbacher, eds (2012) *The Spread of Buddhism*. Leiden: Brill.

Holm, Jean and John W. Bowker (1994). *Sacred Writings*. London: Printer Publisher Ltd.

Horner, Jeremy (2016). *Nirvana. The Spread of Buddhism Through Asia*. Leiden: Brill.

Kopf, David (1979). *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Moffett, Samuel H. (1998). *A History of Christianity in Asia*. Vol. I: Beginnings to 1500. Maryknoll NY: Orbis.

Moffett, Samuel H. (2005). *A History of Christianity in Asia*. Vol. 2: 1500–1900. Maryknoll NY: Orbis.

Podipara, Placid (1973). 'Hindu in Culture, Christian in Religion, Oriental in Worship.' In George Menachery, ed. *St. Thomas Christian Encyclopedia of India*, Trichur, India: STCEI, vol. 2: 107–112.

Rae, G. Milne (2012). *The Syrian Church in India*. London: Forgotten Books.

Pieris, Aloysius (1988). *Asian Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books.

Pieris, Aloysius (1998). *Love Meets Wisdom*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books.

Sine, Nomine (2017). "Frontmatter." *The Journal of World Christianity* 7,1: no page numbers.

Song, Choan S. (1986). *Theology from the Womb of Asia*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books.

Stanley, Brian (2009). *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.

Sugirtharajah, Rasiah J. (2005). *The Bible and Empire. Postcolonial Explorations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tan, Jonathan Y. and Ahn Q. Tran, eds (2016). *World Christianity. Perspectives and Insights. Essays in Honor of Peter C. Phan*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books.

Tennent, Timothy C. (2007). *Theology in the Context of World Christianity. How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think about and Discuss Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

'Together towards Life. Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes.' (2012) WCC Resources. http://www.oecumene.nl/files/Documenten/Together_towards_life.pdf, accessed November 15 2017.

Wilfred, Felix, ed. (2014a). *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Wilfred, Felix (2014b). 'Asian Christianity and Public Life. The Interplay.' in Felix Wilfred, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 558–574.

Winkler, Dietmar, ed. (2013). *Syriac Christianity in the Middle—East and India. Contributions and Challenges*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.

World Missionary Conference 1910, Report of Commission IV (1910). Edinburgh/London: Oliphant, Anderson, and Ferrier.

CHAPTER 7

Thai Comparative Theologizing: Material and Methodological Reflections

Kari Storstein Haug

1 Introduction

The increased attention to the study of Christianity as a worldwide phenomenon has contributed to making visible the diverse ways in which the Christian faith is interpreted and practiced around the world. Further, it has highlighted Christianity's complex interactions and negotiations with different religious and socio-cultural contexts. Given this complexity, and taking into account that the different contexts in which Christianity as a religion finds itself present the researcher with different methodological challenges and opportunities, the question arises as to how knowledge about this field of study could be acquired and/or created. This chapter intends addressing this question by presenting and discussing the case of how Christians in Thailand are interacting with the predominantly Buddhist religious context of the country. It will present and analyze two examples of Thai comparative theologizing. The focus and discussion point will be first, how Thai Christians reflect on their faith in light of and as a response to the religious context in which they are situated, and second, how to create knowledge about this reflective practice and theologizing.

2 Religious Context

Christianity has an approximately five hundred-years-old history in Thailand, and is diverse in terms of denominational backgrounds and affiliations (Björkgren-Thylin 2009: 44–47; Fleming 2014: 53–59; Keyes 1993).[1] Despite

1 The history of Christianity in Thailand begins in the mid-sixteenth century through the contact with the Portuguese. The first resident Catholic missionaries were two Portuguese Dominicans, followed by French Catholic missionaries. Protestant missionaries were allowed into the country from 1828. In contemporary Thailand, the government recognizes five Christian organizations. The Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand (EFT), the Thailand Baptist Convention (TBC), the Seventh-Day Adventist

© KARI STORSTEIN HAUG, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004444867_009
This is an open access chapter distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

Christianity's relatively long presence in the country, Christians constitute a tiny minority in Thai society, a society in which the religious and socio-cultural context is very much formed and informed by Buddhism. At the same time, Thai Christians are embedded in the complex and transnational web of connections and networks that constitutes contemporary World Christianity.

The majority of the population in Thailand is Buddhist (94.6 percent), while Islam is the second largest religion in the country, with 4.3 percent followers. Christians constitute 1.0 percent of the population. The remaining 0.1 percent is affiliated with other religions (National Statistical Office).[2] According to the constitution, the king must be a Buddhist, and is the patron of the *Sangha* (the monastic community). At the same time, he is the protector of all religions (Ishii 1986). The state supports Buddhism in various ways, and Buddhism is taught in all government schools. It is further considered as one of the three nationally promoted pillars of Thai identity, which are religion, king, and nation (Slagter and Kerbo 2000: 88–89, see Reynolds 2002 for a critical discussion of Thai national identity).

Buddhism in Thailand belongs to the Theravada tradition of Buddhism.[3] It is multifaceted and can be described in a variety of ways. At the most basic level, it is possible to distinguish between doctrinal Buddhism and popular Buddhism. Doctrinal Buddhism refers to Buddhism as it is taught and practiced based on the *Pali* scriptural tradition and authoritative commentaries to these (Payutto 2003/2546). Popular Buddhism is Buddhism as it is understood and practiced by the ordinary adherents of the religion—but also many monks and *mae-chiis* (nuns)—and which differs in emphasis from doctrinal Buddhism (Podhisita 1998/2541; Kitiarsa 2012; Slagter and Kerbo 2000: 78–89; Swearer 1973). This latter type could—with reference to Melford Spiro's well-known categorization of the soteriological system of Buddhism—be described as *karmatic* Buddhism, having a focus on gaining a better life in this and next life. In addition, popular Buddhism in Thailand includes a belief in

Church, and the Roman Catholic Church. In addition, there are a great number of unofficial independent churches as well as mission organizations and missionaries coming from different countries and denominations.

2 Five religions are officially recognized, that is, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Brahmanism-Hinduism and Sikhism. These religions are supported and regulated by the state through the Department of Religious Affairs, under the Ministry of Culture. In addition, there is an Office of National Buddhism. This office reports directly to the Prime Minister.

3 According to tradition, missionaries from India introduced Buddhism to the area of what is present day Thailand, in the era of King Ashoka (304–232 BCE). Most scholars agree, however, that is from the era of the Sukhothai kingdom (1238–1438 ACE), that Buddhism was consolidated in Thailand (Phra Dhammapitaka i.e. P.A. Payutto 2001; cf. also Baker and Phongpaichit 2014).

the world of spirits and magic, which Spiro describes as *apotropaic* Buddhism (Spiro 1982: 11–13, 66–161).

3 Research on Christianity in Thailand

Previous research has demonstrated that Buddhism, particularly popular Buddhism, has decisively formed Christianity in Thailand. Several studies of the Church of Christ in Thailand, for example, argue that the teaching of *karma* is a framework influencing Christian faith and practice in decisive ways (Hughes 1984, 1985; Suwanbubbha 1994). Nevertheless, research into Christianity in Thailand more generally, has also shown that its understandings of and interactions with Buddhism and Buddhists are quite variegated. It has been influenced by different denominational and theological discourses resulting from its international connections through, for example, missionaries (Fleming 2014).

Looking at the available studies of Christianity in Thailand, especially those which address the interaction between Christianity and Buddhism, it is possible to divide them into the following categories. First, historical studies of Thai church- and mission history, which in different ways give important insights into the history of the encounter between Christianity and Buddhism (see for example Chaiwan 1984; Smith 1999; Swanson 1984). Second, empirical studies of Thai Christians, mainly using qualitative approaches and methods, focusing on how Christian faith and practice has been influenced and formed by its encounter with Thai Buddhism (some examples are Cohen 1995; Haug 2015; Hughes 1985; Suwanbubbha 1994; Zehner 1991, 2005, 2009). Third, empirical studies of conversion and church growth (Galgao 2019; Hilderbrand 2016; Sandland 2014, Visser 2009; Zehner 2013). Fourth, literature on Buddhist-Christian encounter and dialogue in Thailand. As Bantoon Boon-Itt documents in his doctoral study there is a limited amount of studies in this field (Boon-Itt 2007). The studies he mentions will be discussed in the next section. There are some studies focusing on how Christianity is or could be viewed from a Buddhist perspective (Buddhadasa Bhikkhu 1967; Sivaraksa 1986, 2002). A few articles present and discuss interreligious dialogue in Thailand (Phongpit 1990/2533; Ratanakul 2005; Suwanbubbha 1998). A recent book by Kenneth Fleming both gives an overview of some of the history of the Buddhist-Christian encounter in Thailand and presents some contemporary cases (Fleming 2014).[4] My own study of how to interpret Old Testament

4 Fleming (2002) has also a chapter on the theology of Kosuke Koyama's (a former missionary to Thailand) theology of dialogue with Buddhism.

wisdom texts in light of Thai Buddhists' interpretations of the same texts addresses the question of interreligious hermeneutic and Bible interpretation in a Buddhist context (Haug 2012). Fifth and finally, there are a few theological and practical-theological oriented studies from a Christian perspective. The majority of this literature is written by non-Thais, predominantly scholars who are, or have worked as, missionaries in Thailand, and is mostly concerned with contextualization issues and/or church growth (for example Davis 1993; Grether 1960; Hong-Shik 1989; Hovemyr 1983; Koyama 1974; Taylor 2005).

4 Thai Theology

With some notable exceptions, very few Thai scholars and theologians have discussed or published on the issue of Thai theology. That is, there are not many publications by Thai nationals, engaging in a theological discourse of interpreting Christian faith and practice in dialogue with the historical and contemporary context of Thai society. In the words of church historian Herbert R. Swanson: "Few Asian nations, however, have been as 'silent' theologically as Thailand, and from an international perspective, it would seem fair to wonder if 'Thai theology' ever exists, particularly among Thai Protestants" (Swanson 2002: 59; see also Taylor 2005). Swanson's observation resonates with the conclusion Boon-Itt reached after having searched for theological thinking by Thai Christians on the Buddhist-Christian encounter: "In the past fifty years, research and writings from Thai Christians responding to or relating to Buddhism have been scarce" (Boon-Itt 2007:139).[5]

Most of the available studies written by Thai theologians focus on the question of how to communicate the gospel in Thailand in ways that are culturally appropriate and understandable for Thai Buddhists (Boon-Itt 2007; Lorgunpai 1995; N. Mejudhon 1997; U. Mejudhon 1997; Petchsongkram 1975). Boon-Itt, Lorgunpai and Petchongkram argue that in order to communicate effectively it is necessary to use terms and concepts that Thai Buddhists can understand.[6] This demands in-depth knowledge of both Buddhist and Christian worldviews and concepts. Lorgunpai further sees the potential of comparing biblical insights with Buddhist teaching. In his doctoral dissertation, he compares the theological content of Ecclesiastes with central themes in Thai Buddhism, pointing out similarities and differences. He concludes that both Thai Christians and

5 Boon-Itt found only seven studies (six are doctoral dissertations) on this issue, of which just two are published. The two published studies are Petchsongkram 1975 and Lertjitlekha 1998.

6 Behind this assertion, one finds both an implicit and explicit critique of the overly westernized ways of formulating and communicating the Christian faith in Thailand.

Buddhists can benefit from such a comparison: "It [Ecclesiastes] provides Thai Christians with a tool for communicating with Thai Buddhists. Likewise, Thai Buddhists will realize that some messages in the Christian Bible are not entirely foreign to them. They can also gain some insights from reading Ecclesiastes and will have an alternative response to human suffering" (Lorgunpai 1995: 270–271, see also Lorgunpai 1994). Like Lorgunpai, Lertjitlekha also has a comparative approach. He compares Buddhist and Christian ethics, and argues for the importance of dialogue in this matter. In his opinion, dialogue contributes to "moral progress and mutual understanding of each partner. This in turn brings self-understanding and self-correction of each one in their own faith" (Lertjitlekha 1998: 383). He also stresses the importance of understanding the two religions on their own terms and highlighting their uniqueness. Nantachai and Ubolwan Mejudhon are particularly concerned with finding culturally appropriate ways of communicating the gospel, and argue that there is much to be learned from Thai culture (and by extension Thai Buddhism) in the way it emphasizes the value and attitude of meekness. Finally, Phongpit makes a strong case for dialogue and its importance for theological understanding. According to Boon-Itt,[7] he argues that "one's own understanding of one's own religion is only made whole when 'one finds out that it is no longer possible to comprehend one's own religion without considering the reality of the other religions'" (Phongpit in Boon-Itt 2007: 143).

5 Everyday and Comparative Theology

While the relatively limited amount of studies by Thai theologians might lend some support to the conclusion that Thai theology seems to be rather underdeveloped, it could, however, be argued that the way Thai Christians live and interpret their lives in light of their faith is an expression of everyday theology (Vanhoozer, Anderson and Sleasman 2007). As we have already noted, previous research into the encounter between Christianity and Buddhism in Thailand has argued that the faith and practice of Thai Christians has been decisively informed and shaped by Thai Buddhism. Little attention has been paid, however, first, as to how Thai Christians' faith and practice could be interpreted as

7 Boon-Itt refers to Phongpit's doctoral thesis, which is unpublished (Phongpit 1978). Unfortunately, I have not been able to get hold of the thesis, so I rely on Boon-Itt for this reference.

an expression of Thai everyday theology and theologizing, and second, to the question of the agency of Thai Christians in this process.[8]

How to study and get hold of Thai theologizing efforts? One approach, which is found in Swanson's article 'Dancing to the Temple, Dancing to the Church' (Swanson 2002), is to observe and reflect on, from an everyday theology perspective, how ordinary Thai Christians live and negotiate life and practice in their daily encounters with Buddhist neighbors and their religious rituals and practices. Fleming also utilizes an empirical approach in a similar, but more general, case study of a village, which includes both a Buddhist and Christian community (Fleming 2014: 119–139). Their approach reflects a turn, both in theology and religious studies, to more empirical studies of religion. In these studies, the focus is on religious faith and practices as they are understood and lived out by different kinds of practitioners, not at least so-called ordinary believers (Ammerman 2007, 2014; Tanner 1997; Wigg-Stevenson 2014). I think Swanson's and Fleming's contributions—even though they are limited in scope—demonstrate that this approach might contribute valuable material to the understanding of how Thai Christians actively interact and negotiate with their context. More research however is definitely needed in this area. Hence, I concur with Clarke, who contends that "… the field of world Christianity needs to deliberately embrace the messiness of the lived forms of Christianity that take root and bear fruit in historical contexts of diverse peoples and disparate places on our earth" (Clarke 2014: 195).

The approach I will develop and discuss here, however, takes comparative theology as its point of departure, but argues that by developing this approach in a more empirical direction, it has the potential of expanding our knowledge of the complex interactions and negotiations in which Christianity as a world religion is embedded and involved.

Comparative theology aims at exploring how the wisdom of other religions might enrich one's own faith and belief. The comparative theologian does a careful study of, and attentive listening to the ideas of other religions, and then proceeds to ask how these insights could contribute to the interpretation and understanding of Christian faith and theology (Clooney 2010a, b). In my opinion, comparative theology in the tradition of Francis Clooney has contributed valuable insights and reflections on the interreligious encounter (Clooney 2005, Fredericks 2004). For a useful review of newer developments and discussions, see Heim 2019). The approach has however, according to my knowledge,

8 One exception here is Zehner's study into Thai Christian interactions and negotiations with Thai animistic beliefs (see for example Zehner 2005).

mainly been used by western Christian academic theologians,[9] and have not been applied to ethnographic empirical material or to ordinary people's reflection on their faith. Based on my own research and fieldwork in Thailand, I would like to argue that a focus on comparative theology in the creation and analysis of empirical material yields fruitful insights into Christianity in Thailand.[10] In the following, I will present what I label as two examples of comparative theologizing based on Thai Christian and Buddhist readings of two biblical wisdom texts. My question is if one by approaching the study of Christianity in Thailand with a focus on empirical comparative theology could learn more about how Thai Christians engage and negotiate their faith in dialogue with the predominantly Buddhist context in which they find themselves.

6 Case Study: Thai Comparative Bible Reading and Theologizing

In the following, I will first present an example of how comparing Thai Buddhists' and Christians' interpretations of two Biblical wisdom texts can contribute to understanding how Thai Christians negotiate their faith and theology in a context highly informed by Thai Buddhism. Second, I will give an example of Thai comparative theologizing by highlighting some Thai Christians' reflections on the teaching of *karma*.

The material referred to in this section was created during fieldwork in Bangkok, Thailand in 2005. I invited nineteen Thai Buddhists and thirteen Thai Christians to read and interpret three texts from the Old Testament wisdom literature (Proverbs 11:18–31, Psalm 73 and Ecclesiastes 9:1–12).[11] The Thai readers included both religious specialists and ordinary believers, men and women, young and old, educated and uneducated. After having had an initial contact on mail or on phone, I usually met the respondents twice. The first time I met them, I informed them in more detail about the research project and agreed on where and when we would meet for an interview. In addition, I gave them a copy of the three Bible texts that I would like to discuss with them, in order for them to have the opportunity to read the texts in advance. The second time

9 There are some exceptions, see for example Tatari 2017.

10 A similar methodological consideration is made by O'Donnell 2017.

11 The three biblical texts belong to the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. All three texts discuss in some way or other the relation between act and consequence, a central topic in the wisdom literature. See Haug 2012:12–14 regarding the rationale of choosing these particular texts. In this chapter, I focus on the Thai readings of Proverb 11:18–31 and Psalm 73. In the Proverbs text there is a clear expectation about order or justice in life (an optimistic view of causation), while the Psalm questions this way of thinking.

we met, I conducted the interview, where the focus was on how the respondents read and understood the texts and their topics. The interviews had an exploratory aim and were semi-structured (Rapley 2004). I interviewed the respondents individually, with one exception: Two of the Buddhist monks wanted to be interviewed together, as they were not comfortable being interviewed by a woman alone. A typical interview lasted one to one and a half hour. All interviews were conducted in Thai.[12]

7 Thai Interpretations of Proverbs 11:18–31 and Psalms 73

7.1 *Main Themes*

Both the Buddhist and Christian respondents argued that the overarching theme in Proverbs 11: 18–31 is the relation between act and consequence. In their interpretation of the text, most of the respondents referred to the well-known Thai saying, "do good, receive good; do evil, receive evil", and argued that this saying could very well sum up the main teaching of the passage. One of the respondents, Dr. Phimpan, formulated it as follows: "It is about […] 'do good, receive good; do evil, receive evil' […] every verse can be summarized—they all mean the same—as: If one does good, then in return one will receive that which is good". In other words, both groups of respondents emphasized that the text stresses the correlation between act and consequence, and read the different verses as exemplifications and further explications of this.

Next, both the Buddhist and Christian readers claimed that the text thematizes how to understand the connection between act and consequence, and they agreed that in the text, the answer to this question somehow relates to the issue of how to understand God and God's role. Nevertheless, as we will see below, views differed as to how God's role should be understood in more detail. Finally, yet importantly, both groups of respondents read the text as an address to the reader, calling upon its readers to live ethically good lives, and avoid acting unjustly.[13]

Even though the Buddhist and Christian readers largely highlighted the same main themes in the Proverbs text, there are some differences in emphasis. For example, the Buddhist readers mentioned two themes, which the Christian

12 I have studied Thai language, and worked in Thailand for eight years over a ten years period (1994–2003). I have translated all quotations from respondents from the Thai original transcript.

13 "Whether [the results of acts] are the result of *karma* in Buddhism or, like one expresses it in Christianity, [due to the fact that] God gives, what is for sure [is that this text] encourages people to do good" (Phra Suthep and Phra Phongsak).

readers did not mention at all. First, several of the Thai Buddhist respondents argued that the text strongly emphasizes that there is no way to escape the consequences of one's actions. Second, some of the Buddhist respondents found the text to highlight the theme of human freedom. That is, the freedom of human beings to control their own destiny. Even though some of the Christian informants emphasized that the text makes clear that there are different paths of life to choose between, and indirectly challenges the reader to make a choice, none of them claimed that the text should be interpreted as meaning that the destiny of an individual is in his or her own hands.

Reflecting on Psalm 73, all the respondents agreed that the psalm raises a basic question, which challenges the idea of correspondence between act and consequence put forward in Proverbs 11. The question is why the good suffers, while the wicked seems to be successful and prosper, or as Mr. Wibun puts it: "Why [is it that] the evil, the more evil they do, and the richer they get? S/he [the psalmist] does that which is righteous, but why does s/he end up having nothing good?" The respondents further argued that this is a common human experience and most of them also pointed to a Thai play of words on the saying referred to above (do good, receive good, do evil, receive evil), namely: "Do good, receive good, where do we find that? Do evil, receive good, this is found everywhere!"

The psalm was read as a person's existential struggle with this problem, and particularly as the psalmist's struggle understanding his/her own situation in the light of his/her faith in a good and just God. All the respondents believed that the psalm offers an answer to the psalmist's problem, but they differed in their interpretation of it (more on this below). In addition to pointing out the main theme and question of the psalm, all the respondents became very engaged by the psalmist's lament. They both suggested how it could be understood, and evaluated the psalmist and his response to the situation. The respondents agreed that the formulations in the first half of the psalm should be seen as an expression of the psalmist's strong emotional reaction to his/her situation, being in despair and heavily depressed. Nevertheless, they disagreed in their evaluation of the psalmist's reaction. Most of the Buddhist respondents were very critical of the psalmist's lamentation and interpreted it as an expression of ignorance and lack of faith.[14] The background for this assessment is the Buddhist teaching that when a person grows in wisdom and insight, s/he

14 "This, if [I am to] put it bluntly, is foolishness, ignorance, because if s/he [the psalmist] knew, had wisdom, he would not have been jealous; s/he would have known that this group [the wicked] will not [receive] good for very long. Soon their *karma* will catch up [with them]" (Dr. Somsri).

will understand the cause of the suffering and the apparent incoherence between deeds and consequences. Consequently, the reason for the lament will disappear. Similarly, some of the Christians respondents also believed that the psalmist's lament was founded on wrong understandings. Nevertheless, compared to the Buddhist respondents, most of the Christian readers were much more positive in their assessment of the psalmist. Even though they agreed that he used very strong language, they believed that it is legitimate to come to God with the feelings and questions you have. Differences in the perception of God and God's role seem to be the main reason for the different interpretations (see below).

In summary, when looking at what kind of themes the respondents find in the texts, it is, despite some differences, the similarities that dominate when comparing the Buddhist and Christian readings. However, when I analyze how these topics are understood in more depth, and look into the rationale behind the interpretations, the picture becomes a bit more complex. In the following, I will point to some of the similarities and differences in how the Christian and Buddhist respondents developed and explained the themes in more detail.

7.2 *The Understanding of the Themes*

Reading the Proverbs text, both Buddhists and Christians suggested that this text is about the correspondence between deed and consequence and that God in some way or another is related to this. How is the role of God understood among the respondents, and what, if any, are the similarities and differences between Christian and Buddhist interpretations?

Many of the respondents, both Buddhists and Christians, believe that the relationship between act and consequence is a law of nature that applies to all people. Accordingly, the Buddhist respondents argue that what the text does is that it describes the law of *karma*. The majority of Christian readers, on the other hand, does not use this terminology, but rather speaks in general terms about a law of nature arising from the fall. Some of them named this as "the law of righteousness and injustice", based on the argument that there seems to be an in-built law in nature ensuring a just retribution of good and bad acts.

When it comes to the question of the role of God in the relationship between act and consequence, one group of Buddhist respondents argued that God could be compared to the law of *karma*. God does not have an independent role in the act-consequence process. God's function is only to facilitate the process and ensure that the seed is bearing fruit. While some of the Christian respondents thought it could be argued that God uses the law of *karma* or the natural law of correlation between act and consequence, none of them would say that God *only* facilitates a natural process. The reason was that they

believe that God has the power to overrule this law. In other words, several of the Christian respondents believed that God could be said to fulfil the same function as the law of *karma* and repay persons righteously in accordance with their deeds. At the same time, they emphasized that God is not a law of nature, but a person, and therefore s/he can choose to forgive people their iniquities, and be gracious to them.

Another group of Buddhist respondents interpreted the role of God in the act and consequence nexus differently from the first group. They argued that in the text God seems to replace the law of *karma*, in the sense that it is God, who assigns the result of a person's actions. God can therefore be described as a judge rather than a facilitator. This interpretation largely corresponds to how many of the Christian respondents interpreted the text. Both these two groups of respondents emphasized that such an interpretation of the text implies an understanding that the outcome of human action does not depend solely on one's own, but that it depends on someone outside of himself or herself. While the Christians perceived this as positive, the Buddhists perceived it negatively. They believed that this creates a basic insecurity with regard to what one can expect because of one's deeds. The Christian readers, however, found the idea of God's free agency as hopeful and comforting. Even if a person had not managed to live the way s/he should, s/he could still hope and believe that God would show mercy and forgive.

Returning to the two themes that some of the Buddhist respondents highlighted, but which are not mentioned by any of the Christians (one, the impossibility to escape the consequences of one's actions; two, everyone is responsible for his own destiny), it appears that the Buddhist respondents who emphasized these two themes were the same who believed that in this text, God and the law of *karma* must be understood as the expression of the same reality. The fact that the Christian readers do not mention these topics could thus be understood as an expression of differences in the interpretative framework of the Christian and Buddhist readers.

Reading Psalm 73, all respondents found it to address the question of how to understand the fact that human experience seems to problematize the expected correspondence between act and consequence. How they explained the reasons for the problem of the psalmist, evaluated his lament and understood the solution of the psalm, were very much dependent on the wider hermeneutical framework in which they read the text.

As regards the Buddhist readers' explanations, these were largely characterized by a common Thai Buddhist understanding of *karma*. Both suffering and happiness are a result of *karma*. The discrepancy between act and consequence

can be explained in terms of so-called old *karma*,[15] or it could be an expression of the psalmist not being as good as s/he believe. The correct attitude in face of suffering should be to continue doing good, trusting that the law of *karma* is utterly just. Many of the respondents accordingly interpret the lament as spiritual immaturity and ignorance. The Thai Christians, however, did not seem to think that suffering is the result of ignorance or sin, or that good deeds are the way one gets rid of pain and suffering.

As we have seen above, there is a fundamental difference between the Christian and the Buddhist readers in how they understand God, and this difference influences the interpretations of Psalm 73 as well. Despite the fact that the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper, the Christian readers believe that God is in control and that God might both send suffering (for example in order to test or to discipline) and turn suffering into something good. They maintain that God is both righteous and good and trust that s/he has a good plan and purpose with everything that happens. Whereas many of the Buddhist readers argue that believing in God as a personal actor creates insecurity because one does not know what one has to deal with; the Christians are comforted by the thought of God being in control, because they are convinced that God wants them well. This difference in the understanding of God also appears to be the main reason in the different way the majority of the Buddhist and Christian readers evaluate the psalmist's lamentation. For the Christians, God is not an impersonal principle, but is regarded as a person who cares for them. As one of the respondents formulated it: "God can be compared to a father, friend, or mother." In such a close relationship, it is possible to share what is on your heart.

Further, differences in interpretative framework also influence the understanding of what kind of solution the psalm offers to the problem it articulates. Both the Thai Christian and the Thai Buddhist respondents found that the psalmist received an answer to his/her question. Based on their reading, they agreed that the psalmist realizes that everyone will be rewarded in accordance with their deeds. While for most of the Buddhist readers this was seen to be the final answer, the Christian readers were of the opinion that the most important insight was that God is always present, no matter the situation. God is rendered fair, but at the same time as one who takes care of those who turn to Godself.

15 'Old karma' is often explained as bad karma that one has previously committed, either earlier in this life, but even more often in a previous existence.

7.3 *Thai Christian Discourses on Karma*

Based on the Thai Buddhist and Christian readings of Proverbs 11 and Psalm 73, I will now turn to the question of how the Thai Christians explicitly reflected on the question of *karma* in relation to their own Christian faith and beliefs. How did the Christian Thais, who were interviewed, theologize in dialogue with the *karma* framework?

As we have seen above, the teachings of *karma* constitute the basic framework for the Thai Buddhist interpretations of the texts. It served as an interpretive key to pinpoint and interpret the themes of the texts, as well as pointing out similarities and differences between Christianity and Buddhism. Contrastively, none of the Thai Christian respondents explicitly used the concept of *karma* or 'the law of *karma*' in their interpretation of the texts, even though they referred to this way of thinking more implicitly. This is in line with findings in previous research, for example Hughes' findings in his study of the Church of Christ in Thailand (Hughes 1982). Interested in how the Thai Christian respondents would reflect on their interpretation more explicitly in light of the *karma* teaching, I asked them, towards the very end of the interviews, to reflect on what they had said about the texts and their themes in this light. Here follows a brief summary of their reflections.

One issue raised by many of the respondents, was whether the acts described in the texts could be denoted as *karmic* acts. Several of the respondents underlined that if *karma* is understood as action, and the law of *karma* as that which governs the relationship between act and consequence, this text could be said to deal with *karma* and the law of *karma*. "It is the law of *karma*, I think it is the same, see for example verse 31 [Proverbs 11]. This means that if someone who does good is oppressed in this world, those who did it will be punished more than this in the next world. This, I think, is the law of *karma*" (Mr. Suchart).

At the same time, the same respondents pointed out that Christians do not believe in rebirth. Therefore, they do not think of *karma* in the same way as the Buddhists. Connected with this point, some of the respondents emphasized that as Christian one has no *karma*, in the sense of being guilty of sin, because of Jesus' redemptive work. "Jesus has redeemed it (*karma*) already. Therefore, *karma* or the circle of rebirth has no power in my life now. When I die, I don't have to use my *karma* in hell, or be born again to use up my *karma*" (Mr. Paisan).

When it comes to the question of how God and the law of *karma* relate to each other, none of the respondents thought that God or the law of *karma* is an expression of the same reality. The main argument against comparing God with the law of *karma* was that the latter is considered as a law of nature, while

God is a person. “A law of nature is a thing, it doesn’t have life. It is a thing that cannot show mercy. In fact, if it is a law of nature, there are no exceptions, isn’t it so. If I do *karma*, bad *karma*, I have to receive the bad *karma*. A law of nature cannot be merciful or forgive, but our God has mercy with us. So there is a difference, God is a person, not a force of nature” (Mr. Somsak).

In other words, the respondents argued that there is a main difference between the law of *karma* and God. As a law of nature, the law of *karma* cannot show mercy, love or forgive. God, however, as a person, can do all these things.

Even though all the Christian respondents emphasized that God and the law of *karma* are not the same, some of them argued that the law of *karma* is a tool used by God. “The law of *karma* is not God, but it is a tool, which God uses. When humankind fell in sin, it emerged, that is, the law of *karma* originated. It is a restrictive measurement, which God established, namely that everyone needs to reap the fruit of their own doings” (Mr. Suchart).

Here it is stressed that the law of *karma* originated because of the fall. A couple of the respondents were also careful to emphasize that God did not create the law of *karma*. It originated because of human disobedience to God. “God did not create the law of *karma*, but the result of *karma* originated when humankind fell in sin” (Rev Anuman).

In the previous section, we have seen that several of the Christian respondents argue that act and consequence naturally hang together. There is a natural connection between act and consequence. God blesses those who do good and punishes (with a loving, disciplining purpose) those who do bad. Here, therefore, one can find support for the claim that Thai Christians interpret their faith within a *karmic* frame of reference. Several of the Thai Christians also argue that on certain conditions, one could also use the language of *karma* to describe Christian theological insights. Nevertheless, in two central areas, the Christian respondents’ theologizing breaks with an interpretation based on the law of *karma*. None of them has a cyclical understanding of reality. This means that the relationship between act and consequence is not interpreted as expressing the law of *karma*, to the extent that the law of *karma* is understood as the law governing the rebirth process. Further, none of the Christian respondents thinks of God and the law of *karma* as referring to the same reality. That is, they do not think of God as a law of nature or an impersonal law that regulates the relation between cause and effect. According to the Christian respondents, God is a personal force, independent of and over the laws of nature. God therefore, has the opportunity to break the chain of causal effect and can, for example, forgive human beings their iniquities and not let them experience the natural consequences of their actions.

8 Comparative Theologizing

What kinds of knowledge and insights does this case study into Thai reflections on biblical texts and their themes contribute? First, how do Thai Christians reflect on their faith in light of and as a response to the religious context in which they are situated? Second, and in extension, how to create knowledge about this reflective practice and theologizing?

I have presented two types of comparative theological work, which contribute with both material and methodological insights. First, I have analyzed and compared two sets of Thai readings and reflections of Proverbs 11:18–31 and Psalm 73. Second, I have presented examples of Thai Christians comparative theologizing on the theme of *karma*.

In the first example, the comparisons of Thai Buddhists' and Thai Christians' interpretations of biblical texts highlight and reveal significant similarities and differences in the understanding of, and reflections on the texts. In the analysis, I found similarities and differences both in terms of themes they found in the texts and in terms of the basic framework of understanding that informed how they understood the text. In the second example, it became apparent that the Christian respondents differed as to how they would conceptualize the ideas connected with the law of *karma*, and to what extent they found it useful to use the term of *karma* in their reflections. Nevertheless, their reflections on the thinking of *karma* revealed that the Christian Thais, who I interviewed, were willing and able to create a dialogue between Buddhist thinking and Christian theology.

Comparing the interpretations of the Thai Christians' with the Buddhists' interpretations reveals the complex and rich ways in which the Thai Christians interpreted their beliefs in dialogue with Buddhist faith and understanding of reality. The comparison has given in-depth insights into the main interpretive frameworks activated in the reading of the texts and its themes. Whilst the Buddhist respondents largely interpreted the text in light of the teachings of *karma*, the Christians' main interpretive key seems to be their understanding of God. The analysis has shown that the Christians' perception of God differs from the Buddhists' perception, and that the Christians' image of God contributes to a new framework for interpretation on their part. This is an interesting finding in my material, as previous research has largely concluded that Christians interpret their beliefs within the framework of a traditional Thai worldview.

The Thai Christians' readings demonstrate that they do not share the worldview underlying the *karma* thinking, although their thinking and understanding may still be characterized by several of the elements that make up the

teachings of *karma*. I would argue that their interpretations could be viewed as a dialogue between different drafts of understanding of reality. The Thai Christians' interpretations demonstrate that they engage in a theological creative process. They do not only exchange the law of *karma* with God and otherwise preserve their former worldview unchanged, but also reflect on their faith in dialogue with the context in which they find themselves. The new basis for interpreting life, which the Bible provides, as well as the new interpretative context constituted by the Christian community provide the Christian interpreters with new resources and frameworks in their understanding of reality. This again informs their interpretation of individual texts in the Bible. In other words, by comparing readings of the same texts, and engaging Thai Christians in comparative theologizing work, my research demonstrates that insight is gained into the complex and innovative ways in which Thai Christians negotiate their faith in the midst of a majority Buddhist context.

Further, my case study shows that a focus on how Thai Christians themselves reflect and compare their faith and practice to Buddhist understandings and concepts sensitizes and alerts the researcher to the agency of the Thai believers. In the literature describing Christianity in Thailand, there has been a tendency to describe its contextual character in a way that indicate an uncritical and/or unconscious appropriation of Thai Buddhist ideas and worldviews (Hughes 1984; Kusawadee 2010; Taylor 2001), while it could also be interpreted in terms of negotiation, innovation or Thai Christian theologizing.

9 Concluding Remarks

Studying Christianity as a worldwide phenomenon in all its complexity and diversity requires the use of a variety of methodological approaches. It is thus a necessary and important task to investigate and discuss how to develop and expand the methodological toolbox for creating knowledge about this field of study.

Through a presentation and analysis of a case study from Thailand, this chapter has made an argument for the importance of using empirical studies of lived faith, and sociological and comparative methods in order to unfold and understand the interfaith entanglements of Christianity worldwide. The chapter has argued that using an empirical comparative theological approach in studying the phenomenon of World Christianity can contribute with in-depth knowledge of both the agency of local Christians and local and contextualized forms of Christian theology and practice. I would argue that the case study presented in this chapter demonstrates that applying a

comparative theology approach to the creation and analysis of empirical material might sensitize and alert the researcher to the constructive theological work being done by local Christians, and contribute with new knowledge of and insights into the rich and multifaceted phenomenon of World Christianity.

Bibliography

Ammerman, Nancy Tatom, ed. (2007). *Everyday Religion. Observing Modern Religious Lives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ammerman, Nancy Tatom (2014). *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes. Finding Religion in Everyday Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Baker, Chris, and Pasuk Phongpaichit (2014). *A History of Thailand*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Björkgren-Thylin, Marika (2009). *From Pioneer Mission to Autonomous Church. Lutheran Mission Cooperation and Church Building in Thailand 1976–1994*. Åbo: Åbo akademis förlag.

Boon-Itt, Bantoon (2007). 'A Study of the Dialogue between Christianity and Theravada Buddhism in Thailand. As Represented by Buddhist and Christian Writings from Thailand in the period 1950–2000.' Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, Department of Religious Studies, The Open University, St John's College.

Buddhadasa, Bhikkhu (1967). *Christianity and Buddhism*. Trans. by Venerable Punno, Mr. B. Siamwala, Mr. Hajji Prayoon Vadanyakul and an unknown person. Sinclaire Thompson Memorial Lecture, Fifth Series. Bangkok: Sublime Life Mission.

Chaiwan, Saad (1984). 'A Study of Christian Mission in Thailand.' *East Asia Journal of Theology* 2,1: 62–74.

Clarke, Sathianathan (2014). 'World Christianity and Postcolonial Mission. A Path Forward for the Twenty-first Century.' *Theology Today* 71,2: 192–206.

Clooney, Francis X. SJ (2005). *Divine Mother, Blessed Mother. Hindu Goddesses and the Virgin Mary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Clooney, Francis X. SJ (2010a). *Comparative Theology. Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Clooney, Francis X. SJ, ed. (2010b). *The New Comparative Theology. Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation*. New York, NY: T&T Clark.

Cohen, Erik (1995). 'Christianization and Indigenization. Contrasting Processes of Religious Adaption in Thailand.' In Steven Kaplan, ed. *Indigenous Responses to Western Christianity*. New York: New York University Press: 29–55.

Davis, John R. (1993). *Poles Apart? Contextualizing the Gospel*. Bangkok: Kanok Bannasan.

Fleming, Kenneth (2002). *Asian Christian Theologians in Dialogue with Buddhism*. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Fleming, Kenneth (2014). *Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Contemporary Thailand*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Fredericks, James L. (2004). *Buddhists and Christians: Through Comparative Theology to Solidarity*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Galgao, Gabby Jed C. (2019). 'Factors Contributing to Thai Buddhists' Adoption of Adventist Beliefs—Part 1.' *Human Behavior, Development and Society* 20,2: 50–61.

Grether, Herbert G. (1960). 'The Cross and the Bodhi Tree.' *Theology Today* XVI,4: 446–458.

Haug, Kari Storstein (2012). *Interpreting Proverbs 11:18–31, Psalm 73, and Ecclesiastes 9:1–12 in Light of, and as a Response to, Thai Buddhist Interpretations. A Contribution to Christian-Buddhist Dialogue*. Leiden and Boston: Brill.

Haug, Kari Storstein (2015). 'Cultural Affirmation or Innovation? Christian Spirituality in Its Thai Cultural Context.' In Knut Alfsvåg and Thor Strandenæs, eds. *Urban Christian Spirituality. East Asian and Nordic Perspectives*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang: 83–101.

Heim, S. Mark (2019). 'Comparative Theology at Twenty-Five: The End of the Beginning.' *Modern Theology* 35,1: 163–180.

Hilderbrand, Kelly Michael (2016). 'What Led Thai Buddhist Background Believers to Become Christians. A Study of One Church in Bangkok.' *Missiology. An International Review* 44,4: 400–415.

Hong-Shik, Shin (1989). *Principles of Church Planting as Illustrated in Thai Theravada Context*. Bangkok: Kanok Bannasan.

Hovemyr, Anders (1983). 'Towards a Theology of the Incarnation in the Thai Context.' *The East Asia Journal of Theology* 1,2: 78–83.

Hughes, Philip J. (1982). 'Christianity and Culture. A Case Study in Northern Thailand.' Ph.D thesis, South East Asia Graduate School of Theology.

Hughes, Philip J (1984). 'The Assimilation of Christianity in the Thai Culture.' *Religion* 14: 313–336.

Hughes, Philip J. (1985). 'Christianity and Buddhism in Thailand.' *Journal of the Siam Society* 73,1–2: 23–41.

Ishii, Yoneo (1986). *Sangha, State and Society. Thai Buddhism in History*. Trans. by Peter Hawkes. Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press.

Keyes, Charles F. (1993). 'Why the Thai are not Christians. Buddhist and Christian Conversion in Thailand.' In Robert W. Hefner, ed. *Conversion to Christianity. Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press: 259–284.

Kitiarsa, Pattana (2012). *Medium, Monks, and Amulets. Thai Popular Buddhism Today*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.

Koyama, Kosuke (1974). *Waterbuffalo Theology*. London: SCM Press Ltd.

Kusawadee, Banjob (2010). *Suffering and the Cross. The Meaning of the Theology of the Cross for a Thai Christian Understanding of Suffering*. Bangkok: Luther Seminary in Thailand.

Lertjitlekha, Cherdchai (1998). *Buddhist Pañña. A Study of Theravada Buddhist Ethics in Dialogue with Christian morality*. Bangkok: Saengtham College Press.

Lorgunpai, Seree (1994). 'The Books of Ecclesiastes and Thai Buddhism.' *The Asia Journal of Theology* 8,1: 155–162.

Lorgunpai, Seree (1995). 'World Lover, World Leaver. The Book of Ecclesiastes and Thai Buddhism.' Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, The Faculty of Divinity, New College, University of Edinburgh.

Mejudhon, Nantachai (1997). 'Meekness. A New Approach to Christian Witness to the Thai people.' Doctor of Missiology Dissertation, Faculty of the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism, Asbury Theological Seminary.

Mejudhon, Ubolwan (1997). 'The Way of Meekness. Being Thai and Christian in the Thai Way.' Doctor of Missiology, Asbury Theological Seminary.

National Statistical Office. *Report on Population Characteristics. The 2015–2016 Survey of Population Change*. http://web.nso.go.th/en/survey/popchan/pop_change-Report.htm. Accessed 18–06–2020.

Payutto, Phra Prayudh. (2003/2546) (In Thai). *Buddhadhamma. Revised and Expanded Version*. Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

Phra, Dhammapitaka/P.A. Payutto (2001). *Thai Buddhism in the Buddhist World. A Survey of the Buddhist Situation Against a Historical Background*. Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation.

Petchsongkram, Wan (1975). *Talk in the Shade of the Bo Tree*. Trans. by Frances E. Hudgins. Bangkok: Thai Gospel Press.

Phongpit, Michael Seri (1978). 'The Problem of Religious Language. A Study of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Ian Ramsey as Models for a Mutual Understanding of Buddhism and Christianity.' PhD thesis. Münich.

Phongpit, Seri (1990/2533). 'Buddhist-Christian Approach to Social Liberation.' In Sulak Sivaraska, ed. *Radical Conservatism. Buddhism in the Contemporary World. Articles in Honour of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's 84th Birthday Anniversary*. Bangkok: International Network of Engaged Buddhism: 459–468.

Podhisita, Chai (1998/2541). 'Buddhism and Thai World View.' In Amara Pongsapich, ed. *Traditional and Changing Thai World View*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press: 31–62.

O'Donnell, Emma (2017). 'Methodological Considerations on the Role of Experience in Comparative Theology.' In Francis X. Clooney and Klaus von Stosch, eds. *How To Do Comparative Theology*. New York: Fordham University Press: 259–270.

Rapley, Tim (2004). 'Interviews.' In Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber F Gubrium and David Silverman, eds. *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage: 15–33.

Ratanakul, Pinit (2005). 'Interfaith Dialogue. A Thai Buddhist Perspective.' In Ronald Y. Nakasone, ed. *The Transforming Spiritual Landscape. Buddhist-Christian Encounters*. Fremont, CA: Dharma Cloud Publishers: 71–78.

Reynolds, Craig J., ed. (2002). *National Identity and Its Defenders. Thailand Today*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.

Sandland, Morten. (2014). *Joining New Congregations—Motives, Ways and Consequences. A Comparative Study of New Congregations in a Norwegian Folk Church Context and a Thai Minority Context*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Sivaraksa, Sulak (1986). 'Christianity in the Reflection of Buddhism.' In Hans Küng, Jürgen Moltmann and Marcus Lefébure, eds. *Christianity Among World Religions*. Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark LTD: 55–59.

Sivaraksa, Sulak (2002). 'What can Christians Contribute to an Understanding of Buddhism in Thailand?' *Swedish Missiological Themes* 90,1: 85–91.

Slagter, Robert, and Harold R. Kerbo (2000). *Modern Thailand*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Smith, Alex G. (1999). *Siamese Gold. A History of Church Growth in Thailand. An Interpretive Analysis*. Bangkok: Kanok Bannasan.

Spiro, Melford E. (1982). *Buddhism and Society. A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Suwanbubbha, Parichart (1994). 'Grace and Kamma. A Case Study of Religio-Cultural Encounters in Protestant and Buddhist Communities in Bangkok and Its Relevant Environs, Thailand.' Doctor of Theology Dissertation, The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

Suwanbubbha, Parichart (1998). 'Can Theravada Buddhist Ethics Solve Economic Problems? The Example of Thailand.' In Viggo Mortensen, ed. *A Just Asia. The Challenge of a Globalized Economy*. Geneva: Lutheran World Federation: 113–123.

Swanson, Herbert R. (1984). *Khrischak Muang Nua. A Study in Northern Thai Church History*. Bangkok: Chuan Printing Press.

Swanson, Herbert R. (2002). 'Dancing to the Temple, Dancing to the Church. Reflections on Thai Theology.' *Journal of Theologies and Cultures in Asia* 1: 59–78.

Swearer, Donald K. (1973). 'Thai Buddhism. Two Responses to Modernity.' In Bardwell L. Smith, ed. *Tradition and Change in Theravada Buddhism. Essays on Ceylon and Thailand in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Leiden: Brill: 78–93.

Tanner, Kathryn (1997). *Theories of Culture. A New Agenda for Theology. Guides to Theological Inquiry*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Tatari, Muna (2017). 'Using Contemparary Insights in Developing Kalām. A Personal Reflection on Being Trained in Comparative Theology.' In Francis X. Clooney

and Klaus von Stosch, eds. *How To Do Comparative Theology*. New York: Fordham University Press: 188–205.

Taylor, Steve (2001). ‘Gaps in Beliefs of Thai Christians.’ *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 37,1: 72–81.

Taylor, Steve (2005). ‘A Prologomena for the Thai Context. A Starting Point for Thai Theology.’ *Evangelical Review of Theology* 29,1: 32–51.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J., Charles A. Anderson and Michael J. Sleasman, eds. (2007). *Everyday Theology. How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Visser, Marten (2009). *Conversion Growth of Protestant Churches in Thailand*. Boekencentrum.

Wigg-Stevenson, Natalie (2014). *Ethnographic Theology. An Inquiry into the Production of Theological Knowledge*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Zehner, Edwin (1991). ‘Merit, Man and Ministry. Traditional Thai Hierarchies in a Contemporary Church.’ *Social Compass* 38:2: 155–175.

Zehner, Edwin (2005). ‘Orthodox Hybridities. Anti-Syncretism and Localization in the Evangelical Christianity of Thailand.’ *Anthropological Quarterly* 78,3: 585–617.

Zehner, Edwin (2009). ‘Beyond Anti-syncretism: Gospel, Context and Authority in the New Testament and in Thai Conversions to Christianity.’ In Brian M. Howell and Edwin Zehner, eds. *Power and Identity in the Global Church. Six Contemporary Cases*. Pasadena, California: William Carey Library: 155–183.

Zehner, Edwin (2013). ‘Conversion to Christianity among the Thai and Sino-Thai of Modern Thailand: Growth, Experimentation, and Networking in the Contemporary Context.’ In Jonathan A. Seitz and Richard Fox Young, eds. *Asia in the Making of Christianity. Conversion, Agency, and Indigeneity, 1600 to the Present*. Leiden: Brill: 403–426.

CHAPTER 8

Interreligious Dialogue: A Case Study Approach in Respect to the Vatican and the World Council of Churches

Douglas Pratt

1 Introduction

Interreligious dialogue and the promotion of interfaith relations is a feature of our times. During the twentieth century, global Christianity—as represented in an ecumenical sense by the Vatican and World Council of Churches (WCC)—reached a position wherein, initially, interreligious dialogue, subsequently also 'interfaith relations' to reflect a broader scope and agenda, became affirmed and embraced. This has been in no small measure due to the rising influence of Asian and African Christian leadership and engagement during the 20th century in respect of both the Vatican (e.g. Cardinal Francis Arinze) and the WCC (e.g. M.M. Thomas, Paul Devanandan, Wesley Ariarajah).

In recent decades the term 'World Christianity' has come into vogue, almost eclipsing the term 'ecumenical Christianity' as the referent for world-wide Christianity. Whereas ecumenism—or the ecumenical movement—arose out of early 20th century ecclesial motivations to address questions of Christian mission and unity, the relative innovation of the 'World Christianity' appellation tends to transcend even the inclusiveness of ecumenism, at least in terms of institutional expression. It highlights the transcendental character of catholicity—that *urgrund* inclusivity that is a mark of what it means to be 'members one of another'. All Christians everywhere, together form one vast global community, at least in some ideal sense. It is more than *ecclesia*; it finds a parallel in the Islamic notion of Muslims forming a single *ummah*.

Building on Henry van Dusen's conceptualisation of World Christianity as a quest to promote Christian mission and unity (Robert 2009), this contribution considers World Christianity to indicate this consciousness of belonging to a worldwide Christian *oikoumene* and sees the World Council of Churches and the Vatican, being "two extensive networks that knit together Christians from various parts of the world" (Cabrita and Maxwell 2017: 31), as key institutions that promote such a consciousness. Within this Christian *oikumene* there has been an increasing consciousness about 'the religious other' and about the

© DOUGLAS PRATT, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004444867_010
This is an open access chapter distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

need to reflect on the encounter with people of other faith traditions, highlighted by scholars such as Peter Phan and Dale Irvin who define their research as studies in World Christianity (Phan 2012: 183, Irvin 2016: 4). This contribution explores the dynamics and models of relating to 'the religious other' as developed within the World Council of Churches and the Vatican.

The global reach and size of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), and the fact that the WCC includes not only historic Christian World Communions such as the Lutheran, Reformed and Anglican among others, but also much of Eastern Orthodoxy and now great blocs of African Independent Churches and Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches, means that between them the RCC and the WCC constitute the great majority of Christians at least in some formal sense of interconnected fellowship. This is arguably the case even though not all Christian communities are represented by this combined institutional expression of ecumenism constitutive of World Christianity.

Furthermore, it needs to be noted that at its inception the ecumenical movement embraced, first, the denominational diversity of Protestantism, and was soon joined by members of the diverse Orthodox family. It has since expanded to include many other 'Christian World Communions' and other ecclesial blocs, such as African Independent Churches. While at one level the Roman Catholic Church, by virtue of its own ecumenical openness—especially since Vatican II—may be, and most often is, included within the umbrella of ecumenism, it has never been, nor can it be, a full member of the World Council of Churches. This latter is the institutional expression of ecumenism, par excellence, though less than the sum of what might be regarded as representing 'World Christianity' in the Van Dusean sense.

To return now to the two interrelated organs of ecumenism, there is one major difference in modus operandi of these that needs to be noted. Whereas for the RCC there is centralised authority and the directive of a clear magisterium, for the WCC (being a council *of* churches) there can, at best, only ever be a modicum of consensus and, more likely, an advisory guideline that tends to be honoured more in the breach, if not simply ignored outright. For, with both the WCC and the RCC there are fault lines of theological difference—reactionary conservatisms, even countervailing fundamentalisms—that militate against any full and final unity of agreement and action. Nevertheless, many Catholics take cognisance of Vatican decrees and documents, and many churches of the WCC do pick-up on the agendas, resources, and programmatic foci of the WCC. Ecumenism, as with the very notion of global or World Christianity, is a work in progress. For although the world-wide Christian community may profess openness to the world at large and an inclusiveness of fellowship one with another, in reality the divides of theological self-understanding, as also the

divides of ecclesial structures and other church organisational arrangements, can be devastatingly profound.

With all this in mind, how might the question of Christian relations with other faiths be addressed from a perspective of World Christianity? While it is true that today we can speak of Christianity as one among a number of recognisable world religions, the fact remains that no world religion is itself one unified 'thing'. All religions are marked by internal divides and variant identities. 'Christianity' does not relate with 'Islam', for example; rather specific Christians in concrete locales and times relate, positively or negatively, to or with specific Muslims is particular situations. Catholics may dialogue with Shi'a; Anglicans with Sunni. But even then, it is North Atlantic (UK/US) Catholics and Iranian Shi'a, and all at the scholarly level. And UK Anglicans dialogue with Egyptian Sunnis at the al-Azhar mosque and university. Dialogical and relational specificities come before generalised comment, discussion, or articulation of interreligious dialogue and interfaith relations per se. And whereas interreligious dialogue tends for the most part to be specific to bi-lateral engagements of a more formal type, interfaith relations tends now to refer to the prospect and reality of multi-faith engagements allowing for a greater range of interaction and common-ground community enhancing activities, such as interfaith councils representing a number of different religions whose communities of faith coexist within a given society. This chapter focusses on formal and representative developments of contemporary Christian engagement in interfaith relations, taking something of a case study approach in respect to the WCC and the RCC.

During the course of the 20th century, Christian involvement in interreligious dialogue became, in effect, a permanent and formally endorsed ecclesial activity (Pratt 2010). Nevertheless, at times the eastern Orthodox churches within the WCC, and various conservative and evangelical churches, or reactionary constituencies within some other member churches of the WCC, have expressed resistance and objection. There would seem to be no going back, despite dissenting voices. The development and promotion of dialogical engagement through various initiatives involving the WCC,[1] together with, since the early 1960s, similar developments undertaken by the Roman Catholic Church,[2] have been of critical importance. How did this come about? What has occurred down to the present time? Other religions and their peoples are viewed

1 Initially, this was via a programmatic 'Sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Other Faiths and Ideologies' (DFI), thence the 'Office on Inter-Religious Relations' (OIRR) and more recently the office or team for 'Inter-Religious Relations and Dialogue' (IRRD).

2 At first through the 'Secretariat for Non-Christians' (SNC) which became the 'Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue' (PCID).

today—at least formally—not so much in terms of competition and threat but as potential partner and actual neighbour. Leaders from other religions receive hospitable welcome at the Vatican; the religious 'other' is received as an honoured guest at WCC Assemblies. Where, previously, friendly and accommodating relational détente on the basis of mutual respect and regard would have been the exception, it is now the effective rule. Members of other religions join with Christians as interlocutors at dialogue conferences; as partners in interfaith organisations; and in common quests and cooperative ventures of one sort or another. What has taken Christianity worldwide, in and through its central ecclesial structures of the WCC and the Vatican, into dialogical engagement with other religions? In order to sketch an answer, we need to go back to the first decade of the 20th century.

2 Early Twentieth Century Ecumenical Developments

The first large-scale international 'World Missionary Conference' was held in Edinburgh in June of 1910. Its work involved a number of commissions of which two were relevant to the eventual emergence of interreligious dialogical activities. These were Commission I, 'Carrying the Gospel to All the Non-Christian World' and Commission IV, 'The Missionary Message in Relation to the Non-Christian World'. Furthermore, this gathering gave birth to the International Missionary Council (IMC) which, during the course of the 20th century, played a key role in Christian debates and development of interreligious dialogue. The second World Missionary Conference was held in Jerusalem at Easter in 1928 (Paton 1928). As at Edinburgh, the "issue of religious plurality, and the proper Christian response to it, received a great amount of attention" (Pranger 1994: 1). But it was the perception of a growth in secularism, or the secularist ideology, and the challenge which that posed for religion in general, and Christianity in particular, that constituted the main focus. This meeting, in recognizing non-Christian religions as valid systems of thought and faith marked a turning point in attitude toward them, with motifs of positive regard and appreciation of inherent values coming to the fore (Mott 1938). Secularism, as a challenge to all religion, was perceived to offer for Christians a point of contact with people of other religions, with the conference issuing a call for other religions to join with Christianity in the struggle against secularism. Although this was a controversial initiative, to be severely criticized only ten years later, it nevertheless prefigured one of the platforms of dialogical engagement that was to emerge several decades further on: working together in

a common cause. Indeed, secularism, as a point of common cause with other faiths, was soon critiqued by Hendrik Kraemer (1930), among others, with his advocacy of revelation as the counterpoint to "secular corrosion".

At Jerusalem, Christian and non-Christian alike were seen to be in need of salvation: each shared equally in the human need of redemption, and the quest for justice and community, at least. Despite sharp points of theological disagreement, there was nonetheless a general inclination "to admit that other religions had spiritual values" which Christians could positively affirm: but certainly not salvation as such, of course; the uniqueness of Christ vis-à-vis salvation was not up for debate (Sperber 2000; Cairns 1929). The conference message "spoke against any imperialistic attitude of Christians to other faiths … (and made) use of the word 'sharing' for the act of Christian witness to those of other faiths" (Ariarajah 1991: 45). The stage was set "for a clear, concise, and considered Christian position in relation to people of other faiths" (ibid: 51), but the way ahead was not clear. Indeed, opposition was voiced to the call for dialogical engagement that the debates at Jerusalem 1928 had signalled (cf. Pranger 1994: 46). Ambiguity about interreligious dialogue can be said to have marked Christian engagement from the outset; the issue has ever been a polarising one.

At the 1938 meeting of the IMC held at Tambaram, India, the concept of other religions evincing positive spiritual values, as affirmed at Jerusalem a decade earlier, was maintained alongside the unassailable uniqueness of Christ—to which all other religious claims and values were, in the end, to be relativised (Addison 1938). This event was to become famous within the ecumenical movement as a moment at which relations with people of other faiths was curtailed relative to the openness and broad acceptance that had emerged thus far. An assertion of Christian uniqueness and superiority was made such that intercourse with any other faith tradition was correspondingly queried—if not negated—if it was other than evangelistic in modality and intent (Paton 1939). This derived largely, but by no means solely, and nor without opposition, from the work of the Dutch missionary theologian, Hendrik Kraemer (1938). He had a deep and positive appreciation for the cultural and value dimensions of other faiths, but this was not to be confused with the imperative of Christian salvific proclamation. The outcome, which was to remain highly influential until quite late into the 20th century, was to popularise and extend the distinction between revelation, understood as divinely given through Christ alone, and religion *per se*—that is, all forms of human seeking-for-the-Divine. Tambaram affirmed both continuity and discontinuity: Christianity, *qua* religion, is indeed one of many; yet revelation in

and through Christ sets Christianity apart from all religions, and indeed from religion as such.

3 Mid-century Consolidation: The World Council of Churches

Following World War II, the stalled ecumenical movement resumed its developmental trajectory. The first Assembly of the newly mandated WCC was held in Amsterdam in 1948 (Visser't Hooft 1986). The stage was now set for significant new issues such as relationships to other religions. However, other than a report and recommendations on the 'Christian Approach to the Jews', certainly a significant post-War focus (see Brockway *et al.* 1988: 5–9), the inaugural Assembly did not address directly the matter of relationship to other faiths; rather, evangelical witness predominated. Relationship to persons of other religions was to be primarily, if not solely, evangelistic and *not* dialogical. The uniqueness of Christ's lordship was affirmed over against any suggestion of relativism and syncretism (Ariarajah 1991: 95; Wilson 1990). The *de facto* stance towards other religions appeared unremittingly exclusivist. However, the second Assembly of the WCC, held in Evanston (USA) in 1954, saw some shift in ground towards a more inclusivist stance, and thereby an entirely new openness to other religions and the possibility of genuine dialogue (cf. Van der Bent 1991). A growing mood of respect toward other faiths became evident. The pre-War language of 'sharing' re-emerged.

In the ecumenical scene, newly emergent Asian Christian leadership promoted positive relating to other religions. Sharp questions were raised: "Must the attitude of the evangelist be that Christianity should *supplant* other religions? Or can it content itself with the conviction that Christianity is the *fulfilment* of other religions? Are there still further alternatives—those that hold that in Christ a *transformation* has taken place, or that in Christ *all* religions are brought under judgement?" (Ariarajah 1991: 99). An awareness of the widespread renaissance of other religions had come to the fore, particularly in missionary circles such as the IMC (cf. Newbigin 1959). Nevertheless, there was still an overriding Christocentrism and allied priority given to the missionary imperative in evidence (Fulton 1959). But the issue of establishing and pursuing an interactive relationship with other religions was gathering momentum nevertheless. The drive to engage seriously in interreligious dialogue was again underway.

In 1955 the WCC initiated a study programme entitled *The Word of God and the Living Faiths of Men*. This programme ran until 1971 and involved a number of Study Centres around the world together with a series of regional

ecumenical consultations and allied reflection meetings. The obligation to witness—resulting in the need to clarify the relation of the gospel to other religions, together with emerging new opportunities and contexts for interreligious engagement and so the need for learning about the 'other'—constituted the fundamental rationale for the programme. Furthermore, such a study needed to be ecumenical because all churches were involved, whether directly or indirectly, and because the large and complex nature of the task required resources from throughout the world church. Significantly, in July 1960 the programme was affirmed as being inclusive of Christian-Muslim dialogue specifically, with the final report underlining "the responsibility of Christians for meeting Muslims in a constructive way" (Sperber 2000: 8).

In many respects it was this programme that enabled interreligious dialogue to be taken up by ecumenical Christianity in a way never before possible. Indeed, its development signalled a growing responsiveness within the WCC, and also the wider global Christianity it represented, to the increasingly pressing demand for a serious and significant addressing of intercultural and interreligious relations and issues. The context of such concern was that of mid-20th century post-war recovery, readjustments, and burgeoning new opportunities. The impact of contemporary globalising tendencies and dynamics was beginning to be felt. Improvements to mass-media enabling a more rapid and immediate exchange of information were well underway. The television age was dawning. And the increased and more widely-spread capacity for demographic shifts, through the ebbs and flows of migration, were stimulating ever more significant cultural and population encounters. Such factors either brought about changed circumstances in terms of the situations in which people lived, or else alerted the world to hitherto unacknowledged contexts—and thus to new issues to be tackled. Interreligious dialogue was not merely a theoretical option; it was an immediate existential demand. A key-note speaker at the 1961 WCC Assembly, Paul Devanandan, affirmed other faiths as manifesting responses to the creative activity of the Holy Spirit: "The only alternative is to confess either the Christian ignorance of God's ways with people or the Christian blindness in refusing to believe in God's redemptive work with people of other faiths" (Thomas 1987: 89).

It is at this juncture that new—indeed epoch-making—developments occur within the Roman Catholic Church that bring about not only a major development in respect to interreligious dialogue within this, the largest, Christian bloc; it also begins an era when hitherto Protestant and Orthodox ecumenical engagement in interreligious matters is expanded, in many contexts, to include Roman Catholic.

4 Catholic Initiatives for Interreligious Dialogue

The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) had been long content with the *status quo* of received tradition within which any modification was carefully contained. Acknowledgment of the 'religious other'—even other Christian Churches—was, at best, muted (PCID 1994: 89). To the extent that encounter with another religion might be entertained, for whatever reason, the official response was one of considerable caution. Certainly, there was no salvific value accorded to other religions, and the notion of establishing some kind of dialogical relationship with any religious 'other' was a relatively fringe idea that had been at times pursued in some quarters, but always courted controversy. Up until the 1960s religious exclusivism held unassailable sway. However, not long into his pontificate Pope John XXIII convened a great Council, 'Vatican II', comprising the bishops from throughout the worldwide RCC, which met at the Vatican for several sessions at different times from 1962 up to and including 1965. Concern for a reappraisal of the relation of the Church to the Jews had featured in the thinking of Pope John XXIII when he convened this Second Vatican Council. However, he died in June 1963 before the Council had concluded. His successor, Pope Paul VI, took up the reigns of papal office and saw the Council through to its ending, and it was under his leadership that significant innovations were undertaken (Abbott 1967). His 1964 encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, sounded a note of respect for "the moral and spiritual values" of other religions, advocating openness to them "and a willingness for practical dialogical engagement", albeit within the framework of an apostolic mission (*ES* 1964, cl. 107–8).[3] Nonetheless, dialogue was now seen as denoting "a whole new way of thinking, a way of seeing and reflecting on the world and its meaning" (Swidler 1990, xi; cf. Jadot 1983).

Throughout his pontificate Paul VI was both guided by and stamped his interpretive refinement on, the directives and pronouncements that emerged from the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council. And of the many documentary outcomes from this Council (see Gioia 1997; Hastings 1991; Sheard 1987; Nolan 2006), signalling quite remarkable changes, in a wide variety of areas of Church practice and doctrinal stance, there were some which both directly and indirectly paved the way for the engagement of the RCC in interreligious dialogue, including in particular dialogue with Jews and with Muslims.[4]

3 Note: this and other Vatican II documents are available of the Vatican website: see http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm.

4 These are: *Nostra Aetate* (*NA*), *Lumen Gentium* (*LG*), *Dei Verbum* (*DV*), *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (*AA*), *Dignitatis Humanae* (*DH*), *Ad Gentes* (*AG*), and *Gaudium et Spes* (*GS*).

The single most important of these, so far as interreligious dialogue is concerned, was *Nostra Aetate*, the 'Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions'. This relatively short statement (only some 1200 words of text in its original Latin) was promulgated in 1965 and is divided into five sections, or chapters (Gioia 1997: 35–40). The first comprises an introduction in which the motif of the timeliness of "examining with greater care" the relationship of the Church to other religions, in the context of the commonality and transcendent unity of the human community which yet displays great religious diversity, sets the tone. This diversity is elaborated in the second section which makes mention, in particular, of Hinduism and Buddhism, and alludes to other religions more generally. Significantly, within this section there is found a pivotal passage which states:

> The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.
>
> NA cl. 5

Very clearly an attitude of openness to the 'other' is here signalled. However, this significant, if somewhat general, indication of relational regard is followed immediately by a delimiting statement: "Yet she proclaims and is duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is 'the way, the truth, and the life' (John 14:6). In him, in whom God reconciled all things to himself (cf. 2 Co. 5:18–19), men find the fullness of their religious life" (NA cl. 5). Openness to other religions, wherein is urged "with prudence and charity … discussion and collaboration with members of other religions", is not absolute; it is rather a relative stance that insists on a clear perspective of identity and mission whither the Church's openness to interreligious dialogue is to proceed. The third section focuses on Islam. It speaks of the Church's "high regard for the Muslims" and goes on to state:

> They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth … They strive to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own. Although not acknowledging him as God, they venerate Jesus as a prophet, his Virgin Mother they also honour, and even at times devoutly invoke. Further, they await the day of judgement and the reward of God

> following the resurrection of the dead. For this reason they highly esteem an upright life and worship God, especially by way of prayer, alms-deeds and fasting.
>
> NA cl. 7

Nothing is said about Islam as a religion, nor the status of the Qur'an as scripture or Muhammad as Prophet. However, *Nostra Aetate* (NA) acknowledges the "many quarrels and dissensions" that have obtained in the past between Christians and Muslims, yet seeks to go beyond that past and urges "that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding" (NA cl. 8).

The fourth section speaks at relative length of the relationship of the Church to Judaism. The essential Hebraic heritage of Christianity is acknowledged, going back to the indissoluble link with the patriarch Abraham. Furthermore, a reminder is given that Jesus and the Apostles were all Jews. On the basis of "a common spiritual heritage" the Vatican Council encouraged "mutual understanding and appreciation" (NA cl. 13). Significantly, NA states unequivocally that

> … neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during (Christ's) passion.… (Although) the Church is the new People of God, yet the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed.… Indeed, the Church reproves every form of persecution … she deplores all hatreds, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism levelled at any time or from any source against the Jews.
>
> NA cl. 14 & 15

NA concludes with three short paragraphs that comprise its fifth section—entitled 'Universal Fraternity'—so echoing the motif of the Introduction: the common bonds of humanity by virtue of being created by God. And it adds, as a contextual rider to the call for dialogical relationship as a primary modality of encounter with peoples of other faiths, the clear reprobation of any form of discrimination or harassment (NA cl. 19). At the time, NA may have occasioned some disappointment at what was left unsaid; but it nevertheless stands as a most significant document for what it did say. However, although NA "recognizes a search for God in other religions and mentions dialogue and collaboration, no attempt is made to define it. It is set within the context of the search for human unity and the assumption that such unity finds it origin in creation and in Christ, to whom the Church is called to witness" (Gioia 1997: 248). Nevertheless, with *Nostra Aetate* the first formal step by the Church of Rome to genuine and mutual dialogue with other religions was taken; an open

attitude to other faiths was clearly encouraged by the Second Vatican Council. But, as it happened, in this regard *NA* is not the only relevant document.

Lumen Gentium (*LG*), the 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church', was issued in 1964, the year before *NA*, and it begins with an affirmation of the Church as the sacramental vehicle wherein humanity may attain "full unity in Christ" (*LG* cl. 1) in the context of the universality of the One People of God and, *inter alia*, the reconciling and in-drawing mission of the Catholic Church (*LG* cl.13). In this regard the salvific validity of other faiths, and especially that of Islam, is given high recognition: "the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place among whom are the Muslims: these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God …" (*LG* cl. 16). The explicit reference to Islam, by way of the inclusion of Muslims within the divine plan of salvation, is the first such documentary reference emanating from Vatican II: the scene was set for the development which then resulted in *Nostra Aetate*. Arguably, lying behind the impetus of the Roman Catholic Church to engage in interreligious dialogue was, at least in part, a new acceptance of religious plurality, albeit certainly not the (later) ideological stance of pluralism as a conceptual framework for comprehending and valuing that plurality, for such views were—and remain here—highly contentious, arousing much perplexity and polemical reaction.

5 Rationales for Dialogue

A summary overview of lead theological rationales for dialogue, or components of a theology for dialogue, emerges from a consideration of the work of the WCC and the Vatican. These are *socio-contextual, community-building, theocentric, responsive* and *salvific* rationales. I do not claim this list as exhaustive; only that these reasons seem to stand out both in their own right and as illustrative of wider trends.

5.1 *Socio-contextual Rationales*

Socio-contextual reasons to engage in interreligious dialogue refer to wider contextual factors that can be seen to aid or indirectly promote the cause of dialogue. In the context of ecumenical engagement from the mid-20th century that we are here considering, these include, for example, a post-war situation of openness toward, and positive regard for, other religions and cultures. There had been earlier intimations, as noted above, but it was the emerging globalising factors and post-war awakenings to religious and cultural 'others' as immediate neighbours that particularly contributed. This included a Christian

affirmation of compatible values being able to be found in other religions, as well as affirming a more general value, or validity, of other religions: they, too, have their place in the greater scheme of things. And this positive regard of the fact and substance of other religions coincided, of course, with a growing affirmative response to, and concomitant regard for, the phenomenon of religious plurality—both inter and intra—as such. New appreciations and related new thinking were in the air. Indeed, it is quite clear that the context of increasing religious diversity—in some quarters at least (it needs to be remembered that in some parts of the world Christians were well used to living in a context of considerable religious diversity)—has been a longstanding component in the overall rationale for Christian engagement in interreligious dialogue and interfaith relations. Religious plurality, or the multi-faith diversity as the lived context of much Christianity throughout the world, continues even today as a principal element justifying the interreligious dialogical imperative by way of responding to that plurality.

Another broad socio-contextual component, emerging during the course of the 20th century, was the impact of secularisation. Secularism, or rather the religious response to it, was one of the first 'common cause' issues articulated as providing good reason to engage in interreligious dialogue. Others can be added, particularly the quest for global peace and justice and, more recently, addressing inter-communal tensions, global environmental responsibilities, the worldwide economic recession and related issues, the HIV-Aids situation, as well as other social concerns. However, the perception of secularism as a common threat, or at least challenge, to religion as such arguably remains the case today, especially where secularism is expressed in terms of opposition to religion having a place in the public square. Contemporary interfaith dynamics often see diverse religions joining forces in some way to resist or ameliorate the impact upon their communities of a hostile secular society. This element of joining forces in the face of a common threat brings us to the next grouping—community-building rationales for dialogue.

5.2 *Community-building Rationales*

The quest for community, in both localised and global senses, can also be seen as a clearly argued rationale for dialogue. A necessary connection between the Christian community and other faith communities was clearly given in the promotion of 'dialogue in community' (Sperber 2000: 14; Samartha 1977; WCC 1977; Best 1990). For example, Pope John Paul II regarded dialogue as the modality *par excellence* for engaging in the quest for improved human community: the engendering of mutual respect; the tackling together of common human problems; promoting the socio-political task of nation-building.

Motifs of human solidarity and human community, and the related promotional quest, are long-standing elements of a Catholic rationale for interreligious dialogue (Humbertclaude 1969; Zago 1984; Arinze 1987; Fitzgerald 1988; PCID 1994). Indeed, from the very outset the fundamental purpose of dialogue was here articulated in terms of the 'social good' of humanity. The corollary requirements were that of mutual learning—hence educational efforts within the Churches—and an intentional engagement at many levels: interreligious dialogue, at the very least, serves the cause of social justice and healthy community relations and requires the discharge of an educational task. Also, from the early 1990s, the WCC tended to focus, for a time at least, on the fostering of inter-faith and allied inter-communal relations, especially in respect to situations of conflict (VanElderen 1998; Kinnamon 1991). In effect, the lead rationale for engagement in dialogue had by this stage become diaconal: dialogue in the service of a greater communal end. This was given graphic exemplification by a 1994 interreligious team visit to Fiji (Ucko 1994). Apart from the specific outcomes achieved, it was observed that the success of such a visit, "comprised of people of different faiths, travelling and working together, having the same objective in mind as a common agenda", could well provide a model of interreligious co-operative work for the future. Service to the wider community is justification for—indeed in many instances, such as the Fijian situation, even requires—interreligious dialogical engagement.

5.3 *Theocentric Rationales*

Recognition of the one universal Creator responsible for the whole of creation in all its fullness and diversity can be said to be a consistent element of theological rationale for dialogue: we are all equally creatures of the same one Creator. This rationale was early-on articulated in terms of the concern of God for all creation, the universal application of the divine love, and "the universality of the Christ who died for all and the eschatological expectation of the rule and reign of the Kingdom of God as fully encompassing of human diversity, including religion and culture" (Van der Bent 1986: 46). The idea of the encompassing love of God has often been advocated as a theological rationale for dialogue (WCC 1987). A theology for dialogue would clearly have the motifs of God as Creator and Sustainer to the fore. The affirmation of the unity of the human race as a creation of God is an allied rationale for dialogue: all of humanity shares a common divine origin. This impetus and rationale for interreligious dialogue is very much an expression of "God's concern for all: the divine love and salvific purpose is universal" (Van der Bent 1986: 46). This love is of universal scope; all are included. It comprises the greatest challenge to Christian praxis, for even those who are deemed 'enemy' are subject to the

commandment to 'love the neighbour'. And this universality is itself also an expression of the idea encapsulated in the notion of the seeds of the Word (Logos) of God that are seminal across creation.

The final element is that of belief in God as Trinity. It is faith in the Triune God, who calls Christians to human relationship with their many neighbours and this adds weight to the rationale for dialogue. This relationship is marked by listening and speaking: in both attending to the other, and also bearing witness to the self, are dialogue and proclamation properly and in a balanced way equally involved (WCC 1979). Indeed, one principal reason to engage in interreligious dialogue is because of Trinitarian relationality: the universality and encompassing pervasiveness of the love of God the Father; the enlightening Word and Wisdom given in and through God the Son; and the regenerative life-giving Spirit that "acts in the depth of people's consciences and accompanies them on the secret path of hearts toward the truth" (ACTFOR 1984: cl. 24. Cf. Hinze 2006; Sheard 1987: 246–251). Dialogue is regarded as a genuine give-and-take of insight and understanding premised on Trinitarian relationality.

5.4 *Responsive Rationales*

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2000), first issued in 1992, gives a broad rationale for interreligious dialogue premised on notions of the innate human hunger for relationship with the Divine: the universality and commonality of the inherent human quest found within the variety of religions throughout history. This relates to the 'Seed of the Word' motif together with a universal 'moral sense' understood as being present within the diversity of human cultures and religions found throughout the entire world. It also allows for a measure of validity and veracity being attributed to non-Christian religions, so providing a further basis on which to pursue dialogue. At the same time there is a pneumatological implication: the ubiquitous efficacy of the Holy Spirit is understood to be operative at the very heart of being human. Thus, being open to the other in dialogue is a modality of being open to the God who is present in, with, and through the other: the pneumatological gives way to theological anthropology—each person "grows by encountering and sharing with others" whereby seeking after truth "is better attained, understood, and lived through encounter, and by it even one's own faith can be purified and deepened" (Zago 1984: 267). Anthropological foundations of interreligious dialogue can be found also in respect to the deepening and enriching of faith and in the humanising and improving elements of social interaction (cf. Jukko 2007: 243–246).

5.5 *Salvific Rationales*

The purpose of dialogue is not just a matter of co-existence. A deeper theological relationality between Christians and people of other faiths is being

sought: a Christian concern for a theology of religions that would embrace the question of God's plan for salvation for all—including those of other faiths—in contrast to engaging in dialogue with the intention, in the end, of incorporating the 'other' into the Christian fold of faith as the sole efficacious means of obtaining salvation. The assertion that God, the Creator of all, is present and active in the very plurality of religions is understood to lead inexorably to the inconceivability that the divine saving activity could be confined to any one continent, cultural type, or groups of peoples. Redemption is inherently universal. The singularity of creation and the universality of redemption are drawn upon, implicitly at least, as part of the supporting rationale for interreligious dialogue. Most typically it is accompanied by the specifically Christocentric and exclusive affirmation that it is only in and through Christ that the fullness of the religious life can be found. Yet there is also an inclusive dimension: all of humanity shares a common divine origin and eschatological orientation (Arinze 1987: 254). Christocentric affirmation does not necessarily have to result in theological exclusivism. Either way, however, it is the implication of belief in the universality of the redeeming Creator that can be said to be a distinctive theological rationale for dialogue. Furthermore, the motif of "the universality of the Christ who died for all", together with "the eschatological expectation of the rule and reign of the Kingdom of God as fully encompassing of human diversity, including religion and culture" (Arinze 1987: 254; cf. Van der Bent 1986: 46; Kinnamon 1991; Fitzgerald 1994), yield yet another basis for dialogue.[5]

Further, and especially from a Roman Catholic perspective, dialogue carries with it a soteriological dimension: "God, in an age-long dialogue, has offered and continues to offer salvation to humankind. In faithfulness to the divine initiative, the Church too must enter into a dialogue of salvation with all" (DP 1991: c. 38). John Paul II declared that, with respect to "the economy of salvation, the Church sees no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in interreligious dialogue" (RM 1990: cl. 55). These two elements, which are essential to the overall task of mission, are distinct and non-interchangeable, but are symbiotically interconnected necessarily. Interreligious dialogue "is witness to Christ. It is dialogue of salvation. It is part of the total mission of the Church" (Arinze 1987: 256). Dialogue is not just juxtaposed with proclamation; it serves, in the end, the greater cause of Christian witness. Interreligious dialogue is

---

5 Such sentiments are found in reports, often unpublished, such as the WCC 'Report of the Kandy Consultation, Feb 27–March 5, 1967'; the 'From Baar I to Baar II: A report from a consultation on the theological significance of other faiths' found in *Current Dialogue*, Vol 26 (June 199): 1–68; the Vatican's *Lumen Gentium* and *Nostra Aetate* (see Gioia 1997). See further in Pratt 2010.

understood to accompany mission on account of the soteriological imperative of the gospel.

6 Models of Dialogue

It is significant that, at the official level of policy pronouncements and practical guidelines the WCC and the Vatican, if not speaking with one voice exactly, are certainly singing from the same hymn-sheet. Models employed in the approach to interreligious dialogue have been different, but arguably complementary.

6.1 *WCC Models*

Three models of dialogue have applied in respect to the WCC which I identify as *systemic, communitarian*, and *relational*. They are fairly obvious, and require but relatively brief adumbration. It also needs to be said that they are not mutually exclusive, although each has had a period of predominance in terms of the practice of dialogical engagement. In certain contexts the very nature of the dialogical agenda could involve two or more of these models simultaneously.

6.2 *Systemic Dialogue*

Systemic dialogue refers to the notion of dialogue as a discursive interaction between belief-systems, mediated through the meeting of minds. Although it is persons who dialogue, here the focus is not the relationship *per se* that obtains between and among the interlocutors; rather on the doctrines, teachings, and other authoritative statements and expressions of belief and worldview as espoused by the religious traditions that the interlocutors represent and/or belong to. This is the arena of discussion, enquiry, and debate undertaken by expert representatives. In some ways this is the classic understanding of what dialogue is about: an intellectual exercise and quest. Although it was perhaps one of the earlier models employed, it was eventually eschewed by the WCC in favour of the communitarian and relational models on the basis that dialogue is primarily an interpersonal engagement in respect to addressing concrete social issues. Inter-systemic dialogue was dismissed as an abstract arid exercise, effectively the antithesis of genuine dialogue, for dialogue was soon understood to be primarily, if not solely, a relational experience; a meeting of persons of different faiths, set within a context of various lived community engagements.

6.3 *Communitarian Dialogue*

This second model emerged very much in the context of the community-building rationale for dialogue. Dialogical engagement is here regarded as a modality of community building *per se* in which, although also an interpersonal exercise, the agenda was that of a societal enhancing nature: the quest for peace; the promotion of harmony; the agitation for justice; the combating of social ills; and so on. This soon emerged as the predominant model of WCC-related interfaith initiatives and dialogical engagements. It was attractive because of its pragmatic orientation, and because it allowed for relatively clear identifiable and measurable outcomes. Although having high aims the underlying issue of the applied meanings of concepts such as justice, rights, 'the communal good', and so forth could prove problematic, and eventually contributed to a recognition that even such pragmatic-focussed dialogue requires a measure also of systemic (theological, meaning-probing) dialogue. In large measure much communitarian dialogue could be critiqued as amounting to an exercise in social engagement, as opposed to an exercise of deep intercommunal understanding through dialogue. It also meant that underlying thorny issues of an ideological and/or theological nature could be glossed over—but not entirely so—, for there is ever an educational dimension that WCC work is inclined to address, and this leads us to the third model.

6.4 *Relational Dialogue*

The relational model is enacted where dialogue is promoted on broadly educational grounds: mutual enrichment, deepened understanding, the need to combat ignorance and prejudice, together with the aim of building interpersonal relations of goodwill, especially among religious and community leaders. In many ways this could be seen as an extension or development of the communitarian model of dialogue. But here there is also the internal dimension of promoting intra-faith dialogue *about* interfaith engagement: encouraging and enabling Christian communities to learn about their religious neighbours and themselves and to reflect upon the theology of the religious 'other' *per se*. Arguably the relational model of dialogue, with its two-fold focus (self-directed and other-directed), is theoretically, if not also practically, a prior requisite to the communitarian model. In order to undertake interfaith engagement successfully as a community enhancing activity, there needs necessarily to be a foundation laid of relationship-building and mutual acceptance, and so a measure of mutual understanding. This must be attended to first. However, to what degree this happens in practice is moot. Where there is resistance to the idea of systemic dialogue, and a presupposition that it is that which forms the agenda

of interfaith relational engagement, it is likely that the benefits of the relational model are short-circuited in favour of engaging the communitarian model directly. Programmes that draw multi-faith, or bilateral, communities together in a common project tend to gain more popular support with respect to WCC priorities and wider constituent Church endorsement. As a rule, Christians are good at loving their neighbours, but not necessarily at getting to know them at depth—let alone accepting them unconditionally.

6.5 *Vatican Models*

It was primarily through Catholic developments that the now standard fourfold model for dialogical engagement—Life, Action, Experience and Discourse—was articulated (Michel 1981; ACTFOR 1984; Arinze 1987, 1991; RM 1990). I suggest other distinctive models may be discerned also. The RCC, through the Vatican State, engages in formal diplomatic relations with the nations of the world. As an official Vatican organisation, the contacts which the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) has with the world of other faith communities tend to be at high social and/or governmental level (Jukko 2007). The dialogue in which it is engaged is often between leaders. At the same time, the task of interreligious dialogue is a mandated work of the Church at large, supported and nurtured by the Vatican, particularly in and through its interreligious Dicastery, to which has been given "the apostolate of promoting dialogue with the followers of other religions … and contributing to the formation of people who engage in interreligious dialogue" (Arinze 1993: 17). Wherever there is dialogue, there is also proclamation: the mission of salvific proclamation forms the default horizon within which, for the most part, dialogue takes place. So it is that, within these contexts, three distinct and mutually interactive models of interreligious dialogical engagement may be identified: *ambassadorial, propaedeutic* and *humanitarian*. These may also be seen to mark emphases or stages—or denote types—of dialogical engagement.

6.6 *Ambassadorial Dialogue*

In the first place can be found *ambassadorial* dialogue for the Vatican is a sovereign state with all the diplomatic responsibilities and relationships that pertain thereto. This is not to be underestimated. It influences the means of engagement and relating to any 'other' as such. Today many countries have ambassadors accredited to the Holy See, and in turn the Vatican has ambassadorial representation and relationships around the globe. So, it should not be surprising that this relational modality is found to the fore in respect of interreligious relations. In many situations, of course, state and religious relations coincide. A mark of the ambassadorial mode is that steps are taken to

maintain long-term relationships: specific dialogical events may be themselves *ad hoc*, infrequent, and irregular; but the relationship between dialogical parties can be nurtured over time nonetheless. The annual goodwill message to Muslims throughout the world marking *Eid al-Fitr*, the end of the fasting month of Ramadan, may serve as an example. Over the years there has been a steady increase in reciprocal greetings "and expressions of gratitude" by way of response (Arinze 1997: 29). Since 1995 similar annual messages have been sent to Hindus, in respect of *Diwali*, and to Buddhists in respect of *Vesakh*. In the ambassadorial mode of dialogical relationship there is—or, at least, there is a presumption of—an encounter of equals: the establishment and maintenance of cordial and functional working relations is the order of the day. In this context the undergirding task is the patient and mutual self-presentation of one side to the other in the interest of fostering mutual authentic knowledge and respect. Ambassadorial dialogue is the implicit precondition for any dialogue of action: cooperative ventures require, in the first place, a context of mutual respect and functional communication. To that extent ambassadorial dialogue does not just name a type of dialogue that applies specifically to the role and work of the Vatican, but names a model that has wider applicability for the Roman Catholic Church, for in dialogue all Catholics anywhere, when acting as representatives of their Church, may well utilise this model vis-à-vis the commencement of a dialogue process, at least. And, qua model, it is not limited to Roman Catholic usage: it is one form of Christian dialogical modality that, arguably, could and has been applied by Christians in other contexts.

6.7 *Propaedeutic Dialogue*

The second model refers to the style, or dimension, of interreligious engagement that goes beyond the ambassadorial presenting of credentials to the careful explanation of the self to the other as a means of preparing the ground for further development and deepening of relationship. This allows for mutual invitation and responsive engagement. As with the ambassadorial model, it is premised on the reciprocities and protocols of the host-guest relationship paradigm. It is thus a model for dialogical engagement that, born of initial Vatican practice, informs the wider RCC work in this field. Inherent in this model is the fact that much careful attention is paid to identity explanation. This involves articulating an apologia and bearing clear witness, rather than simply a cursory informative self-presentation. Pains are taken to assert and explain what it means to be Christian—indeed, to be Catholic—in the context of this dimension of engagement. References to it abound with the language of 'proclamation', 'mission', or 'outreach'. Indeed, it is referred to in terms of clearing the way for appropriate evangelical 'invitation and witness'. Cardinal

Arinze, in this regard, spoke of a 'conversion' that is concomitant to, if not inherent within, interreligious dialogue. There is, he wrote,

> … a sense in which we can rightly speak of conversion as a needed mental state and as a result of dialogue. It is the sense of greater conversion to God. Every believer who meets other believers in interreligious contact should strive to be more and more open to the action of God. God can speak to us through our encounter with other believers. Such can become occasions in which we are challenged to become more faithful to the deeper calls of our faith
>
> Arinze 1993: 41

Given that religion should be proposed, not imposed, the propaedeutic dialogue model is undoubtedly a valid form of interreligious engagement, one that is premised on both respecting the integrity of the 'other' and upholding one's own assertions and truth references.

6.8 *Humanitarian Dialogue*

The third Vatican-originating model may be called *humanitarian* dialogue. This can be discerned, in particular, in terms of the dialogue of action, where engagement is not so much in attending to issues of identity, relationship and understanding—such as would be expected in the context of dialogues of discourse and religious experience, and implied within the dialogue of life—but rather a coming together of two or more parties in the quest for a common goal, or the commitment to joint action for the greater good of the human community, whether in a local or wider context. Such dialogue, more particularly, is an expression of the local or regional church in action. This model approximates, arguably, the communitarian model of the WCC, but the wider context is somewhat different. A number of PCID-sponsored dialogues, such as the conference on Jerusalem or various consultations on the Middle East have focussed on socio-political issues and allied humanitarian concerns involving questions of justice, human rights, freedom and so on (PCID 1984; Zago 1984; Gioia 1997: 112–13, 426–28 502–4, 521–22; Pratt 2010). The humanitarian model stands alongside, and may even intertwine with, the propaedeutic and ambassadorial models.

It is the work of the Vatican which, as mentioned, has produced and articulated the four—often effectively regarded as standard—models of dialogue: life, whereby dialogical engagement is an epiphenomenon of everyday interactions; action, where dialogical engagement in respect to achieving a common goal or purpose in respect to the wider social good is enjoined, but without

presupposing religious interaction *per se*; and the dialogue of experience that encompasses either an intentional communal inter- or multi-religious act, such as praying for world peace, or responding in a liturgical fashion to a communal disaster or other notable event, or else it refers—indeed more typically—to religious or spiritual exchanges such that interlocutors experience first-hand the deeper dimensions of one another's religious life; and finally discourse, wherein representative intellectual experts meet for in-depth conversation and discussion.

7 Conclusion

There is often a disjunction between official positions and policies of Churches at a global or regional level and what occurs locally in specific contexts. Nonetheless, where interreligious or interfaith engagement has been occurring locally this has often been in light of the 'permission-granting' policy and guidance from central Church authorities. In these situations, recourse to supportive ecclesial mandate can be significant and important. For, to be sure, within the RCC as well as member churches of the WCC there are those who simply choose to ignore issues of interreligious dialogue or interfaith relations. And if this is so for 'ecumenical Christianity' it is also the case more widely within Christianity.

The impetus for Christian engagement in interreligious dialogue and interfaith relations has come from two directions: local contexts where Christians daily interact with people of other faiths, and from usually some central reflection on the meaning and implications of that for wider Christian self-understanding and contemporary missionary endeavour (cf. WCC 2016). There is ever a dialectical tension between a desire for dialogue between religions as complex systems of belief and thought for the purposes of seeking and deepening theological understanding on the one hand, and recognition of the priority and importance of relationships between persons of different faiths for the purposes of social peace and harmony, and working together for a greater common good. Both the Vatican and the WCC took the first route in the early days of opening up to interreligious dialogue. But by the late 20th century a turn towards engaging in relationship between peoples of different faiths, in light of local specific contexts and the multiplicity of religious identities and orientations that exist within religions, all but eclipsed discursive theological dialogue. Arguably both are needed, with *interfaith relations* the arena of practical lived engagement and *interreligious dialogue* as the point where that engagement is reflected upon and discussed in light of religious beliefs,

values and principles, and where interlocutors may mutually interrogate each other about those; and specific Christian reflection to produce a theology—or theologies—of religion whereby Christian belief and thought may appropriately adjust to, and formulate appropriate positions on, the very context of religious diversity whence arises the fact of engagement with religious 'others' in the first place. This study of these multiple ways of relating to the religious other should constitute a key feature of a World Christianity approach.

Bibliography

Abbott, Walter M.S.J., ed. (1967). *The Documents of Vatican II*. London: Geoffrey Chapman.

ACTFOR (1984). *Attitude of the Church to Followers of Other Religions*. Vatican City: Document of the Secretariat for Non-Christians.

Addison, James Thayer (1938). 'The Changing Attitude toward non-Christian Religions.' *International Review of Mission* 27,1: 110–121.

Ariarajah, S. Wesley. (1991). *Hindus and Christians. A Century of Protestant Ecumenical Thought*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Arinze, Francis (1987). 'Interreligious Dialogue. Problems, Prospects and Possibilities.' *Bulletin* 66 (XXII/3): 247–265.

Arinze, Francis (1993). 'Meeting Other Believers. Introduction to the Plenary Assembly 1992.' *Bulletin* 82 (XXVIII/1): 17–22.

Arinze, Francis (1997). *Meeting Other Believers*. Herefordshire, UK: Gracewing.

Bent, Ans J. van der (1986). *Vital Ecumenical Concerns. Sixteen Documentary Surveys*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.

Bent, Ans J. van der (1991). 'WCC Assemblies.' In Nicholas Lossky, ed. *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*. Geneva: WCC Publications: 1091–92.

Best, Thomas F., ed. (1990). *Vancouver to Canberra 1983–1990. Report of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches to the Seventh Assembly*. Geneva: WCC Publications.

Brockway, Allan R. *et al.*, eds (1988). *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People. Statements by the World Council of Churches and its Member Churches*. Geneva: WCC Publications.

Cabrita, Joel and David Maxwell (2017). 'Introduction. Relocating World Christianity.' In Joel Cabrita, David Maxwell and Emma Wild-Wood, eds. *Relocating World Christianity. Interdisciplinary Studies in Universal and Local Expressions of the Christian Faith*. Leiden: Brill: 1–44.

Cairns, D.S. (1929). 'The Christian Message. A Comparison of Thought in 1910 and 1928.' *International Review of Mission* 18,3: 321–331.

Catechism of the Catholic Church. Revised in Accordance with the Official Latin Text Promulgated by Pope John Paul II (2000). Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana (2nd edition).

Dialogue and Proclamation. Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (May 19, 1991).

Ecclesiam Suam (August 6, 1964)

Fitzgerald, Michael (1988). 'Mission and Dialogue. Reflections in the Light of Assisi 1986.' *Bulletin* 68 (XXIII/2): 113–120.

Fitzgerald, Michael (1993). 'Dialogue and Proclamation.' *Bulletin* 82 (XXIII/1): 23–33.

Fitzgerald, Michael (1994). 'Other Religions in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.' *Pro Dialogo* 85–86: 165–177.

Fulton, Austin (1959). 'The Missionary Nature of the Church. Reflections on the Christian Faith and Other Religions.' *International Review of Mission* 48,4: 389–397.

Gioia, Francesco, ed. (1997). *Interreligious Dialogue. The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church (1963–1995)*. Boston: Pauline Books and Media/Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

Jadot, Jean (1983). 'The Growth in Roman Catholic Commitment to Interreligious Dialogue since Vatican II.'*Bulletin* 54 (XVIII/3): 205–220.

Hastings, Adrian, ed. (1991). *Modern Catholicism. Vatican II and After*. London: SPCK, New York: Oxford University Press.

Hinze, Bradford E. (2006). *Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church*. London: Continuum.

Humbertclaude, Pierre (1969). 'Clarification of the Nature and Role of the Secretariat for Non-Christians.' *Bulletin* 11: 76–96.

Irvin, Dale (2016). 'What is World Christianity?' In Jonathan Y. Tan and Ahn Q. Tran, eds. *World Christianity. Perspectives and Insights. Essays in Honor of Peter C. Phan*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books: 3–26.

Jukko, Risto. 2007. *The Trinity in Unity in Christian-Muslim Relations. The Work of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue*. Leiden: Brill.

Kinnamon, Michael, ed. (1991). *Signs of the Spirit. Official Report, Seventh Assembly, Canberra, Australia, 7–20 February, 1991*. Geneva: WCC Publications / Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Kraemer, Hendrik (1930). 'Christianity and Secularism.' *International Review of Mission* 19,2: 195–208.

Kraemer, Hendrik (1938). *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*. London, Edinburgh House Press.

Michel, Tom S.J. (1981). 'Education for dialogue.' *Bulletin* 48 (XVI/3): 243–249.

Mott, John R. (1938). 'At Edinburgh, Jerusalem and Madras.' *International Review of Mission* 27,3: 297–320.

Newbigin, Lesslie (1959). 'The Summons the Christian Mission Today.' *International Review of Mission* 48,2: 177–189.

Nolan, Ann M. (2006). *A Privileged Moment. Dialogue in the Language of the Second Vatican Council 1962–1965*. Bern: Peter Lang.

Paton, William (1928). 'The Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council.' *International Review of Missions* 17,1: 3–10.

Paton, William (1939). 'The Meeting of the International Missionary Council at Tambaram, Madras.' *International Review of Mission* 28,2: 161–173.

Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue [PCID] (1994). *Recognize the Spiritual Bonds which Unite Us. 16 years of Christian-Muslim dialogue*. Vatican City: Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

Phan, Peter C. (2012). 'World Christianity. Its Implications for History, Religious Studies and Theology.' *Horizons* 39,2: 171–188.

Pranger, Jan Hendrik (1994). *Dialogue In Discussion. The World Council of Churches and the Challenge of Religious Plurality between 1967 and 1979*. Utrecht/Leiden: IIMO Research Publication 38.

Pratt, Douglas (2010). *The Church and Other Faiths. The World Council of Churches, the Vatican, and Interreligious Dialogue*. Bern: Peter Lang.

RM 1990. *Redemptoris Missio* (Vatican City: John Paul II, Encyclical).

Robert, Dana (2009). *Christian Mission. How Christianity Became a World Religion*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Samartha, Stanley J. ed. (1977), *Faith in the Midst of Faiths. Reflections on Dialogue in Community*. Geneva: WCC Publications.

Sheard, Robert B. (1987). *Interreligious Dialogue in the Catholic Church since Vatican II. An Historical and Theological Study*. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press.

Sperber, Jutta (2000). *Christians and Muslims. The Dialogue Activities of the World Council of Churches and Their Theological Foundation*. Berlin & New York: De Gruyter.

Swidler, Leonard (1990). *After the Absolute. The Dialogical Future of Religious Reflection*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Thomas, M.M. (1987). *Risking Christ for Christ's Sake. Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Pluralism*. Geneva: WCC Publications.

Ucko, Hans (1994). 'Interreligious Team Visit to Fiji.' *Current Dialogue* 27: 2–14.

VanElderen, Marlin (1998). *From Canberra to Harare. An Illustrated Account of the Life of the World Council of Churches 1991–1998*. Geneva: WCC.

Visser't Hooft, Willem A. (1986). 'The Genesis of the World Council of Churches.' In Ruth Rouse and Stephen Neill, eds. *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517–1948*. Geneva: World Council of Churches: 697–724 (3rd edition).

WCC (1977). *Dialogue in Community. Statements and Reports of a Theological Consultation, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 18–27 April 1977*. Geneva: WCC Publications.

WCC (1979). *Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies*. Geneva: WCC Publications.

WCC (1987). *My Neighbour's Faith and Mine. Theological Discoveries Through Interfaith Dialogue. A Study Guide* Geneva: WCC Publications.

WCC (2016). *Who Do We Say That We Are Christian Identity in a Multi-Religious World*. Geneva: WCC Publications.

Wilson, Frederick R., ed. (1990). *The San Antonio Report*. Geneva: WCC Publications.

Zago, Marcello (1984). 'Dialogue in the Mission of the Church.' *Bulletin* 57 (XIX/3): 265–269.

CHAPTER 9

Conquering Rome: Constructing a Global Christianity in the Face of Terror. A Case Study into the Representations of the Beheading of Twenty-One Migrant Workers in January 2015

Lucien van Liere

1 Introduction

On January 15 2015, a video was posted on the internet by Al-Hayat Media Center, showing the beheading of twenty-one men (Schnellmann.org). The video was claimed by Islamic State's "Tripoli Province", a group allied to Islamic State, and addressed to "the nation of the cross". Political and religious leaders responded with shock and abhorrence.

In the video, the twenty-one men were presented as "people of the cross, followers of the hostile Coptic Church". One of the killers explained that the captives were murdered as a revenge for the suffering of members of the Muslim community in Egypt. Responses to the atrocity, from Egypt as well as from Europe and the US, appealed to religious ideas of unity and solidarity. These 'frames' were particularly set through interpretations that were spread on the Internet. In this chapter, I will show how these interpretations played an important role in constructing frames of global religious connectivities. Attention for translocal connectivities is considered a key feature of a World Christianity approach as outlined elsewhere in this volume. This contribution illustrates connectivities and dynamics of incorporation forged through discourse and shows that such connectivities can be construed by agents both from within and outside the Christian tradition(s). By using the word 'frame' I refer to a set of convictions and related practices that evolves through selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration and promote a causal interpretation between events, and a moral evaluation of these events (McCombs 2004: 89). Starting with a contextualization of the above-mentioned video this article seeks to make clear that information technologies play a significant role in the development of these frames that use well-worn Christian theological concepts with deep historical roots like 'the baptism of blood' and 'martyrdom' as vivid building blocks to stress a world-wide connectivity and solidarity that support a

© LUCIEN VAN LIERE, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004444867_011
This is an open access chapter distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

'global Christianity' based on images and narratives of suffering communities spread through the Internet.

Besides exploring the contours of this 'global Christianity' by focusing on the construction of 'martyrdom', I will draw attention to yet another but related theme that comes to the fore in the video: the 'crusader', a theme charged with historical memories. Both constructions, I will propose, work as frames in the sense mentioned above and are related, loading events with meanings and proposing causality between events and a moral interpretation. This chapter shows that these frames can change twenty-one migrant workers (twenty from Egypt and one from Chad), looking for jobs in Libya, into Christian crusaders with strong links to Europe ("Rome") on the one side, and into Christian martyrs with strong links to (the whole of) Christianity in past and present on the other.

I will use a structure-based approach to conflict, which means that I will not locate conflict in the individual agency but in representations of global collectivities in speeches, news reports and videos. By doing so, I will use the Internet as a significant source of information on the one hand, but on the other hand critically analyze the information as being part of a medium that 'uploads' and styles information into the rather stereotypical frames of 'martyr' or 'crusader'. At this digital level, a grand narrative of global solidarity is construed by at least two sides within a comparable pattern; crusaders and martyrs are both historically charged conflict-frames that entail perspectives on suffering communities. But while the crusader-image in this narrative points to a suffering Muslim community, the martyr-image reactivates theological perspectives on Christian communality based on 'blood'. To sum up, I will analyze the discursive fields in which references towards these men are charged with wider and deeper layers of historical representations. It will become clear how on the Internet and in speeches and letters from officials the January 2015 atrocity evokes a perspective on Christianity as a unified religion that owns its dynamics from the frames of 'crusaders' and 'martyrs'. A 'global Christianity' as used in this article, is a discursively constructed Christianity charged by the traumatized memories, theologies and articulations of 'crusaders' and 'martyrs' and not an effort to describe a global context. From this perspective, I will show how a 'global Christianity' is discursively constructed on the one hand as a violent effort against the Islamic *umma* while on the other hand as a world-wide network of solidarity.

2 Prelude

On January 12, 2015, *Dabiq*, by then the on-line glossy of Islamic State, published a report about the capture of twenty-one "Coptic crusaders". The Copts were

migrant workers kidnapped in Sirte on December 27, 2014 and in January 2015. According to *Dabiq*, the action was a revenge for "Kamilia Shehata, Wafa Constantine, and other sisters who were tortured and murdered by the Coptic Church of Egypt" in 2010 (Dabiq 2015b: 30).

The story of Kamilia Shehata and Wafa Constantine which *Dabiq* references is vague, but circles around questions regarding the conversion-rights of two Egyptian Christian women to Islam five years earlier, in 2010. The stories of both women have become intermingled. Gossip, rumors, fear and anger accompany what is narrated. The function of gossip is ample and important to mention, especially because of its rapid spread through digital media. As Christopher Boehm explains, gossip functions as a courtroom, as a "system through which the group's idea of what should be morally acceptable or unacceptable is continuously rehashed and refreshed" (Boehm 1984: 84). In the current tense Egyptian context notions of victimhood accompany ideas about what 'the other' is doing. One story-line narrates that Shehata and Constantine were both married to Coptic priests. Wanting to divorce from their husbands, they converted to Islam (which would make the initiation of the divorce easier). According to a Muslim narrative, Christians were less happy with their proposed conversion and forced them to enter Coptic monasteries or, as another story-line claims, forced them back into their churches. Another, Christian, story-line narrates that Shehata had left her husband after a dispute. Fearing that she was kidnapped by Muslim activists, her family started to worry. Later on, she showed up telling that she was just visiting some relatives. The narrative created much outrage in Egyptian society in 2010 (Fadl 2010), with Muslims and Christians each believing their own stories (Durie 2015). Tensions remained high. On 17 February 2011, a month after the bombing of the Al-Qiddissin Coptic church in Alexandria (the bombing killed twenty-three people and took place is a tense atmosphere of gossip and rumor), a video was uploaded onto the internet showing a person claiming to be Shehata. While looking straight into the camera she said that she has never been abducted nor forced to reconvert to the church. Speaking in front of a painting of Jesus, she confessed that the church proclaims freedom and love (EpsajeeTV 2011).

The harsh version of the story however, the one of conversion and repression, was referred to by Dawlat al-ʿIrāq al-ʾIslāmiyyah (Islamic State in Iraq or ISI, the precursor of Islamic State) as justification for a bloody attack on a Catholic church in Baghdad taking fifty-eight lives (*Dabiq* speaks of "more than one hundred" (Dabiq 2015b: 31)) and wounding seventy-eight others on 31 October 2010 (Spencer 2011). According to witnesses, quoted by *The Guardian*, gunmen shouted upon entering the church: "All of you are infidels. We are here to avenge the burning of the Qur'an and the jailing of Muslim

women in Egypt", and then they started to kill churchgoers (Chulov 2010). With the first part of their claim they referred to the (at that time still) intended burning of the Quran by Terry Jones, founder of a small political organization called *Stand Up America Now* and pastor of the *Dove World Outreach Center*, a small nondenominational congregation in Florida, USA. Jones explained his plans to burn a Quran first on Twitter on 12 July 2010 and later also on Facebook and YouTube. At the time of the Baghdad-killings Jones had not yet burned a Quran in front of a camera.[1] The second part of the gunmen's claim is a clear reference to the cases of Kamilia Shehata and Wafa Constantine.

3 The Magazine and the Video: Turning Migrant Workers into Crusaders

The *Dabiq* article that was published on 12 January 2015 mentions that five years after "the blessed operation in Iraq, Allah granted Islamic State expansion to Libya, Sinai, and elsewhere, allowing it to easily capture the Coptic crusaders" (Dabiq 2015b: 32). A few days later, on 15 January 2015, the afore mentioned video entitled *A Message Signed With Blood to the Nation of the Cross* (with Arabic subtitling) was posted, showing the beheading of the twenty-one men near a coastline identified as a waterfront near Tripoli, Libya.

The aesthetic arrangement and choreography of the video suggests power, difference and fixed roles. Beside these twenty-one men, dressed in orange, the video shows twenty-one executioners all dressed in black, except for the spokesman standing in the middle, with caps covering all of their faces except for their eyes. A Quranic text is shown: "Allah, 47:4 'strike [their] necks'" at the bottom of the video. The video refers to the victims as "Coptic crusaders". A semiotic analysis of the video suggests that the contrast between the executioners and their victims is continually stressed in color, movement, and position. The orange jump suits of the captives for example can be taken as a reference to the prison garb of Guantanamo Bay. The video is addressed to "the nation of the cross" and later on to "the people of the cross". The victims walk to a beach while each one of them guarded by an executioner. The only sound we hear is the sound of the sea. All the executioners are 'higher' than their victims, a position we have seen earlier on videos published by Islamic State. The prisoners are forced to kneel down. Their executioners are holding

1 On 21 March 2011 he eventually posted a video on the internet, showing a "trial" and then the burning of a Quran (Daily Mail Reporter 2010), but at the time the gunmen started to spray their bullets no Quran was burned by Jones.

knives, taking up-right positions behind their victims. After a message is spoken out in American English (subtitled in Arabic) by the one standing exactly in the middle and dressed in military garb, the captives are beheaded synchronously. The camera does not turn away but takes the right angle for bloody close-up shots. Screams are heard while acapella music starts to play. The video appears extremely well-structured and esthetically organized. The colors black versus orange, the heights up (the executioners) versus down (the victims), the number of twenty-one which facilitates that one man stands exactly in the middle, holding a speech before the slaughter, the calm, the exact timing making the executioners move in unison, cutting the throats of their victims all at the same time, and the open faces of the victims versus the covered faces of the executioners all refer to a strong difference-construing, staged spectacle.

In the video, Christians are addressed as "crusaders". During his speech, the gunman in the middle claims: "Safety for you crusaders is something you can only wish for", looking straight into the camera, he continues:

> especially when you're fighting us all together, therefore we will fight you all together until the war lays down its burdens and Jesus—peace be upon him—will descend, breaking the cross, killing the swine. The sea you've hidden Sheikh Osama bin Laden's body in, we swear to Allah we will mix it with your blood.
>
> Ahram online 2015

At the end of the video, the speaker declares: "We will conquer Rome, by Allah's permission" (Ahram online 2015) echoing the words of Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami, the former official spokesman of Islamic State: "We will conquer your Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women" (Wood 2017: 192). On the screen the words appear: "The filthy blood is just some of what awaits you". The video shows a red sea, suggesting that the blood of the laborers heralds the blood of the uniting crusaders. It is clear that the twenty-one men were not 'bad guys' who deserved the death penalty according to *sharia*. The executioners wanted to 'hurt' the category these men represented.

In the video, as well as in *Dabiq*, the atrocity is explained and justified as revenge for "Kamilia Shehata, Wafa Constantine and other sisters who were tortured and murdered by the Coptic Church of Egypt" (Dabiq 2015b: 30). The "jailing of Muslim women in Egypt" that the gunmen clamored in the Catholic Church in Baghdad before starting to shoot, now had reached a next level by using the words 'torturing' and 'murdering'. Because it was impossible in 2010 to take revenge in Egypt for this 'torture and murder', the Baghdad Catholics, a "different kuffar" but still having "allegiance to

each other in the face of Islam" (Dabiq 2015b: 31) were killed, *Dabiq* claims. 'Now' however, in 2015, "the Islamic State strikes terror directly in the hearts of the Copts after striking terror in the hearts of their Catholic allies before" (Dabiq 2015b: 32).

It is noteworthy to see how individual biographies transform into digitalized stereotypes of fundamental conflict. The—predominantly Egyptian—migrant workers from Sirte become anti-Muslim crusaders killed as retaliation for the 'torture and murder' of supposititious ex-Coptic Muslim women. This perspective of retaliation includes ideas of a suffering community that transforms these men into perpetrators or crusaders. By using the term 'crusader', the representation of suffering is given a historic dimension. I consider the term 'crusader' to be a stereotype with a dense sense of historic memory. By using the term 'crusaders', the Copts and Chadian are placed within a genealogy of violence representing a Europe-Muslim world binary, and become the current heirs of the historic perpetrators, although neither the Copts nor the Chadians were ever part of any crusade. Charles Strangor defines stereotypes as representing "the traits that we view as characteristic of social groups, or individual members of those groups, and particular those that differentiate groups from each other" (Stangor 2009: 2). The term 'crusader' however is more than just a characteristic and differentiating term. Muslims 'down through the ages' have spoken about the West's crusader mentality (Tolan et al 2013: ix). The term 'crusader' here is an implosive category that covers a history of (violent) relationships. In our case it bluntly refers to a history of violent conflict that is evoked every time the term is used. In Islamist discourses, Thomas Hegghammer writes,

> the term 'Crusader' has become a buzzword. The discourse of (…) global jihadists tended to highlight Muslims' suffering at the hands of the so-called Jewish-Crusader alliance. Their texts were characterized by long enumerations of places and events which demonstrated that Muslims were victims of oppression, occupation, and war.
>
> Hegghammer 2006: 13

Indeed, the term appears abundantly in speeches and writings of Islamic State leaders like Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (Ensor 2015, al-Baghdadi was killed in October 2019) and Abu Muhammed al-Adnani (who was killed in August 2016) but also in Islamic State media. A *Dabiq*-article for example states that "Bush spoke the truth when he said, 'Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists.' I.e. either you are with the crusade or you are with Islam" (Dabiq 2015a: 43). In this context, 'Rome' is on the one hand the seat of power that called for crusades against Muslims in the past and at the same time the apocalyptic

focal point that will be conquered in the future (Wood 2017: 253–254). The term 'crusader' therefore covers a specific conflict-loaded view and raises the issue of a suffering community within the frame of justified 'defence'.

Related to the crusader-stereotype is the Islamic State-construction of a globally interconnected Christianity "in the face of Islam", as *Dabiq* explains, as a network of anti-Islamic perpetrators. The crusader-frame is the uniting frame used to address this interconnectivity. Catholics in Baghdad and Copts in Egypt are united as 'crusaders' opposing Islam. Precisely this term makes it possible for Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) in 2010 and for Islamic State (IS) in 2015 to transform churchgoers and migrant workers into antagonistic subjects and charge them with the "torture and murder" of Egyptian women. This way 'Christians' are labeled as violators of the 'fragile' parts of the *umma*. The term 'crusaders' projects a self-perspective of the *umma* as a suffering and threatened community, upon Iraqi and Egyptian Christians. It alludes to extend the violent effort to 'abolish' this category by the classic threat to conquer Rome. The term 'crusader' in this 'traumatic' context signifies "the nation" or "the people of the cross" and constructs a 'global Christianity' from a jihadist perspective that is antagonistic, violent and attackable. Parallel to this categorization of Christianity, Islamic State can profile the *umma* as victim of an aggressive global Christianity and explain its deadly anti-Christian attacks as 'counter-violence' within the crusader-frame.

4 Responses: Turning Crusaders into Martyrs

Responses to the video were many. Egypt almost immediately launched airstrikes on IS-positions in Libya. Political leaders condemned the atrocity. Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi spoke about an "abhorrent act of terrorism", while The White House officially spoke about a "despicable and cowardly" act (Cunningham and Habib 2015). On Twitter, the Coptic bishop Anba Ernia published the names of the victims.

Protests were organized in Cairo where the faces of the beheaded workers appeared on colorful banners, but also in Washington DC, where a small group of Coptic immigrants showed up in orange suits. They were reported chanting "Obama, Obama, did you see? Christian blood in the sea" (Constable 2015).

The Coptic Church officially declared these men as "martyrs of the righteous" (Mack 2015). Six days after the massacre, the Coptic Church made an important announcement. It declared that the murdered Coptic men would from 'now' on be commemorated in the Coptic Synaxarium, the Church calendar, as 'martyrs of faith' on February 15 of the Gregorian calendar (which is

the 8th Amshir of the Coptic calendar). Interpreting the video, many people argued after watching, that some victims had been seen mouthing the words 'Lord Jesus Christ' just seconds before their deaths, or had been seen mumbling prayers. In an interview with SAT-7 ARABIC, an Arabic Christian channel, Beshir Kamel, who was presented as a brother of two of the 'Coptic martyrs', thanked Islamic State: "ISIS gave us more than we asked for when they didn't edit out the part where they declared their faith and called upon Jesus Christ. ISIS helped us strengthen our faith," he said. The martyrdom of his brothers was "a badge of honor to Christianity", he claimed (Vatican Radio 2015; see also Mosebach 2019).

Recently, the Coptic community has been frequently targeted, especially since president Abdul Fatah al-Sisi has intensified Egypt's policy to roll up Islamist networks. Many Copts situate these attacks within a 'frame of martyrdom' that has been part and parcel of Coptic collective memory. Martyrs own an important part of the commemoration calendar of the Coptic Church. In Coptic martyrologies and calendars, the so-called 'Era of Martyrs' functions as a point of reference. This persecution started under Emperor Diocletian in 303 and ended with the Edict of Milan in 313. It contributes to the idea that the history of the Copts in Egypt is a history of violence and persecutions. The Coptic calendar is dated to this Era of Martyrs. Vivian Ibrahim writes that the Era of Martyrs is a useful tool "by which modern Copts can identify any form of persecution or discrimination as part of a historical process of eternal martyrdom" (Ibrahim 2011: 5). More than that, martyrdom is also a frame by which Coptic Church officials view current situations of conflict. On 9 October 2011 for example, during a Coptic mass-protest against the attack on a church in Marinab, in the Aswan province, that killed twenty-seven people, bishop Stephanos was reported saying: "Christians are currently experiencing their worst time in recent centuries. (…) Nevertheless, all Coptic Christians are prepared for martyrdom, as at the beginnings of Christianity" (Hoft 2011). This frame of suffering has been part and parcel of the Coptic tradition and has deep roots in Coptic theology. Zeidan argues that Copts view their history "as a long series of persecutions, massacres, forced conversions and destroyed churches, as a sad tale of a subjugated people precariously surviving among a dominant and hostile majority. Martyrdom and suffering have a high symbolic meaning for Copts as they perceive themselves as facing a constant existential threat" (Zeidan 1999: 56). Despite voices that raise attention for the great variety of Egyptian Copts and their involvement in society (Guirguis 2012), suffering has become part of Coptic identity (Henderson 2005: 163) and is as a—what Aleida Assmann calls—"hot past" that is 'present' (Assmann 2011: xi) not only in liturgy, theology and collective memory, but also in the interpretation of its current

vulnerable position in Egyptian society. Within this vein, Ishak Ibrahim argues that "the gruesome video thus joined a historic litany of martyrdom and became a source of pride in the community" (Ibrahim 2015).

Not only the Coptic Church, but also the Egyptian government addressed the victims as martyrs, opening a more nationalistic trajectory of martyrdom. The state officially announced seven days of national mourning directly after the video was published. The government claimed that the victims were "martyrs of the revolution", subscribing them to the martyrs of the January 25 Revolution (2011). This entitled their families to receive social and financial support. Officials, including representatives from the *Nour Party*, an Egyptian Salafist group, travelled to al-Our, where thirteen from the twenty-one men came from, to condole the family of the victims. Government officials granted the Copts of al-Our permission for the building of a new church which would be named "The Church of the Martyrs of Faith and Country in al-Our" (Ibrahim 2015) (which would lead to social unrest and clashes in al-Our later on). Contrary to their reluctance to cover the story of the kidnapping of the Copts before their beheading, media-attention in Egypt was phenomenal after the men were killed. However, as Ishak Ibrahim from *The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy* observes: "Little to no discussion could be found noting the victims' religion as the main reason that they were taken hostage and then killed" (Ibrahim 2015). While Ibrahim is referring to the Egyptian context, this lack of attention for the religious affiliations of the victims was absolutely not true for global media-framings of the beheadings outside of Egypt.

On the internet, *Dailymotion*, one of the biggest video platforms in the world, uploaded a video unto its website with footage from the IS-video, projecting almost continually three crosses on the background while Kari Jobe is singing her gospel song *I am not alone* (Dailymotion). Similar artistic interpretations in which the death of these twenty-one men was reframed as Christian *marturion*, show a strong identification between the Coptic migrant workers and the suffering Christ. Paintings were uploaded unto internet, one for example, showing Jesus wearing his cross while the Copts and their executioners follow; another—from the migrant Coptic artist Tony Rezk, living in Virginia USA—showing the 21 as martyrs receiving a crown from angels and be welcomed by Jesus. In an interview with Kathryn Jean Lopez from *The National Review*, Rezk explains: "We believe that their martyrdom will help the Church grow stronger" (Lopez 2015). Martyrdom became the uniting category for an envisioned 'global Christianity' based on solidarity with the victims. Cardinal Timothy Dolan, American cardinal prelate of the Catholic Church in New York, argued in *The New York Post* that the workers "were beheaded for nothing less

than their religious convictions. It moves me to prayers. It moves me to tears, yes, as a Christian, but also as an American, who recognizes religious freedom as our first and most cherished liberty." IS is, Dolan claimed, "threatening civilization" (Dolan 2015). Other church officials but also individuals and NGO's responded on different websites strongly against the "Islamic threat" and asked global attention for the structural persecutions of Christians in Muslim countries. Mariz Tadroz for example published an article in *50.50 Inclusive Democracy* entitled *Are We All Beheaded Copts?*, and wrote that the abductions and killings of minorities reveal an ideologically driven political project "which is intended to clear the Middle East of its religious minorities, and liquidate religious pluralism" (Tadroz 2016). The crusader-frame was replaced by the martyr-frame.

However, not only the Coptic Church was addressed by the IS-video. The message also contained a clear threat to Rome. As a matter of fact, even though Copts were killed, the threat to conquer Rome, and not Cairo or Alexandria, was clearly made. The blood that flows into the Mediterranean at the end of the video (which is the suggestion being raised), can be seen as a symbolic impendence to Rome. The suggestion is created that this blood as shown on the video, is indeed the blood of the beheaded men. But while this blood oozed into the Mediterranean as crusaders' blood, at the other side of the sea their blood drifted ashore as martyrs' blood. Not only in Egypt these men became martyrs of faith, but also in the threatened city of Rome, where the beheaded men became unifying symbols of an intra-Christian solidarity based on blood.

5 Reaching Rome

Pope Francis was swift in responding to the video. A day after the atrocity, on February 16, he wrote a letter to the moderator and representatives of the Church of Scotland. Writing to the Presbyterian Scotts, Pope Francis was searching for words of unity and included the fresh news about the Copts. He expressed his "profound sorrow" and, referring to the beheadings, wrote that

> their only words were: 'Jesus, help me!'. They were killed simply for the fact that they were Christians. (…) The blood of our Christian brothers and sisters is a testimony which cries out to be heard. It makes no difference whether they be Catholics, Orthodox, Copts or Protestants. They are Christians! Their blood is one and the same. Their blood confesses Christ. As we recall these brothers who died only because they confessed Christ,

> I ask that we encourage each another to go forward with this ecumenism which is giving us strength, the ecumenism of blood. The martyrs belong to all Christians.
>
> Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2015a

According to the Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi, Pope Francis phoned the patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Pope Tawadros II, to "express his profound participation with the pain of the Coptic Church for the recent barbaric assassination of Coptic Christians by Islamic fundamentalists" (Vatican Insider 2015). Pope Francis assured the Coptic Pope that "tomorrow, during the funerals of the victims, he will be united in spirit with the prayer and the pain of the Coptic Church" (Saul and Golding 2015).

Blood plays an important role in Pope Francis' construction of an ecumenism that unites all confessions. His predecessor John Paul II already spoke about an "ecumenism of martyrs" (Bräuer 2017: 4–14). Pope Francis has taken up this theme while speaking about an "ecumenism of blood" and using this theme to develop a more inclusive perspective. In the video, blood is present as the blood of the twenty-one beheaded men, flowing into the Mediterranean. The Islamic State-commander points to this flow as a stream of blood that will eventually reach Rome. It indeed reached Rome. The "filthy" blood of the so-called 'crusaders' transformed into the uniting blood of Christian martyrs that unites all Christians. In this sense Pope Francis seeks to construct an "ecumenism of blood" in the face of current terror, based on an old Christian concept of martyrdom.

Ascribing a unifying role to the blood of Christian martyrs is certainly not a new issue. In an interview at the occasion of Christmas in 2013, Pope Francis already spoke about relations with other Christian denominations and talked about an "ecumenism of blood":

> for me ecumenism is a priority. Today there is an ecumenism of blood. In some countries they kill Christians for wearing a cross or having a Bible and before they kill them they do not ask them whether they are Anglican, Lutheran, Catholic or Orthodox. Their blood is mixed. To those who kill we are Christians. We are united in blood.
>
> Tornielli 2013

The beheading-video fitted well within this perspective. Two days after the video of the beheading was uploaded, on February 17 2015, the Pope said during the Morning Meditation at Domus Sanctae Marthae: "We offer this Mass for our 21 Coptic brothers, slaughtered for the sole reason that they were

Christians. (…) Let us pray for them, that the Lord welcome them as martyrs, for their families, for my brother Tawadros, who is suffering greatly" (Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2015b).

Pope Francis' claims that the Copts died as martyrs and that—as martyrs—they belonged to all Christians also raised old disputes within the Catholic Church about the question whether someone who dies 'as a Christian' but outside 'the Church' can be recognized as a martyr by the Church (Denzinger Bergoglio). The ultraconservative website *Novus Ordo Watch* for example heavily criticized the martyr-frame for the Copts because although the 'baptism of blood' could possibly apply for the Copts, this concept does not cover an "ecumenism of blood". If all people who are killed because they are perceived as Christians become martyrs, this would mean that the motive of the killer could cause Christian unity, even among Protestants and Catholics. An 'ecumenism of blood' is an "absurdity, simply the latest in Modernist-indifferentist hogwash dressed up as Catholic theology and foisted upon an unsuspecting populace by the enemies of the true Catholic Faith" (Novus Ordo Watch 2015). Pope Francis' argument does not point to the belief of the victim in order to determine whether someone is a 'real martyr' but indeed seems to grant that power to the perpetrator. On October 2016, he explained the ecumenism of blood on Vatican Radio:

> When terrorists or world powers persecute Christian minorities or Christians, when they do this, they don't ask: 'But are you Lutheran? Are you Orthodox? Are you Catholic? Are you a Reformed Christian? Are you a Pentecostal?' No! 'You are a Christian!' They only recognize one of them: the Christian. The enemy never makes a mistake and knows very well how to recognize where Jesus is. This is ecumenism of the blood.
>
> Vatican Radio 2016

The perpetrator becomes the key agent for uniting all Christians.

Martyrdom and the function of the blood of the martyrs have deep historical roots within the Christian tradition (Matthews 2010). By charging blood of victims with meanings like unity and the perseverance of a persecuted community, Pope Francis evokes 'old' meanings that were given to the blood of the martyrs in the first centuries of Christianity but had never disappeared from the Christian tradition. The so-called 'baptism of blood' (*baptismus sanquinis*) was never undisputed by theologians, but throughout the second to the fourth centuries, many saw the baptism of blood as a powerful ritual (Chidester 2000: 90–94). Dying for faith had a saving power even if the victim had not received the sacrament of water baptism before her or his death.

Based on Matthew 10:32 ("Everyone therefore that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven") and 10:39 ("He that shall lose his life for me shall find it"), the theme still belongs to the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and refers to the obtaining of "the grace of justification by suffering martyrdom for the faith of Christ" (New Advent). In past and present, disputes circled around the church as the locality of salvation. Outside the church salvation could not be received, and thus only baptized Catholics could officially die as martyrs. Pope Francis' "ecumenism of blood" is an allusion to this tradition and at the same time an inducement to raise new questions. An ecumenism of blood blurs the boundaries within the Church as the parameters of salvation are widened in such a way that it also includes Lutherans, Pentecostals and Orthodox Christians. They are all gathered within an ecumenical Christianity through their suffering while their blood is seen as a *martyrion*, a testimony of confessing Christ. It is in Pope Francis' discourse not only the Church, but also "the enemy" that "recognizes" the Christian. This is, so to say, at least a remarkable argument within Catholic soteriology. Nine months after the video-posting, on 29 November 2015, while visiting the Protestant faculty in Bangui, in the Central African Republic, Pope Francis once again explained his "ecumenism of blood", saying:

> God makes no distinctions between those who suffer. I have often called this the ecumenism of blood. All our communities suffer indiscriminately as a result of injustice and the blind hatred unleashed by the devil. (…) In these difficult circumstances, the Lord keeps asking us to demonstrate to everyone his tenderness, compassion and mercy. This shared suffering and shared mission are a providential opportunity for us to advance together on the path of unity; they are also an indispensable spiritual aid. How could the Father refuse the grace of unity, albeit still imperfect, to his children who suffer together and, in different situations, join in serving their brothers and sisters?
>
> Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2015c

Pope Francis' ecumenical efforts were acknowledged by the Coptic Church. When two years after the video was posted, on 16 February 2017, people commemorated the killings during several services worldwide, Bishop Amba Angaelos, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church said during a commemoration service held in the chapel of St. Mary Undercroft in London: "One profound result and gift of this horrific act is that it brought people together." And he continued: "These men paid the ultimate price, but gave us a cause to advocate for all those persecuted; they also showed us that there was a level of

evil that we must all stand in solidarity against, and a level of courage, faithfulness and defiance that we must all aspire to" (Zaimov 2017).

In April 2017, after four attacks on Coptic communities and churches following each other in a rapid sequence, Pope Francis visited Egypt on a journey of "unity and fraternity". At the Al-Azhar University, where the pope spoke at a peace conference with Muslim and Christian leaders on April 28, showing cognizance of his audience, he condemned religiously inspired hatred as an idolatrous caricature of God and declared that "Peace alone (…) is holy and no act of violence can be perpetrated in the name of God, for it would profane his name" (Glatz 2017). In the presence of Muslim leaders, Pope Francis did not speak about an ecumenism of blood but about "peace" as central monotheistic theme. Whereas suffering and blood as the result of violence unites all Christians, 'peace' unites people from all faith traditions.

6 Chadian Conversion

As already noted, not all men that were murdered came from Egypt. One migrant worker, identified as Mathew Ayairga, kneeling precisely in the middle in front of the group-leader, came from Chad (although earlier reported as Ghanaian). Whereas the narratives about the Egyptian men focus on martyrdom, the stories circling around the Chadian migrant worker also include conversion. Especially sites communicating a more evangelical theology endorsing conversion as personal choice and experience, and interpreting a suffering Christian community as a sign of the end of times, focus on Ayairga's 'decision' to become a Christian in the last minutes of his life. Lindsay Steele from *Mission Network News*, summarizes this story-line as follows: one of the perpetrators asked Ayairga 'Do you reject Christ?' and he responded with 'their God is my God'. Thus, Steele claims, he became one of the twenty-one men "laying down their lives for their faith in Christ" (Steele 2015). Whether this small conversation between Ayairga and his executioner really took place remains unclear from the footage, but websites dramatically explore this story-line (see for example: The Voice of the Martyrs 2015; Kelly 2015; Bos 2015; Brown 2015) and refer to "Mathew Ayairga, still in the prime of life, wanted to be beheaded for Christ rather than living on earth as a Muslim" (Bos 2015). Whether Ayairga was a Muslim or not, is not clear but enthusiastically embraced as a 'fact' by many English websites. Interestingly, the agency of Ayairga is strongly filled in and related to the martyrdom-frame addressed to the Egyptian victims. Their strong faith in Christ already worked as a witnessing power at the moment of the atrocity itself. As *Voice of the Martyrs* narrates:

> According to reports, Mathew was not a Christian. However, just moments before his death, when the ISIS militants demanded he follow Islam, Mathew turned them down. After reportedly witnessing the "immense faith" of the Egyptian believers, he decided to become a follower of Christ himself. On camera, one of the terrorists asked Mathew, "Do you reject Christ?" He responded boldly: "Their God is my God." He then became one of the 21 men who laid down their lives for their faith in Christ.
>
> The Voice of the Martyrs 2015

According to *The Voice of the Martyrs*-website, many men were praying 'Lord Jesus Christ'. Several websites dramatize this 'prayer' along the strongly drawn lines of martyrdom as witness. *BosNewsLife* for example, using *The Voice of Martyrs* as source, speaks about "*Each* man had been praying, 'Lord Jesus Christ,' in their final moments before they were beheaded" (Bos 2015, italic LvL). During a *World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians*, organized by the *Billy Graham Evangelistic Association* in May 2017, Egyptian Anglican Bishop Mouneer Anis reported to the conference, "Mathew Ayairga did not share the Copts' faith, but he was so moved by their witness and courage, that—when challenged him to reject Jesus—he declared 'Their God is my God'. Thus, he was then beheaded alongside them" (World Watch Monitor 2017). Interestingly, the Chadian migrant worker's agency becomes charged with themes that dramatically mark his 'conversion': inner movement, decision, courage, boldness, laying down his life for his faith, wanted to be beheaded for Christ rather than living on earth as a Muslim. Although, as mentioned earlier, this 'conversion' remains unclear in the video and it is at least remarkable that someone with the Christian name 'Mathew' quotes a verse from the Bible book of Ruth (see Ruth 1:16) before he turns from Islam to Christianity, from evangelical points of view Ayairga fits well within a frame of divine power, conversion and suffering as a sign of the times. Primarily through evangelical websites, Ayairga became a brave convert through whom God intermitted the violent message against the nation of the cross.

7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter shows how twenty-one men searching for work in Libya became explicated as crusaders, martyrs and a convert. Internet played a decisive role as source of information, exhibiting how the 'world' connects through narratives of violence, offense and gossip. As I have shown in this chapter, in the case of the Baghdad church killing in 2010, Islamic State justified its violence

as counter-violence, 'quoting' an (alleged) earlier violence that soared on the streams of gossip and facilitated that the perpetrators could perceive their community as victimized. This dynamic however takes on categorical dimensions with stereotypes that contain historic memories and representations within established frames, like the terms 'crusaders' and 'martyrs'. Within these frames that were abundantly explored by the media, the twenty-one men that were beheaded were first presented as crusaders and later on interpreted as martyrs encouraging Pope Francis to seek for an ecumenical Christianity based on their blood. Their biography as Egyptian/Chadian migrant workers continually 'imploded' in the different religious and political categories and stereotypes that were applied to them.

Being charged with the collective memories of crusader- and martyr-frames, these categories are both based on perspectives of suffering communities. As crusaders and martyrs, the twenty-one men mediate perspectives on Muslim and Christian communities as tormented communities at the hands of the other. On the one hand Muslims are suffering at the hands of 'crusaders'. The gossip-based violence towards women functions as a reason to 'repulse'. However, neither the victims of Baghdad, nor the twenty-one men near Tripoli can quench the thirst for revenge with such a deep historical profile. On the other hand, as the martyrdom of these twenty-one became evident within the Coptic Church and Pope Francis 'claimed' their blood serving a 'ecumenism of blood', the men were inscribed into a much wider frame of suffering Christian communities. The January 2015 atrocity evoked frames that developed rapidly along historical memories and theologies. Several 'global Christianities' were evoked based on deep-rooted representations. One version was induced by Islamic State's "Tripoli Province" who charged its version of a global Christianity with the historic aggression of the crusader. While the Coptic Church inscribed the laborers as official martyrs into the Coptic Synaxarium, another global Christianity appeared in response to the first and became charged with the historic suffering of the martyr. While global responses of abhorrence followed on the video, Pope Francis represented the blood of the laborers as part of an ecumenism of blood that unites all Christians in suffering. An evangelical variety focused on the drama of conversion as a sign of God's grace. Each of these representations fashions the notion of a 'global Christianity' by discursively constructing connectivities through time and space. The discursive construction of these Christianities on the Internet shows how events like the January 2015 atrocity are digitally re-created as beads in chains of memories that are filled with images of suffering, obliquely implying antagonistic interpretations but also applying longings for unity. The twenty-one men never 'returned' back home as the migrant laborers they once were.

Bibliography

Ahram Online. (2015). 'Video Shows Beheading of Copts at IS hands. Egypt Declares Week of Mourning.' at: http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/123128.aspx.(2015), accessed: 03–04–2017.

Assmann, Alaida (2011). *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization. Arts of Memory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boehm, Christopher (1984). *Blood Revenge. The Enactment and Management of Conflict in Montenegro and Other Tribal Societies*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bos, Stefan (2015). 'African Man Turns to Christ Moments Before Beheading.' *BosNewsLife* 23 April 2015. At: http://www.bosnewslife.com/35141-african-man-turns-to-christ-moments-before-beheading, accessed 20–11–2017.

Bräuer, Martin (2017). 'Pope Francis and Ecumenism.' *The Ecumenical Review* 69,1: 4–14.

Brown, Michael. (2015) 'The Man Who Was Beheaded the Day He Became a Believer.' *The Christian Post* 12 May 2015. At: https://www.christianpost.com/news/the-man-who-was-beheaded-the-day-he-became-a-believer-183399/, accessed 11–01–2018.

New Advent (2017). *Catholic Encyclopedia Online*, 'Baptism of Blood', at: http://newadvent.org/cathen/02258b.htm, date accessed: 20–11–2017.

Chidester, David (2000). *Christianity. A Global History*. London: Penguin Books.

Chulov, Martin (2010). 'Baghdad Church Siege Survivors Speak.' *The Guardian*. At: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/nov/01/baghdad-church-siege-survivors-speak?intcmp=239, accessed 03–04–2017.

Constable, Pamela (2015). 'Coptic Christian Protest Urges White House Action against Islamic State.' *The Washington Post online* February 24, 2015. At: https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/coptic-christians-in-prison-jumpsuits-join-dc-protest-against-libya-slaying/2015/02/24/cb2637d8-bc5b–11e4–b274–e5209a3bc9a9_story.html?utm_term=.d4f812f49f2d, accessed: 04–04–2017.

Cunningham, Erin and Heba Habib (2015). 'Video Shows Purported Beheading of Egyptian Christians in Libya'. *The Washington Post online* 15 February 2015. At: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/video-shows-purported-beheading-of-egyptian-christians-in-libya/2015/02/15/b8d0f092-b548-11e4-bc30-a4e75503948a_story.html?tid=a_inl&utm_term=.3c5671354b5b, accessed: 04–04–2017.

Daily Mail Reporter (2010). 'Florida Preacher burns Koran in Bizarre "Trial and Execution" in front of a Crowd of 30 People.' *Daily Mail*. At: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1368543/Florida-preacher-Terry-Jones-burns-Koran-bizarre-trial-execution-crowd—30-people.html, accessed: 03–04–2017.

Dailymotion (2015). 'ISIS Video Beheading 21 Coptic Christian Men @ Mediterranean Sea I Am NOT Alone! By Kari Jobe.' At: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x35xkig, accessed: 30–03–2017.

Dabiq (2015a) 'The Failed Crusade.' *Dabiq* 4. At: https://clarionproject.org/docs/islamic-state-isis-magazine-Issue-4-the-failed-crusade.pdf, accessed: 03–04–2017.

Dabiq (2015b). 'Revenge for the Muslimat Persecuted by the Coptic Crusaders of Egypt.' *Dabiq* 7. At https://clarionproject.org/docs/islamic-state-dabiq-magazine-issue-7-from-hypocrisy-to-apostasy.pdf, accessed: 03–04–2017.

Denzinger, Bergoglio (2017). 'The Ecumenism of Blood is a Priceless Contribution toward Christian Unity.' At: https://en.denzingerbergoglio.com/ecumenism-of-blood-is-a-priceless-contribution-toward-christian-unity-2/, accessed: 03–04–2017.

Dolan, Card (2015). 'Civilization is Threatened by Evils of ISIS.' 17 February 2015. At: http://nypost.com/2015/02/17/cardinal-dolan-civilization-is-threatened-by-evils-of-isis/, accessed: 06–04–2017.

Durie, Marc (2015). 'A Message Signed with Blood to the Nation of the Cross.' *Lapidomedia. Centre for Religious Literacy in Journalism*. At: https://www.myislam.dk/articles/en/durie%20a-message-signed-with-blood-to-the-nation-of-the-cross.php, accessed: 13-10-2020.

Ensor, Josie (2015) 'Islamic State Leader Baghdadi Goads West in Rare Audio Statement.' 26 December 2015. At: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/12069924/Islamic-State-leader-Baghdadi-goads-West-in-rare-audio-statement.html, accessed: 11–05–2017.

EpsajeeTV (2011). 'Camelia Shehata Confirms her Christian Faith.' At: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pglZwQekZfE, accessed: 03–04–2017.

Essam, Fadl (2010). 'Priest's Wife to Receive Counseling with Church Doctor.' *Daily News Egypt* 29 July 2010. At: https://dailynewsegypt.com/search/Priest%27s+Wife+to+Receive+Counseling+with+Church+Doctor/, accessed 11–01–2018.

Glatz, Carol (2017). 'Unmask Violence Posing as Holy. Pope Tells Religious Leaders in Egypt.' *Catholic News Service* 28 April 2017. At: https://www.archpitt.org/unmask-violence-posing-as-holy-pope-tells-religious-leaders-in-egypt/, accessed: 13-10-2020.

Guirguis, Magdi (2012). 'The Copts and the Egyptian Revolution. Various Attitudes and Dreams'. *Social Research* 79, 2: 511–530.

Hegghammer, Thomas (2006). 'Global Jihadism after the Iraq War.' *Middle East Journal* 60, 1:11–32.

Henderson, Randall P. (2005). 'The Egyptian Coptic Christians. The Conflict between Identity and Equality.' *Islam and Christian—Muslim Relations* 16, 2: 155–166.

Hoft, Jim (2011). 'Coptic Bishop. Christians Are Experiencing Their Worst Time in Recent Centuries.' 31 October 2011. At: http://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2011/10/coptic-bishop-christians-are-experiencing-their-worst-time-in-recent-centuries/ accessed 06–04–2017, accessed: 05–05–2017.

Ibrahim, Ishak (2015). 'Egypt Responds to the Beheading of Copts by IS in Libya.' *The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy* 28 March 2015. At: https://timep.org/commentary/egypt-responds-to-the-beheading-of-copts-by-is-in-libya/, accessed 06–04–2017.

Ibrahim, Vivian (2011). *The Copts of Egypt. The Challenges of Modernisation and Identity*. London, New York: Tauris Academic Studies.

Kelly, Brian (2015). 'Their God Is My God'. Moslem Among the 21 Killed by ISIS Affirms Christ Before Death.' *Catholicism.org* 3 March 2015. At: http://catholicism.org/their-god-is-my-god-moslem-among-the-21-killed-by-isis-affirms-christ-before-death.html, accessed: 11–01–2018.

Libreria Editrice Vaticana (2015a). 'Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Moderator and Representatives of the Church of Scotland.' *Libreria Editrice Vaticana* 16 February 2015. At: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/february/documents/papa-francesco_20150216_moderatore-chiesa-scozia.html, accessed: 04–04–2017.

Libreria Editrice Vaticana (2015b). 'Pope Francis. Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, As Martyrs.' *Libreria Editrice Vaticana* 17 February 2015. At: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2015/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20150217_as-martyrs.html, accessed: 06–04–2017.

Libreria Editrice Vaticana (2015c). 'Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Kenya, Uganda and the Central African Republic (25–30 November 2015). Meeting with Evangelical Communities, Address of His Holiness Pope Francis.' *Libreria Editrice Vaticana* 29 November 2015. At: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco_20151129_repubblica-centrafricana-comunita-evangeliche.html, accessed: 11–05–2017.

Lopez, Catherine Jean (2015). 'What Martyrdom Looks Like'. *NR Interview* 25 February 2015. At: http://www.nationalreview.com/article/414400/what-martyrdom-looks-interview, accessed: 06–04–2017.

Mack, David (2015). 'U.S. and U.N. Condemn "Despicable" ISIS Beheading Of Egyptian Christians in Libya.' *BuzzFeedNews* 15 February 2015. At: https://www.buzzfeed.com/davidmack/isis-egypt-christians-beheading-video?utm_term=.uvJjm7R2p#.nwN9xewPD, accessed 04–04–2017.

Malsin, Jared (2015). 'Beheading of Coptic Christians in Libya Shows ISIS Branching Out.' *Time Online*. At: http://time.com/3710610/libya-coptic-christians-isis-egypt/, accessed: 03–04–2017.

Mosebach, Martin (2019). *The 21. A Journey into the Land of Coptic Martyrs*. Transl. Alta L. Price. Walden, NY: Plough Publishing House.

Novus Ordo Watch (2015). 'It's Heresy. Francis' Ecumenism of Blood is More Dangerous than ISIS.' *Novus Ordo Watch* 17 February 2015. At: https://novusordowatch.org/2015/02/francis-ecumenism-of-blood-heresy/, accessed: 20–11–2017.

Shelly Matthews (2010). *Perfect Martyr. The Stoning of Stephen and the Construction of Christian Identity*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

McCombs, Maxwell (2004). *Setting the Agenda. The Mass Media and Public Opinion*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Schnellman.org (2015). 'A Message Signed With Blood To The Nation Of The Cross.' At: http://schnellmann.org/message-signed-with-blood.html, accessed: 04–04–2017.

Saul, Josh and Bruce Golding (2015). 'Pope Francis Condemns ISIS' Slaying of Christian "Martyrs".' *The New York Post* 16 February 2015. At: http://nypost.com/2015/02/16/pope-francis-condemns-isis-slaying-of-21-christians/, accessed: 11–05–2017.

Spencer, Richard (2011). 'Egypt. The Two Women at the Centre of the Clashes'. *The Telegraph* 8 March 2011. At: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/egypt/8501280/Egypt-the-two-women-at-the-centre-of-the-clashes.html, accessed: 28 03 2017.

Stangor, Charles (2009). 'The Study of Stereotyping, Prejudice and Discrimination within Social Psychology. A Quick History of Theory and Research.' In Todd D. Nelson, ed. *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination*. New York: Psychology Press: 2–22.

Steele, Lindsay (2015). 'Chadian Among Coptic Christians Killed.' *Mission Network News* 21 April 2015. At: https://www.mnnonline.org/news/african-among-coptic-christians-killed/, accessed: 20–11–2017.

Tadroz, Mariz (2016). 'Are We All Beheaded Copts?' *50.50 Inclusive Democracy* 12 December 2016. At: https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/mariz-tadros/are-we-all-beheaded-copts-outrage-in-libya-0, accessed: 06–04–2017.

The Voice of the Martyrs (2015). 'Their God is My God.' 23 April 2015. At: https://www.vomcanada.com/ly-2015–04–23.htm, accessed: 20–11–2017.

Tolan, John Victor, Gilles Veinstein, Henry Laurens (2013). *Europe and the Islamic World*. trans. Jane Marie Todd. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Tornielli, Andrea (2013). 'Never be Afraid of Tenderness.' *Vatican Insider* 16 December 2013. At: http://www.lastampa.it/2013/12/16/vaticaninsider/eng/the-vatican/never-be-afraid-of-tenderness-3sMZy950JWmaNvfq4m1sTN/pagina.html, accessed 06–04–2017.

Vatican Insider (2015). 'ISIS. "The Copts were Killed Simply for being Christian".' *Vatican Insider* 16 February 2015. At: http://www.lastampa.it/2015/02/16/vaticaninsider/eng/the-vatican/isis-the-copts-were-killed-simply-for-being-christian-ZDRieLEnVGiHzTo68L7LKK/pagina.html, accessed: 11–05–2017.

Vatican Radio (2015). 'Coptic Church Recognizes Martyrdom of 21 Coptic Christians.' 21 February 2015. At: http://www.news.va/en/news/coptic-church-recognizes-martyrdom-of-21-coptic-ch, accessed: 06–04–2017.

Vatican Radio (2016). 'Pope: Persecuted Christians are United by "Blood" Ecumenism.' *Vatican Radio* 12 October 2016. At: http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/10/12/pope__persecuted_christians_are_united_by_%E2%80%9Cblood%E2%80%9D_ecumenism/1264596, accessed: 06–04–2017.

Wood, Graeme (2017). *The Way of Strangers. Encounters with the Islamic State*. London: Allen Lane.

World Watch Monitor (2017). 'Relatives of Coptic 'Martyrs' Join Summit on Persecuted Christians in US Capital.' *World Watch Monitor* 11 May 2017. At: https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2017/05/world-summit-in-defence-of-persecuted-christians/, accessed: 20–11–2017.

Zaimov, Stoyan (2017). 'Christians Mark Anniversary of 21 Beheaded Copts in ISIS' Message to the Nation of the Cross.' *The Christian Post* 16 February 2017, at: http://www.copticsolidarity.org/2017/02/16/christians-mark-anniversary-of-21-beheaded-copts-in-isis-message-to-nation-of-the-cross/, accessed: 30–03–2017.

Zeidan, David (1999). 'The Copts. Equal, Protected or Persecuted? The Impact of Islamization on Muslim and Christian relations in modern Egypt.' *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 10, 1: 53–67.

CHAPTER 10

Multiple Religious Belonging and Identity in Contemporary Nigeria: Methodological Reflections for World Christianity

Corey L. Williams

1 Introduction

At the beginning of the twentieth century, almost 75 percent of Nigeria's population primarily identified with African Indigenous Religions (AIR).[1] According to the statistics presented by Todd Johnson and Brian Grim in the World Religion Database, Islam garnered around 25 percent of the population, while Christianity accounted for only 1 percent (Johnson and Grim 2019). In the last century, Nigeria has become far more multireligious, yet the existent literature is largely silent in terms of detailed and comprehensive accounts of contemporary interreligious encounters.[2] While research on religious life in Nigeria is teeming with broad historical accounts, or studies of politics, violence, and corruption, in many cases, little is known about the intricacies of living, identifying, and belonging within contemporary multireligious contexts, and to what extent religious groups, individuals, and their traditions intersect and are

1 While there are numerous alternatives for referring to the indigenous religions of Africa, I opt to use the term 'African Indigenous Religions', which I consider to have four primary benefits: (1) it insists parity with other religions by being a proper noun; (2) it is plural which encourages a heterogeneous understanding; (3) it is generally considered innocuous, whereas terms such as 'African Traditional Religion' have merely shifted crude tropes like paganism, primitivism, and primal to the term 'traditional'; and (4) it highlights that these religions are indigenous to Africa—as in these are religions that originated in Africa. While Christianity and Islam have certainly 'indigenized' in Africa, these religions did not originate on the African continent. It is recognized that these benefits do not eliminate all of the problems associated with the term. For more on this discussion, see Cox (2016: 9–74).

2 'Interreligious encounter' is used here as a broad term to encapsulate the diverse ways that religious traditions, individuals, and groups meet or confront each other. As Soares has noted, "The roots of the English word 'encounter' can be traced to the Latin *contra*, meaning 'against', and to the Old French *encontrer*, which refers to the meeting of rivals. In current usage, 'encounter' can mean 'an unexpected or casual meeting' or 'a confrontation or difficult struggle'" (2006: 3).

© COREY L. WILLIAMS, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004444867_012
This is an open access chapter distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

influenced by each other. As Benjamin F. Soares has noted on a broader scale in the seminal volume, *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa*:

> … their interactions in Africa are still not properly understood … interactions between Muslims and Christians, in Africa or elsewhere, cannot be understood as simply existing at a point on a one-dimensional continuum that runs from coexistence to conflict. There is a vast array of possibilities between the idealized notion of the peaceful coexistence of Muslims and Christians and Bernard Lewis's notion of the "clash of civilizations" that Samuel Huntington has popularized and made to seem inevitable.
>
> Soares 2006: 2

A later account by Soares states it is only recently that "among historians, social scientists and scholars of religion, there has been increased recognition of the importance of studying Islam and Christianity in Africa not separately but together, as lived religions in dynamic interaction over time" (2016: 673). The now completed European Research Council (ERC) project led by Insa Nolte at the University of Birmingham, titled 'Knowing Each Other: Everyday Religious Encounters, Social Identities and Tolerance in Southwest Nigeria', noticed a similar discrepancy. As noted on the project website:

> Since the end of the Cold War, and especially since September 2001, most research exploring religious difference, and especially Muslim-Christian relations, has focused on politics and the public sphere. At the same time, the majority of detailed work on the role of religion for everyday life focuses on the practices and transformations within Muslim or Christian societies. As a result, we know very little about the practices that structure the fine grain of everyday life in religiously mixed societies.
>
> Knowing Each Other Project

In the case of Nigeria, this "fine grain" and "vast array of possibilities" between Christians, Muslims, and practitioners of AIR has hardly been explored. As the ERC project correctly points out, religious communities are often approached discretely and treated by academic specialists in isolation from one another. Marloes Janson and Birgit Meyer add to this by noting: "In research on religion in Africa, the study of both Christianity and Islam is thriving. Alas, these fields exist more or less independently from each other" (Janson and

Meyer 2016: 615).[3] Even less common are studies that research the encounter of Christianity, Islam, *and* AIR simultaneously.[4] While fields based on the study of single traditions can bring attention to polycentrism, pluriformity, and transnational connections within individual traditions, this independent approach lacks a dynamic understanding of what Janson and Meyer term a "'religious field' in which several religious groups coexist in ever shifting dynamics of similarity and difference" (Janson and Meyer 2016). Within studies of interreligious encounter in Nigeria, approaching the 'religious field' in this way is critical because the way lived religious experience cuts across multiple religious traditions. Thus, in order to more fully understand everyday lived religion, the analytical frame needs to be expanded to include multiple religions.

This chapter focuses on interreligious encounter in contemporary Nigeria with this notion of religious field at the forefront. In relation to the broader aim of the volume, this encounter is explored in the hopes of contributing specifically to the study of World Christianity, although the contribution is also applicable to Anthropology, African Studies, and Religious Studies. The bulk of the chapter is split into two sections. The first section utilizes two case examples from the Yorùbá region of Nigeria. Both case examples are based on participant observation and in-depth, longitudinal interviews that explore how two individuals, Ṣadé and Agbo, negotiate multiple religious belongings and identities within the multireligious milieu of contemporary Nigeria. The final section of the chapter shifts the discussion to case reflections, paying close attention to the methodological lessons related to World Christianity that can be gleaned from these cases.

3 There are undoubtedly exceptions to this general observation: Boer (2003–2009); Frederiks (2010); Goodwin (2009); Janson and Akinleye (2015); Larkin and Meyer (2006); Mustapha and Ehrhardt (2018); Nwanaju (2008); Obadare (2016); Ojo (2007); Ojo and Lateju (2010); Rasmussen (1993; 2007); Sanneh (1996); Sarbah (2016: 366–385); Soares (2006); Sodiq (2009); and Vinson (2020). There are also the twin studies of Clarke (1982) and Clarke (1986). Clarke's analytical frame largely keeps Christianity and Islam separate, but it does represent an impressive attempt by a scholar engaging multiple traditions.

4 Again, there are exceptions to this general observation with anthropological and historical studies such as Peel (2000; 2016); Nolte, Ogen, and Jones (2017) and Vaughan (2016). Within ecumenical studies and interreligious dialogue, examples include Conteh (2009) and Sarbah (2010).

2 Setting the Scene: Ogbómòsó, Yorùbáland

Betraying the common stereotype that Muslims in Nigeria live in the north and Christians live in the south, Yorùbáland—the cultural region of the Yorùbá people—is a microcosm of the country's multireligious composition.[5] Situated in the southwest of Nigeria, Christianity, Islam, and AIR all have historic footholds among the Yorùbá. This is particularly the case for the city of Ogbómòsó, the location where I conducted the fieldwork for this chapter. Just to the southeast of Ogbómòsó sits the town of Ifè, the cradle of Yorùbá civilization and spiritual centre of Yorùbá AIR. To the west is the country of Benin, one of the very few countries in the world that continues to primarily identify with AIR; an influence that spills over the border into nearby places like Ogbómòsó. Just a short way up the road to the northeast sits the city of Ilorin, the former edge of the Sokoto Caliphate, a once expansive and powerful Islamic empire. While the power of the Caliphate drastically waned with British colonization in the twentieth century, Islam became thoroughly integrated in its territories. Finally, in the south, all the way from the coast to Ogbómòsó's doorstep, the impact of foreign and indigenous mission efforts is apparent, with some of the largest and most influential Christian groups in Africa dotting the landscape. Many refer to this area as the future Jerusalem and there are modern day prophecies about this area being the new cradle of Christendom. Critically, this triple religious heritage is not only historic. Christianity, Islam, and AIR all continue to play prominent roles in contemporary Ogbómòsó, making it an optimal context to research interreligious encounters.

3 Setting the Scene: Egúngún

As in other regions of the world, there are certain spaces and times in contemporary Yorùbáland where the multiplicity and complexity of religious belongings and identifies are impossible to avoid. These include pilgrimage sites, healing shrines, special events (e.g. revivals, crusades), and life-cycle rituals (e.g. wakes, funerals, weddings). It is not uncommon to come across those who identify as Muslims at Pentecostal revivals, Christians at Muslim funerals, and AIR at Catholic shrines. The same boundary crossing is also common during religious festivals and holidays, which are an important and regular part of community life in Yorùbáland. From Easter to Christmas, *Eid al-Fitr* to *Eid-al-Adha*,

5 Despite the overall multireligious composition of Nigeria, there are certainly sub-regions where interreligious encounters are less common due to the dominant influence of one tradition.

and the indigenous festivals of *Ole*, *Ilus*, and *Oro*, such events offer participants opportunities to solidify social and religious bonds, while also commemorating, celebrating, and reenacting important rituals and historic moments.

One of the most popular and well-attended festivals in the country is known as Egúngún. The term, Egúngún, is a plural Yorùbá word meaning 'ancestral spirits masquerading' (Falola and Genova 2009: 112–113). While the content and purpose of each festival varies and is dependent on evolving local distinctions, a central unifying theme and practice are the ritual Egúngún masquerade performances dedicated to ancestor veneration.[6] As Rosalind I.J. Hackett comments in *Art and Religion in Africa*, "the most dramatic representation of Yorùbá beliefs concerning the afterlife is found in the form of Egúngún masqueraders. Egúngún masks are considered to be representations of ancestral spirits" (1998: 181). At the same time, Egúngún festivals are also corporate events that provide a political platform, entertainment, and communal bonding opportunities, with varying degrees of religious significance for each individual. Indeed, much has been written on the complex historical-political (Drewal 1992; Kerr 1995; Bascom 1993; Olajubu and Ojo 1977: 253–75; Adedeji 1972: 254–276; Na'Allah 1996: 59–68; Johnson 2010: 29ff; Hart 1993: 136–146; Bentor 1994: 323–338), artistic (Bell 2010: 19ff; Adedeji 1969: 60–63; Houlberg 1978: 20–27; Schiltz 1978: 48–55; Pemberton III 1978: 40–47; Wolff 1982: 66–70; Cordwell 1983: 56–59; Rea 2008: 10–25), and touristic components of Egúngún (Oxford Business Group 2010: 243ff; Makinde 2011).

While Egúngún's origins are linked to AIR, the contemporary festivals are known for their multireligious participation. In fact, a majority of participants are those who identify on surveys as either Christian or Muslim. Intrigued by this participation and predicting that I would be able to explore cases in which individuals had multiple religious belongings and identities, I started attending Egúngún festivals in different parts of Nigeria. This led me to cities like Ogbómòsó, where I attended the annual festival from 2010–2013 and conducted participant observation and in-depth, longitudinal interviews with twelve interlocutors who claimed to have negotiated belonging and/or identifying with multiple religious traditions. In the following section, I highlight two of those cases (Ṣadé and Agbo).[7]

6 Egúngún typically takes place as an annual festival, but it can also occur at funerals throughout the year.

7 While all twelve cases would have been suitable, I include only these two due to space constraints. The formal interviews with Ṣadé were conducted in 2011 (21 September; 14 November), 2012 (10 July), and 2013 (30 January). The formal interviews with Agbo were conducted in 2011 (23 August; 8 December), 2012 (12 July), and 2013 (15 February).

4 Case One: Ṣadé

Ṣadé is a quiet mother of three in her early thirties whom I met during the 2011 Ogbómòsó Egúngún festival. She was born in Ogbómòsó and has lived there her entire life. At the time, I lived nearby Ṣadé and her family and we all ended up spending a lot of time together socializing and attending religious events. According to Ṣadé, her religious upbringing in Ogbómòsó was similar to many other families in the area:

> We were a very religious family. We could be at our [Baptist] church three or more times in a week … in Nigeria we like to say that we are the most religious in the world. I think this may be true. We have churches on every street you see. Everyone is religious that you meet … we were also religious in the home. My father would lead us in [Bible] study and we could sing songs in the night. Even in the morning we had to say prayers together, my brother and sisters … we could not leave until we said our prayers … all families would go to church … there were many Muslims and some Traditional[ists] too. Everyone had religion and practiced freely.

Beyond the Baptist church they attended, her family was also involved in activities related to AIR. While many in their family and neighborhood were aware, they kept this secret from most in their Baptist church. Ṣadé claimed this was because their pastor and a majority of the people who attended the church looked down upon most participation in AIR. It was viewed with suspicion and was believed to be antithetical to Christianity. For Ṣadé, instead of being burdensome or confusing, she enjoyed the family secret and was fond of going to church and AIR sites and events:

> My parents would tell us [siblings] to fib to our friends about our whereabouts. We would say we'd gone away to see some friends or family, but we were really visiting some shrine, you see? … I liked this. We would go to interesting places and meet interesting people. It felt like we were doing something wrong, okay, not in a bad way, just breaking some rule … the Traditional ceremonies were not fun like church, okay, not like the music and dancing … but the [indigenous] festivals I liked very much. We could run about and eat sweeties and have fizzy drinks … it was even better than church.

Festivals like the Egúngún were important in Ṣadé's family. While the pastor and members of the church were generally opposed to involvement in AIR,

attending Egúngún was allowed because most church members viewed it as a community event. Thus, her family and many other members in the church attended openly. However, Ṣadé noted that other Baptist pastors and churches disagreed and that some even threatened to revoke membership if they attended Egúngún:

> This has become a major problem for the Baptists. You know many Baptist pastors they tell their members that if they go to Egúngún, uh huh, they can no longer be a member at their church. Some pastors go to Egúngún to try to catch their members in the act … we did not have this, so many people [from our Baptist church] would go to Egúngún. This was no problem, not like we have today.

When Ṣadé was around fifteen years of age, she recalls experiencing a dilemma regarding her religiosity. She questioned whether or not it made sense to consider herself Baptist and participate in AIR. This dilemma was particularly brought about by a sermon at her church:

> I can still remember this sermon, it was from the book of, eh, Revelation … now, the pastor said you must be either in or out of the church. There is no in between. He said God does not allow the lukewarm to enter the kingdom of God … I started to think, huh, is this me? Am I not fully one or the other … my parents calmed me down after. They said slow down now, this is not you … okay, I said, and I went on and believed again that I was okay.

As Ṣadé turned eighteen a few years later, she experienced a major transition in her religious life. A man named Kehinde courted her for marriage. Kehinde was a Muslim and when they were married, Ṣadé was no longer able to go to church. While she was neither required to convert to Islam, nor give up her Christian identity, Kehinde made it clear that any and all Christian practices were to be conducted within the confines of their home. As Ṣadé recalled:

> My husband is a gentle and kind man. He did not force me to get rid of my faith when we were married. Many women must give up their faith when married, this was not me … my faith in Jesus was too strong and I married a kind man, this was good … I was taught to pray as a Muslim, but remained as a Christian, you see? I have always been Christian, also in the difficult times. I cannot give up my faith.

While Ṣadé claims to have never given up her Christian identity, upon being married her public belonging to Christianity ceased. She was encouraged by her husband to start attending *Jumu'ah*. Despite never being forced to attend, this encouragement from Kehinde combined with social pressure from his family made her feel like she did not have a choice. She attended sometimes, but when she prayed she claims she would "think only about Jesus". As Ṣadé described:

> It was not so difficult. The mosque became my new church. I could go and make new friends. Everyone was so friendly to me. They were excited that I had become Muslim … I did not tell them the truth. I would pray and think only about Jesus. This was not a big sin in Islam, to think about Jesus, okay, I tell you I would pray to Jesus as my savior, as God … Muslims do not agree with this.

Over a period of several years, Ṣadé claimed she "became also a Muslim". According to her, this meant that she kept her Christian identity, while also identifying as Muslim. She was careful not to describe this as a conversion. As she understands it, a conversion would mean repenting and leaving behind Christianity. In Ṣadé's own words:

> I would not say I converted to Islam. Eh, I did not leave Christianity; I did not have to repent of anything. I became also a Muslim. That's it. Kehinde, my husband, also knew this. This was no secret to him … the others I did not tell … when I say the *shahādah*, you know this is our faith confession, uh huh, okay I still believe in Jesus as God. I can pray to Jesus as we say, as *Allah*, this is just God. This is no problem for me.

When I asked Ṣadé about Jesus' roles in the Bible versus the Qur'an, she was quick to respond:

> No contradiction. No problem … these are holy texts and they point us to God, yes? I do not argue with what is said. Sometimes information is not shared between them, okay, like two different stories. So Jesus in the Qur'an looks maybe conflicting in a Bible … this is not understood by many people, so they think there is so many problems. These violences between, eh, Muslims and Christians, this is nonsense. We have no reason to fight, to kill each other.

As for Ṣadé's participation in AIR, this was allowed to continue. Her husband, Kehinde, came from a family who were involved occasionally in AIR activities.

They would attend some festival events and consult with diviners intermittently. Thus, while her public Christian identity was largely suppressed, Ṣadé was able to continue practicing at AIR sites without hindrance. According to Ṣadé, the difference is that AIR do not pose a threat to Islam:

> I can be a Traditionalist and a Muslim, or a Christian. This is no problem in Yorùbáland … we are able to cope with our Yorùbá traditions and these other religions … the Yorùbá religion, people see this as shrinking, it's getting smaller … though many people still are Traditionalists, yes, okay, they are, they do so as Muslims and Christians. This is the problem. Christianity can be seen as a threat to Islam. Christians will try to convert Muslims … Traditionalists do not have this.

After the Egúngún festival in August 2012, Ṣadé and I met together to discuss her current religious life. In particular, I was curious to learn how she identified and what groups she considered herself to currently belong to. She responded as follows:

> Well, you know my story … I am part of everything here in Ogbómòsó. I see myself being a follower of God more than anything. God can come in many different ways and this is why we have these, all of these religions … I was taught by my parents to see God in many different ways. There is no restriction to God, okay, this is how it is. Us, we Yorùbá have known this, we have followed all of these different gods … in every community, a different god … I do not believe I am something more than another, my Christian faith is not bigger than being Muslim for me and I am Yorùbá and still keep to my [indigenous] Yorùbá traditions … I cannot go to church, but, you know, I am still a Christian. It is in my heart. I still read the Bible, you see … this is not unusual in Ogbómòsó. We from Ogbómòsó can be part of many religions all at once. This is no problem.

5 Case Two: Agbo

Agbo is an outgoing Yorùbá man and street trader in his mid-thirties whom I met during the 2011 Egúngún festival in Ogbómòsó. He was born in Ogbómòsó, but left to study in Lagos when he was nineteen years of age. His connection to his family brought him home in his late twenties and he has been living in Ogbómòsó ever since. After meeting Agbo in 2011, we have kept in contact by email and met again several times throughout the years since. As Agbo

describes it, his religious upbringing was complicated, yet at the same time it was not an uncommon upbringing for the Ogbómòsó area:

> My father was Muslim. My mother, she was a born again Catholic and took her faith very seriously. So did my father, of course … now, my grandparents, they were like many during their time, steadfast in their African traditions to their death when I was fourteen years old. I grew up not only around, but even within these different religions. It was very complicated, but at the same time, very common.

Agbo, like many throughout Yorùbáland, grew up in a multireligious family. He describes this as being quite normal and routine. For Abgo this included not only attending events, but also openly participating:

> You know, I would go with my father to mosque on Friday's. I would say the prayers in the Muslim way, praying to *Allah* and reading the Qur'an. My family would also fast during Ramadan and celebrate *Eid al-Fitr*. Of course, even today when you have Muslim friends, even if you are not yourself a Muslim, you may fast and certainly celebrate all together when the fast is broken. It becomes in many ways a community celebration like Christmas or Easter … I never missed a church service with my mother. I would get dressed up in my suit and attended Sunday school even. I sang the songs and read the Bible as I was told. When I was twelve I was baptized and became 'born-again' like my mother. My father came to the service and no one asked any questions about his presence. He was welcome there and was invited by the pastor to say a few words. I will always remember that he was thankful for the church. He said *adupé*, *adupé*, which you know means, 'we thank God', in Yorùbá. He was thanking God as I was baptized as a Christian. Some of my grandparents were also there that day. They were joyous and happy for me. Even later that year I remember going to the Egúngún as a family. There was no tension. After I was baptized I continued to practice as a Muslim as well.

As Agbo grew older, however, and left Ogbómòsó for university in Lagos, he started to have serious questions about his religious background. At university he encountered people who seriously challenged his religious participation for the first time. He was chastised and called a heretic by other Muslims and Christians for belonging to and identifying with multiple religions. As Agbo recalls:

> My family never really talked about these traditions being contradictory when I was growing up. They were seen to be all part of the same, uh, tradition. As if the God of the Bible was the same God as *Olòrún* and the same as *Allah*. But at university this all changed. I was challenged for my views and I did not know how to respond.

Agbo went through a period of time when he stopped attending any religious events. He still identified as being religious, but he was confused and frustrated, both at his parents and those who challenged his religiosity. He mostly kept quiet about his struggles until he was invited and started attending a university student group:

> A friend of mine invited me, you see, to this African consciousness group. A pan-African society. I don't want to say the name. They were committed to reclaiming African heritage. We would read books and poetry. We had famous African writers come and give speeches and implore us to stand up as Africans … for me this ignited a desire and I started visiting a traditional priest when I was back in Ogbómòsó visiting. I grew up around him and he knew my parents very well. He was a family friend. I shared with him my troubles and he was very wise in responding … he spoke about how the Yorùbá should be open to all traditions, that it was intrinsic to the Yorùbá to be open and accommodating toward everyone. He was aware of my religious past and assured me that my story was truly good and showed how the Yorùbá are able to cut down barriers and use different traditions for good, for easing tensions and showing how we are all reaching out to God, but just in different ways.

According to Agbo, this period of seeking counsel lasted for about one year. He met with an AIR priest on five or six occasions. He also continued to attend events at the African consciousness group, even after he graduated from university. In his mid-twenties, Agbo once again began attending religious events and services. During this time, he viewed himself as a religious explorer, rather than having any concrete or singular religious belonging or identity:

> I was floating between groups and traditions. My friends from university were a diverse lot and came from so many different backgrounds. I explored all of them and greatly enjoyed the experiences. As I explored, I found God in all of them. As the priest had told me, we are all reaching out to God and I found God reaching out to us in these different religions.

When Agbo heard that his father was becoming ill, he left a good paying job in Lagos and moved back to Ogbómòsó. Upon returning, he quickly returned to a similar religious routine he had growing up:

> You know when I came back to Ogbómòsó it was a joyous time. A true blessing to be with my family and with the people of Ogbómòsó … When my father was well enough, we would go to mosque together and read the Qur'an together. My mother and myself went to church together and events like the Egúngún were central to our community life … I have my own family today and I raise my children to respect all faiths, all religions. They can choose which path to take.

When I asked about which religious traditions and groups he now belongs to and identifies with, Agbo had this to say:

> I refer to myself as a born again African. This is a funny term, no? Well, what I mean by it is this: I am African and as a Yorùbá person there is no separating religion. To be African and Yorùbá is to be religious. Now, I belong to my community and believe that God is in all of our traditions. So yes, I belong to a church and a mosque and I see a traditional priest … I would say usually I am a Muslim in public because my father was a Muslim, but because of our history, to be Yorùbá is to be open to God in his fullness … I now realize that my upbringing was not a curse, no, no, but an opportunity to experience the fullness of God.

I was fortunate enough to spend time with Agbo attending various religious events in 2011 and 2012. We met at the 2011 Ogbómòsó Egúngún Festival and enjoyed several days together. According to Agbo, Egúngún attendance is on the rise despite efforts to curb participation:

> You know there are some in Ogbómòsó who want to stop these traditions. They are like those I met in Lagos who challenged my background. They say, "You cannot participate in Egúngún, or you are a bad Christian, a bad Muslim." This is not uncommon, but the younger generation is not listening. In fact, the younger generation, the youths, they see right through this. The Egúngún speaks to our heritage, our ancestors … we commemorate and honor our ancestors, you see. The missionaries and Arabs tried to dispel these practices, but they persist and are growing as we wake

> up and are reclaiming our history and culture. Every year there are more people attending … many attend without the blessing of their pastor. They come because they want to connect with their community. So you see Muslims, Christians, all coming together in this festival to celebrate life and our common bonds.

Agbo and I also went together to the Ogbómòsó Central Mosque for *Jumu'ah*. I watched as Agbo and many others prayed together. Afterward we shared a meal with several of his friends. We talked openly about Agbo's multiple religious belongings and identities. Unexpectedly, each of them also shared their own story. While they belong to a mosque and identify as Muslim, their religious life is dynamic and has included instances of multiple belongings and identities. For instance, they have attended Pentecostal revivals in the past and often see a local AIR priest for medicinal and divination purposes. Agbo's friend, Mahmud, shared with us that he continues to participate across multiple religions:

> I was raised as a Muslim and will always be a Muslim. But to be Muslim does not mean that I am blind to claiming *Allah* in my own traditions. As a Yorùbá, my ancestors are part of who I am. So yes, I go to Egúngún and I celebrate. Islam does not restrict my celebration, my family rights … we are fond in Ogbómòsó of saying that *Allah* was among us even before we had the Qur'an.

I also had the privilege of attending a Catholic church where Agbo attends. He informed me that the priest was aware of his religious life and history. We were able to meet with the priest after the service. While he preferred to keep his comments anonymous, he allowed me to record our conversation. It was fascinating as the priest shared his own perspective on religion in Ogbómòsó:

> Ogbómòsó, like much of Yorùbáland, is very religious. We have Christians, Catholics like in this church, and Muslims. We also have our Yorùbá traditions. These are not as prominent as they once were, okay, yet they are ingrained in every Yorùbá person. I use our traditions to explain the Catholic faith, you see? People relate to these traditions because they know them, they trust them. In Yorùbáland, we say that to be accommodating is to be godly. This is what we believe. So we are accommodating to these religions.

He also shared his insight into how the Egúngún festival relates to Catholicism:

> Ah, yes, this is very important. The Egúngún honors our ancestors. These ancestors are specific to the Yorùbá, okay, even to Ogbómòsó. This is based on kinship, on lineage, you understand? So we celebrate each year and receive blessings and guidance from our ancestors … you know, in Catholicism, we have the veneration of the saints. This is really a form of spiritual ancestor celebration as we look to the past and recognize those who have gone before us in death. We celebrate their lives each year on different days and pray to them, asking for guidance, for blessing … I have no problem with Yorùbá festivals. For instance, Egúngún is a celebration of our African heritage and kinship. To be Catholic one must not think that this is somehow off limits. Egúngún is part of our history and we should be sure to make it part of our future. My religion has nothing to say of my participating in my community festival.

Attending these events and meeting Agbo's friends was an education in itself. While Agbo has experienced conflict related to his religious belonging and identity occasionally, he claims this is rare in Ogbómòsó. He believes that even though there are religious leaders who preach against having multiple religious belongings and identities, most in Ogbómòsó are not only respectful toward this religious lifestyle, but also engage in a similar lifestyle on some level. As Agbo remarked on our final meeting together: "My story may not be universal, but it is everywhere to be found here in Ogbómòsó. Go down one street and you will find a dozen of the same story."

6 Methodological Reflections for World Christianity

This final section further unpacks the cases of Ṣadé and Agbo. While there are many directions this could take, the primary aim here is to reflect on how the religious field of Ogbómòsó offers methodological lessons for scholars of World Christianity.

6.1 *Religious Belonging and Identity*

First, while the study of religious belonging *or* religious identity is common in World Christianity scholarship, the case study this chapter draws from, utilizes both concepts to interrogate lived religious experience. As the cases of Ṣadé and Agbo make clear, while religious belonging and identity often go hand-in hand, this is not always the case. Similar to Janson and Meyer's notion

of 'religious field' for expanding the analytical frame, there is added value in employing both religious belonging and identity in a single study in order to capture lived religion more holistically. Additionally, fieldwork in Nigeria has expanded and clarified my understanding of these terms. In the case of religious belonging, it is helpful to broaden the conception to the quality of being a religious member or participant. This broadening allows for a wider range of belonging, which at times is official and formalized, while at other times more serendipitous, at times more public, while at other times mainly private. This more inclusive understanding provides two primary benefits. First, some religious traditions are more institutionally bound and public than others. For instance, participation in AIR is often private and without institutional (i.e. official) acceptance. Second, with a more institutional understanding of belonging, it is often those who exist on the margins of communities or privately belong who often end up being excluded from consideration. Thus, a person that is privately and/or unofficially a member or participant of a group deserves equal consideration alongside those who are publicly and/or officially members. Indeed, the former experience provides an important contrast to the latter experience. This understanding of belonging offers a challenge to scholars of World Christianity, especially in regards to issues of inclusion/exclusion in research projects; namely, who belongs and/or who does not belong in World Christianity scholarship and why?

Relatedly, the definition and use of religious identity as a concept is vigorously contested. While identity can provide a useful analytical framework to categorize religiosity, there are undoubtedly limitations. The work of Stuart Hall and Rogers Brubaker is particularly helpful for both understanding the limitations and providing a useful framework from which the concept remains useful (Hall 2000a: 595–634; Hall 2000b: 15–30; Hall 1996; Brubaker 2006). In terms of defining identity, Mike Morris provides a helpful starting point for how the concept is utilized in this chapter: "the combination of characteristics that collectively demarcate an individual or group, both to themselves and others" (Morris 2012: 127). Two points are worth noting. First, individuals and groups can be considered in discussions of identity. While there are distinctions to be made between individuals and groups, each is influenced by the other and is unable to be isolated completely. Therefore, identity is interactively defined and constructed by both the individual and the other. While this chapter highlights how two individuals identify, the larger case study also interrogates how others identify these individuals, which provides a useful comparison. Second, regarding the "combination of characteristics", the "combination" is inherently flexible, which results in the individual or group lacking a stable, coherent 'self'. As Stuart Hall remarks regarding the nature of this flexibility:

> This produces the post-modern subject, conceptualized as having no fixed, essential, or permanent identity … the subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent "self." Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about … The fully unified, completed, secure, and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with—at least temporarily.
>
> Hall 2000a: 598

Hall and Brubaker have pointed out how extreme conceptions of identity—what Brubaker terms as "hard" and "soft" meanings—have produced ambiguity surrounding the term (Hall 1996: 1–17; Brubaker 2006: 28–63). As Brubaker states: "Understood in a strong sense—as implying a singular, abiding, foundational sameness—'identity' tends to mean too much; understood in a weak sense—as multiple, fluid, fragmented, negotiated, and so on—it tends to mean too little." He suggests that when used in this latter sense, the term "loses its analytical purchase" (Brubaker 1996: 28).[8] The fieldwork this chapter is based upon finds some semblance of balance by conducting research longitudinally. While the result is still snapshots of how interlocutors identify, conducting research over longer periods of time assists in regulating these "hard" and "soft" indications of identity. As well, collecting data on religious belongings, which includes the actions of interlocutors also provides a critical comparison.

8 In Brubaker's effort to go 'beyond identity', it is perhaps useful to mention that he argues scholars should employ the term 'identification' instead. He states: "As a processual, active term, derived from a verb, 'identification' lacks the reifying connotations of 'identity.' It invites us to specify the agents that do the identifying. And it does not presuppose that such identifying (even by powerful agents, such as the state) will necessarily result in the internal sameness, the distinctiveness, the bounded groupness that political entrepreneurs may seek to achieve. Identification—of oneself and of others—is intrinsic to social life; 'identity' in the strong sense is not" (Brubaker 1996: 41). While I largely agree with Brubaker's assessment, I disagree that 'identity' lacks a conceptual framework that can include, as he puts it, "processual" research and an active understanding that lacks the reifying notions that a strong sense of identity implies. Thus, relating this to Morris's definition, my conception of identity connects the 'combination of characteristics' not just to the result (i.e. identity), but also the process (i.e. identification).

6.2 *Everyday Lived Religion*

Next, an approach that only allows for the possibility of classifying people in single, discrete categories of religion leads to naïve and restrictive understandings of everyday lived religion. Such an approach easily masks the varied, dynamic, and complex belongings, practices, and identities of people, many of who in contexts such as Yorùbáland live across and within multiple religious traditions. For World Christianity scholarship, rather than assuming that Christians are *only* Christians, it must be taken into account that practitioners can and do live across the categorical boundaries of religions and are not necessarily limited to singular religious affiliations. As Catherine Cornille has noted on a broader scale:

> In a world of seemingly unlimited choice in matters of religious identity and affiliation, the idea of belonging exclusively to one religious tradition or of drawing from only one set of spiritual, symbolic, or ritual resources is no longer self-evident … A heightened and widespread awareness of religious pluralism has presently left the religious person with the choice of not only *which* religion, but also of *how many* religions she or he might belong to (2010: 1).

In the case of Ogbómòsó, many of my interlocutors claim that only drawing from "one set of spiritual, symbolic, or ritual resources" has never been self-evident. Peel has described this phenomenon in Yorùbáland as "the religiously-unmarked cultural repertoire of the Yoruba" (Peel 2011: 13). While I would challenge the notion of the cultural repertoire being *completely* "religiously-unmarked", Peel's understanding largely corresponds to the lived religiosity I encountered in Ogbómòsó in which religious belongings and identities are not always singular, nor static. Both Ṣadé and Agbo have negotiated belonging to, identifying with, and drawing from multiple religious traditions throughout their lifetimes. They have also each had liminal phases of transition and even now their status is fluid. Yet, when I asked Ṣadé and Agbo in early 2013 about how they would identify religiously on a survey, Ṣadé responded with "Christian" and Agbo with "Muslim". This is despite their open accounts during interviews of multiple religious belongings and identities. It is this very nuance that typically escapes the range of census and survey data. Depending on the types of questions posed, even practitioners themselves can give singular responses and fail to disclose the full range of their religious life. Thus, some people fall into the trap of essentialized enquiries. This is certainly the case with the available census (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1963: 37) and survey

data (Pew Forum 2009: 19; Pew Forum 2011: 11; The World Factbook 2020; World Religion Database 2020) that uses essentialized categories to produce a clear-cut portrait of religious affiliation in Nigeria. All of the survey data, for instance, indicates that Nigerians now largely identify with either Christianity or Islam when given the choice to indicate their religious affiliation. However, survey responses are only one method for interrogating the religious field. They provide only one aspect of how respondents affiliate, often without any ability to follow-up with qualitative queries.

Additionally, it is clear that despite having multiple religious belongings and/or identities, people choose to express these differently depending on the setting, or even the instrument of data collection. This is how distinct features of religiosity end up being expressed more prominently than others. For Ṣadé and Agbo, their identification is also revealed to be dependent on the context of their environment and with whom they are speaking. As Agbo quipped in an interview: "one religion for this place, another religion that [place]." Thus, it is clear that the motivations for indicating one's religious belonging and/or identity can be highly personal and context dependent. The reasons can also be pragmatic, as indicated by Ṣadé's limited ability to express her Christian belonging publicly after she was married. This pragmatic feature is comparable with the work of Danmolé (2008) and Peel (2000). This highlights the necessity not to just be aware of the phenomenon, but there is also a need for more multi-method, multi-site, longitudinal studies that are able to take such fluidity and context into account. For studies in World Christianity, this means expanding the horizon of religious life. In fieldwork studies, for instance, what happens in the town hall, forest festival, university club, etc., can be equally as important to research as the Sunday service or Wednesday night Bible study. Finding diverse angles, methods, and points in time to interrogate religious life is integral for a more holistic understanding. As a practical example from my research on transnational African immigrant networks in Los Angeles, I intentionally decided to start my fieldwork by gaining access to Black Lives Matter groups and attending African cultural festivals. While many of the people I met ended up inviting me to their churches, my initial point of entry assisted in expanding my research field beyond the confines of church life.

6.3 *Entangled Religions and Expanding the Analytical Frame*

The lack of nuance in Ṣadé and Agbo's responses to the survey related question is not limited to religious practitioners. The lack of nuance is also a persistent problem with scholars of religion who still primarily focus on a single tradition. Within multireligious settings in particular, this discrete approach

may lead to a problematic disconnect with the lived world of religious practitioners. In the case of World Christianity, this point is particularly relevant for a field that has its analytical frame focused on Christianity. Yet, to be sure, despite the focus on Christianity, World Christianity need not be limited to the study of a single religion (i.e. Christianity). The full range of Ṣadé and Agbo's religiosity is the domain of World Christianity, as one cannot dissect and dislocate only the Christian elements. In the case of Ogbómòsó, the encounter of multiple traditions has produced what Larkin (2016: 633–639) refers to as religious entanglement. This entanglement means that scholars of World Christianity must approach their respective religious fields openly and allow the lived religiosity of the field to direct their focus of attention. As Gregg and Scholefield have suggested: "We can explore religion as we find it, rather than mould it to meet the cultural essentialisms of what we expect to find" (2015: 15). This will undoubtedly vary from context to context. Simply put, not all religious fields afford the same type and degree of interreligious entanglement as in Ogbómòsó. For instance, in other cases, there may be more intrareligious entanglement, or entanglement with other belongings and/or identities such as ethnicity, gender, nationality, or race. Regardless of the context, an 'entangled' approach to social life is required for every religious field.

Relatedly, both cases also reveal how individuals can adapt and form new religious belongings and/or identities, while also retaining parts of their former religious life in a process of both preservation and reinvention. As Ṣadé's experience demonstrates, public belongings can be limited due to various circumstances, while religious identification remains. One can also imagine scenarios in which the opposite is true and how similar dynamics might play out intrareligiously across the denominations of a religion. This brings issues of religious conversion and religious switching to the fore. These concepts point to changes that occur religiously in form, character, or function, but as these two cases confirm, in the lived world these changes are not necessarily a one-time event, a one-way process, nor do they necessarily create an immediate change. Again, notions of constancy and singularity deserve reflection and critique. Fortunately, there appears to be momentum for this entangled understanding in terms of recent publications, including an edited volume (Rajikumar and Dayam 2016), a thirteen-article issue from *Open Theology* (Braak and Kalsky 2017), and a special issue from *Studies in World Christianity* (Williams and Adogame 2019). The theme of the 2018 European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) conference, 'Multiple Religious Identities—Individuals, Communities, Traditions', also offers some indication of increased focus in this direction (EASR 2018).

6.4 *Of Bias and Hierarchy*

Another important issue is that of recognition and status afforded to select religions. The continued dominance of the world religions paradigm treats religions such as Christianity and Islam as interrelated packages of diverse traditions and practices, while AIR are largely viewed as disparate and not given the same status and scholarly attention. This bias is sometimes linked to a perceived hierarchy of religious traditions, in which religions that are categorized as monotheistic and possess a textual canon represent a higher form of development. This bias could as well be part of the reason why Nigerians by and large identify on surveys as either Christian or Muslim—the result of which provides a quantitative rationale for privileging Christianity and Islam. However, the bias can also be linked to the institutional and organization models of different religions. For instance, the various practices and procedures related to attendance, membership, and participation that scholars utilize for their research. Scholars can and should continue to use these avenues for understanding religiosity, but there is a pressing need to adapt research tools to fit different types of religious fields. In the case of most AIR, the organizational structure is informal and diffused, participation is typically on an individual basis, and there are rarely institutional mechanisms in place to track participation. Additionally, as the cases of Ṣadé and Agbo make clear, despite individual religious desires, there are at times familial and societal restrictions placed on the expression of these desires. Such biases and restrictions result in the assumption for many that there are very few AIR practitioners and the conclusion that they are comparatively less consequential to research. While there are valid reasons to (de/re)construct the world religions paradigm (Cotter and Robertson 2016; Magesa 2013), categorizing and comparing on the basis of interrelated packages can prove beneficial as long as 'packages' are approached with equivalence. Yet, despite the continued importance of AIR in Nigeria, Christianity and Islam continue to be viewed as exceptional and receive the majority of scholarly attention. This point is important for scholars of World Christianity because not only is it critical to widen the analytical frame to include other religious traditions, it is just as critical to approach these traditions with parity.

6.5 *Multi-directional Exchange*

One aspect of interreligious encounter is conflict and intolerance. Conflict, and in particular violent conflict, has received a disproportionate amount of focus in studies of interreligious encounter in Nigeria. As I have noted elsewhere, "… studies of multireligious Nigeria tend to be confined to examining violent flashpoints between Muslims and Christians in a few select regions of

northern Nigeria, portraying it as a place of ruin, with widespread violence and rioting in the name of religion—further entrenching the depiction of a one-dimensional, facile discourse of brutal clash and intolerance" (Williams 2018: 116). While the cases of Ṣadé and Agbo point to instances of conflict and decreased tolerance, these are to be expected in any religious field. Likewise, it should not come as a surprise that their cases simultaneously demonstrate that multireligious contexts provide a habitat of exchange. As Agbo indicated in an interview:

> I am African and as a Yorùbá person there is no separating religion. To be African and Yorùbá is to be religious. Now, I belong to my community and believe that God is in all of our traditions. So yes, I belong to a church and a mosque and I see a traditional priest … I would say usually I am a Muslim in public because my father was a Muslim, but because of our history, to be Yorùbá is to be open to God in his fullness.

This exchange is not limited to how individuals practice, belong, or identify. Religions also are under constant revision and reinterpretation. As the late J.D.Y. Peel noted about the ongoing construction of religion and religious action:

> Religions are always realized in practice through the interplay of context and tradition, of the social and the cultural, of the present and the past. Religious action is always doubly constrained: by the features of the context to which its agents have to respond and by what its tradition—beliefs, values and institutions received from the past—makes available to it. But the determination is never complete: all contexts yield options for action, and all traditions are open to revision and reinterpretation.
>
> Peel 2016: 625

Not only are the boundaries of religions not always clear or mutually exclusive for religious practitioners, no scholarly conceptualization of religions is entirely coherent or without blurry boundaries. Conflation of traditions is perhaps the extreme version of the exchange, which can be observed in research on Chrislam in Nigeria (Janson 2016: 646–672; Williams 2019). Although the spectrum of exchange varies, religions invariably change. Christianity is not excluded from this reality. It is not a one-way flow of Christianity impacting other religions. While perhaps most scholars of World Christianity would recognize this on a conceptual level, there is a need to further explicate the multidirectionality of exchange as it relates to Christianity.

7 Conclusion

Taken in the context of World Christianity scholarship, this chapter offers a grounded precedent in avoiding an essentialized, *sui generis* understanding of religion(s) and religiosity. Likewise, it offers methodological insight into understanding religious belonging and identity as dynamic and situational. While it is recognized that every religious field is distinct and needs to be contextualized, the methodological lessons offered in this chapter on religious belonging and identity, everyday lived religion, entangled religion, bias and hierarchy, and multi-directional exchange can be applied broadly in World Christianity scholarship. Combining these lessons into an approach offers scholars a more nuanced engagement with religious fields, but it also problematizes the discrete classification of religions and their subsequent study. These insights expand the analytical frame of World Christianity scholarship, which naturally leads to questions regarding coherence and what is included or excluded. Jacob Olupona's remarks on AIR are apropos here: "If, in our world of increasingly hyphenated and hybrid identities, it has become more challenging to say what African religion *is*, it has become perhaps even more challenging to say for certain what it *isn't*. If we look more carefully, we find manifestations of it everywhere" (Olupona 2014: 122). World Christianity could easily be substituted in these remarks. Yet, as the hyphenated and hybrid belongings and identities of Ṣadé and Agbo reveal, it is within this challenge that it becomes possible to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding—an understanding that is willing to break down restrictive paradigms, confront biases, and reconstruct an approach that prioritizes everyday lived religious experience.

Bibliography

Adedeji, Joel (1969). 'Traditional Yoruba Theater.' *African Arts* 3,1: 60–63.

Adedeji, Joel (1972). 'The Origin and Form of the Yoruba Masque Theatre.' *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 12,46: 254–276.

Adogame, Afe (2004). 'Nigeria.' In Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez, ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion and War*. New York: Routledge: 328–332.

Bascom, William Russell (1993). *Sixteen Cowries. Yoruba Divination from Africa to the New World*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Bell, Deborah (2010). *Mask Makers and Their Craft. An Illustrated Worldwide Study*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Bentor, Eli (1994). '"Remember Six Feet Deep". Masks and the Exculpation of/from Death in Aro Masquerade.' *Journal of Religion in Africa* 24,4: 323–338.

Boer, Jan H. (2003–2009). *Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations*. 9 Volumes. Belleville, Canada: Essence Publishing.

Braak, André van der and Manuela Kalsky, eds. (2017). 'Topical Issue. Multiple Religious Belonging.' *Open Theology* 3.1.

Brubaker, Rogers (2006). *Ethnicity Without Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Clarke, Peter B. (1982). *West Africa and Islam*. London: Arnold.

Clarke, Peter B. (1986). *West Africa and Christianity*. London: Arnold.

Conteh, Prince Sorie (2009). *Traditionalists, Muslims, and Christians in Africa. Interreligious Encounters and Dialogue*. Amherst, NY: Cambria Press.

Cordwell, Justine M. (1983). 'The Art and Aesthetics of the Yoruba.' *African Arts* 16,2: 56–59.

Cornille, Catherine, ed. (2010). *Many Mansions? Multiple Religious Belonging and Christian Identity*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Cotter, Christopher R. and David G. Robertson, eds. (2016). *After World Religions. Reconstructing Religious Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Cox, James L. (2016). *From Primitive to Indigenous. The Academic Study of Indigenous Religions*. New York: Routledge.

Danmolé, Hakeem O. (2008). 'Religious Encounter in Southwestern Nigeria. The Domestication of Islam Among the Yoruba.' In Jacob K. Olupona and Terry Rey, eds. *Orisa Devotion as World Religion. The Globalization of Yoruba Religious Culture*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press: 202–220.

Drewal, Margaret Thompson (1992). *Yoruba Ritual. Performers, Play, Agency*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

EASR 2018. 'EASR 2018: Multiple Religious Identities.' http://www.easr2018.org (accessed 26 June 2020).

Falola, Toyin and Ann Genova (2009). *Historical Dictionary of Nigeria*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

Federal Republic of Nigeria (1963). 'Population Census of Nigeria, 1963. Combined National Figures, Volume III.' Lagos: Office of Statistics.

Frederiks, Martha (2010). 'Let Us Understand Our Differences. Current Trends in Christian-Muslim Relations in Sub-Saharan Africa.' *Transformation. An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 27,4: 261–274.

Goodwin, Stephen R., ed (2009). *World Christianity in Muslim Encounter. Essays in Memory of David A. Kerr*. London: Continuum Publishing.

Gregg, Stephen and Lynne Scholefield (2015). *Engaging With Living Religion. A Guide to Fieldwork in the Study of Religion*. New York: Routledge.

Hackett, Rosalind I.J. (1998). *Art and Religion in Africa*. New York and London: Cassell, 1998.

Hall, Stuart (1996). 'Introduction. Who Needs "Identity"?' In Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, eds. *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage Publications: 1–17.

Hall, Stuart (2000a). 'The Question of Cultural Identity.' In Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert, and Kenneth Thompson, eds. *Modernity. An Introduction to Modern Societies*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell: 274–323.

Hall, Stuart (2000b). 'Who needs 'identity'? In Paul du Gay, Jessica Evans, and Peter Redman, eds. *Identity. A Reader*. London: Sage Publications: 15–30.

Hart, William A. (1993). 'A West African Masquerade in 1815.' *Journal of Religion in Africa* 23,2: 136–146.

Houlberg, Marilyn Hammersley (1978). 'Egungun Masquerades of the Remo Yoruba.' *African Arts* 11,3: 20–27.

Janson, Marloes (2016). 'Unity Through Diversity. A Case Study of Chrislam in Lagos.' *Africa* 86,4: 646–672.

Janson, Marloes and Akintunde Akinleye (2015). 'The Spiritual Highway. Religious World Making in Megacity Lagos (Nigeria).' *Material Religion. The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 11,4: 550–562.

Janson, Marloes and Birgit Meyer (2016). 'Introduction. Towards a Framework for the Study of Christian-Muslim Encounters in Africa.' *Africa* 86,4: 615–619.

Johnson, Samuel (2010). *The History of the Yorubas. From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kerr, David (1995). *African Popular Theatre. From Pre-Colonial Times to the Present Day*. Oxford: James Currey Publishers.

Knowing Each Other Project (2018). 'The Project.' https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/dasa/research/knowing/project.aspx (accessed 26 June 2020).

Larkin, Brian and Birgit Meyer (2006). 'Pentecostalism, Islam and Culture. New Religious Movements in West Africa.' In Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, ed. *Themes in West Africa's History*. Oxford: James Currey: 286–312.

Larkin, Brian (2016). 'Entangled Religions. Response to J.D.Y. Peel.' *Africa* 86,4: 633–639.

Magesa, Laurenti (2013). *What is not Sacred? African Spirituality*. Maryknoll: Orbis.

Makinde, David O. (2011) 'Potentialities of the Egúngún Festival as a Tool for Tourism Development in Ogbomoso, Nigeria.' In Carlos A. Brebbia and Syed S. Zubir, eds. *Management of Natural Resources, Sustainable Development and Ecological Hazards III*. Southhampton, UK: WIT Press: 583–593.

Morris, Mike (2012). *Concise Dictionary of Social and Cultural Anthropology*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Mustapha, Abdul Raufa and David Ehrhardt (2018). *Creed & Grievance. Muslim-Christian Relations & Conflict Resolution in Northern Nigeria*. Oxford: James Curry.

Na'Allah, Abdul-Rasheed (1996). 'The Origin of Egungun. A Critical Literary Appraisal.' *African Study Monographs* 17,2: 59–68.

Nolte, Insa, Olukoya Ogen, and Rebecca Jones, eds. (2017). *Beyond Religious Tolerance. Muslim, Christian, and Traditionalist Encounters in an African Town*. Oxford: James Currey.

Nwanaju, Isidore (2008). *Christian-Muslim Relations in Nigeria*. Berlin: Logos Verlag.

Obadare, Ebenezer (2016). 'The Muslim Response to the Pentecostal Surge in Nigeria. Prayer and the Rise of Charismatic Islam.' *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 2,1: 75–91.

Ojo, Matthews A. (2007). 'Pentecostal Movements, Islam and the Contest for Public Space in Northern Nigeria.' *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 18,2: 175–188.

Ojo, Matthews A. and Folaranmi T. Lateju (2010). 'Christian-Muslim Conflicts and Interfaith Bridge-Building Efforts in Nigeria.' *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 8,1: 31–38.

Olajubu, Chief Oludare and J.R.O. Ojo (1977). 'Some Aspects of Oyo Yoruba Masquerades.' *Africa* 47, 3: 253–75.

Olupona, Jacob K. (2014). *African Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Oxford Business Group (2010). *The Report. Nigeria 2010*. London: Oxford Business Group.

Peel, John D.Y. (2000). *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Peel, John D.Y. (2011). 'Islam, Christianity and the Unfinished Making of the Yoruba.' Mellon Foundation Sayer Seminar, University of Michigan, 1–2 April 2011.

Peel, John D.Y. (2016). *Christianity, Islam, and Orisa-Religion. Three Traditions in Comparison and Interaction*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Pemberton III, John (1978). 'Egungun Masquerades of the Igbomina Yoruba.' *African Arts* 11,3: 40–47.

Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2009). 'Mapping Out the Global Muslim Population/ A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population.' Pew Research Center: Washington DC, October 2009.

Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2011). 'Global Christianity. A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population.' Pew Research Center: Washington DC, December 2011.

Rajikumar, Peniel Jesudason Rufus and Joseph Prabhakar Dayam, eds. (2016). *Many Yet One? Multiple Religious Belonging*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.

Rasmussen, Lissi, ed. (2007). *Bridges Instead of Walls. Christian-Muslim Interaction in Denmark, Indonesia and Nigeria*. Minneapolis, MN: Lutheran University Press.

Rasmussen, Lilli (1993). *Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa. The Cases of Northern Nigeria and Tanzania Compared*. London: British Academic Press.

Rea, Will (2008). 'Making History. The Modernity of Masquerade in Ikole Ekiti.' *African Arts* 41,4: 10–25.

Sanneh, Lamin (1996). *Piety and Power. Muslims and Christians in West Africa.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Sarbah, Cosmas Ebo (2010). 'A Critical Study of Christian-Muslim Relations in the Central Region of Ghana with Special Reference to Traditional Akan Values.' Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of Birmingham, 2010.

Sarbah, Cosmas Ebo (2016). 'Interrogating the Approaches of Christian-Muslim Encounters in West Africa.' *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 51,3: 366–385.

Schiltz, Marc (1978). 'Egungun Masquerades in Iganna.' *African Arts* 11,3: 48–55.

Soares, Benjamin F. (2016). 'Reflections on Muslim-Christian Encounters in West Africa.' *Africa* 86,4: 673–697.

Soares, Benjamin F. (2006). *Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa.* Leiden: Brill.

Sodiq, Yushau (2009). 'Can Muslims and Christians Live Together Peacefully in Nigeria?' *The Muslim World* 99,4: 646–688.

The World Factbook (2020). 'Nigeria: People and Society.' *Central Intelligence Agency.* https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html (accessed 26 June 2020).

Vaughan, Olufemi (2016). *Religion and the Making of Nigeria.* Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Vinson, Laura Thaut (2020). *Religion, Violence, and Local Power-Sharing in Nigeria.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Williams, Corey L. (2018). 'Religion and Sport in Multireligious Nigeria. The Case of the Kaduna City Interfaith Football Club.' In Afe Adogame, Nick J. Watson, and Andrew Parker, eds. *Global Perspectives on Sport and Christianity*, New York: Routledge, 2018: 114–128.

Williams, Corey L. (2018). 'Chrislam, Accommodation, and the Politics of Religious *Bricolage* in Contemporary Nigeria.' *Studies in World Christianity* 25,1: 5–28.

Williams, Corey L. and Afe Adogame, eds (2019), 'Special Issue. Christianity and Multiple Identities.' *Studies in World Christianity* 25,1: 1–124.

Wolff, Norma H. (1982). 'Egungun Costuming in Abeokuta.' *African Arts* 15,3: 66–70.

World Religion Database (2019). 'Religious Adherents in Nigeria from 1900–2050.' Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim, eds. *Brill Publications and Services.* http://www.worldreligiondatabase.org (accessed 26 June 2020).

CHAPTER 11

Augustine's Approach to Heresies as an Aid to Understanding His Ideas on Interaction between Christian Traditions

Paul J.J. van Geest

1 Introduction

Few thinkers can rival Augustine's (354–430) influence on Western anthropology, theology, and cosmology (Pollmann, Otten et al. 2013). After his baptism in Milan in 387 he developed into an extraordinarily prolific writer. He wrote a great number of sermons, letters, biblical commentaries, and longer works in which he emphasised the primacy of grace, arguing that this preceded good will. He also composed treatises in which he attempted to safeguard the unity of the church, for instance by accusing the Donatists of seriously wounding the church as the Body of Christ through their schism, as we shall see below. His examination of conscience and the self-analysis performed in his *Confessiones*, as well as his account of history and of the ideal social- and societal order in *De ciuitate Dei*, composed to prove the value of Christianity, have been most influential throughout the centuries. But at the end of his life, Augustine had to leave four works unfinished. One of these was his *Retractationes* (426–427): the catalogue of his works in chronological order, each accompanied by criticisms, corrections, and comments. It was intended as a toolbox for the expansion and spread of Latin Christendom (Drecoll 2001: 330–334). A second unfinished work was his *Speculum* (427): an anthology of commandments and prohibitions from the Old and New Testaments intended to confront its readers—without engaging in too many hermeneutical feats—with the right way of living (Van Geest 2017, 2018).[1] But the second book of the *Speculum*, announced in the *praefatio*, remained unwritten. The Pelagian Julian of Aeclanum, who strongly emphasised the goodness of human nature, and God's grace to a much lesser degree, demanded all his attention. The resulting book

1 Cf. Possidius, *Vita Augustini* 28; Ponzio—*Vita di Cipriano*. Paolino—*Vita di Ambrogio*. Possidio—*Vita di Agostino*. Introduzione, traduzione e note a cura di M. Simonetti. Roma, 2000 (third edition); Augustinus, *Speculum*, Praefatio (ed. Weihrich), Wien: 1887, 1–13 (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 12).

© PAUL J.J. VAN GEEST, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004444867_013
This is an open access chapter distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

Contra Iulianum similarly remained an *opus imperfectum*. The fourth work to remain unfinished was *De Haeresibus ad Quodvultdeum* (428). Augustine had been planning to address the question as to what makes someone a heretic in the second part of *De Haeresibus*; but this part was never written.

The first part of *De Haeresibus* contains an overview, as lucid as it is succinct, of known and unknown heretical factions. This gives the work special value, as it affords us a glimpse of the increasingly globalised and yet somehow interconnected Christianity of his day, of the multi-dogmatic plurality of Christian communities and their leaders, as well as of his awareness of these facts (Brown, Doody and Paffenroth 2008).[2]

Desirous as he was of building and maintaining the unity of the Catholic church, Augustine from an early stage occupied himself with the question how to determine who is a heretic (for terminology: Kaufhold 2011: 313–316). For him, persistence in error—the evidence of pride—made the heretic. And heresy was error in relation to the teaching of the apostles, the *catholica ueritas*, the Christian concept of God, the incarnation of the Son, the Trinity, or the resurrection of the body (Wurst 2010). But what was Augustine's objective in listing these groups within Christianity in *De Haeresibus*? Why did he reject the normativity of interpretations of the tradition as detrimental to the unity of the church? Was he interested only in denouncing dogmatic plurality in listing 'suspect' Christian communities?

As a study of *De Haeresibus* alone would produce a one-sided and static picture of how Augustine evaluates the multi-dogmatic plurality of Christian communities, it is useful to look at the four phases in the development that he underwent in his dealings with the Donatists. It is true that the first heresy Augustine fought was that of the Manicheans. He wrote his tracts against the Manicheans much earlier than against the Donatists. His treatment of the Manicheans was completely different. In his eyes their doctrine was completely false; the followers deserved punitive measures. He did not invite them to come back to the Catholic Church. There is little development in his vision of the Manicheans. That is why the Donatists and not the Manicheans are discussed in this article. Apart from the fact that this development implicates a certain dynamic understanding of what a heresy might be, it turns out that his view of 'heretics' was also very varied and sometimes even positive. This is evident moreover from a 'snapshot' contained in *Enarratio in Psalmum* 9 and *Sermo* 117 respectively. Before we examine *De Haeresibus* and after we have

2 Augustine's thought is examined for how it can inform modern inter-religious dialogue. The premise is that he "can remind us on ways and perspectives that we might be lacking or overlooking" (Brown, Doody and Paffenroth 2008: vii).

analysed the stages in Augustine's development vis a vis heretics we will study this *Enarratio* and *Sermo*.

2 Augustine's Relations with Specific Heretics: Four Stages in His Development

The Donatists in North Africa legitimated their existence by emphasising that they were the descendants of Christians who had refused to give the sacred scriptures of Christianity up for destruction during the persecution under the Emperor Diocletian, despite the latter's orders to do so in 303.[3] Although it was already uncertain around 310, a few years after the persecution, who had and who had not collaborated with the government, the Donatists regarded Catholics as *traditores*: squanderers of the books.[4] They condemned the consecration of Caecilian, elected the new primate of Africa in Carthage in 311 or 312, because one of the consecrating bishops was suspected of being a *traditor*. Caecilian was able to retain his position because he enjoyed the support of the Emperor Constantine, whose objective was to create a single universal church in the whole world. But the Numidian bishops elected Majorinus as primate. His successor Donatus was a charismatic man, who from 313 onwards succeeded in forming large groups of Africans into an alternative to the Catholic Church in Numidia.

As Augustine regarded the Catholic Church as the guardian of the unity and wholeness of the church as the Body of Christ, he condemned the development in which one single regional interpretation of Christianity declared itself to be the norm. As early as 391, therefore, Augustine deemed the Donatist Church to be too much a regional phenomenon to be able to be the guarantor of the unity of the universal church. He therefore called on the Donatists to re-join the Catholic Church, all the more stringently as he believed that unity with Christ was preserved exclusively through and in the Catholic, i.e. global church: for him this was the body of Christ which could not be violated through the amputation of parts.[5] Themselves mainly members of the regional establishment, many Donatists viewed Catholic (and imperial) universalism

3 For a general overview of the issues concerning the Donatists see: Lancel and Alexander 1999a; Lancel 1999b: 232–248, 388–429; Smither 2015; Müller 2011:178–189.

4 Cf. *Acta Martyrum Saturnini Presbyteri, Felicis, Dativi, Ampelii et Aliorum*, in: col. 688–703, J.-P. Migne (ed), *Patrologia Latina* 8 (Paris, 1844), especially col. 690.

5 Cf. *Enarratio in Psalmum XCIV*, 8, in: E. Dekker and J. Fraipont, eds (1990) *Enarrationes in Psalmos LI-C* (2nd edition): Brepols: Turnhout: 1337–1338 (*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 38).

with distaste. They based themselves on Scriptural passages which Cyprian and Tertullian had used during the times of persecution to keep the Christians together, describing the church as a *hortus conclusus, fons signatus* (a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up), an exclusive place because it exclusively contained the fountain of grace (Lancel and Alexander 1999a: 625–628).[6]

Previous publications have charted the development that Augustine underwent in his dealings with the Donatists (Van Geest 2015: 289–309; Van Geest 2014: 151–184). His work from the period up to 397 shows that his primary pursuit was peaceful dialogue with them; a dialogue for which he drew up twelve rules. Thus between 391–395 he wrote to Maximinus, the Donatist bishop of Sinitum, that (1) the dialogue must not be troubled by the raking up of memories of the violence perpetrated by Catholics and Donatists alike; (2) it must be conducted openly and (3) everyone must be appraised of the contents of the respective bishops' letters (*Epistula* 23.6). In addition (4) it is important that all parties know that they are equal; no one from either party must regard himself as morally better than the other (*Epistula* 23.6; see also *Epistula* 35.1). And finally, Augustine at this time rejected enforcing dialogue by using or threatening to use state intervention (cf. *Retractationes* 2.5). In *Epistula* 33, he also added (6) that the dialogue must be based on mercy and the interlocutor may choose the first subject of conversation (*Epistula* 33.6). He even proposed to the Donatist bishop Proculeianus that the latter (7) could draw up the rules of the dialogue, (8) take a colleague with him, and even (9) that Augustine would not personally engage in the talks, but that the unschooled Catholic bishop Samcucius would be his interlocutor (*Epistula* 34.5–6, 10). He wanted nothing to stand in the way of this dialogue. Finally, he proposed in *Epistula* 44 to a group of Donatist laymen that the dialogue (10) should take place in a calm and neutral village where neither party had a church, (11) that the canonical books and the documents that both parties had at their disposal should be brought along, and (12) that the dialogue should take all the time that might be needed (*Epistula* 44.14).

There is no mistake that up to 399, Augustine favoured dialogue with *partes* in non-Catholic Christendom, but the purpose of this exercise was to bring them into Catholic unity. But as soon as it became evident after 399 that his strategy was not working, he changed his view.

First he declared in *Epistula* 51 (399–400) to the Donatist bishop Crispinus that he would accept state intervention in the Donatist controversy, although he refrained from giving the state full scope to punish (*Epistula* 51.3). Although

6 Cf. J. Alexander, S. Lancel, 'Donatistae', in: A. Mayer (ed.), K.-H. Chelius, A. Grote (red.), *Augustinus-Lexikon*. Basel, 1986-… Dl. 2, fasc. 3/ 4 (Basel 1999), kol. 606–638, esp. 625–628.

he mentioned this drastic measure in his *Ad catholicos fratres* (401–402), his tone remained mild. He accused the Donatists of causing schism (*crimen schismatis*), which had rent the unity of the universal church (*Ad catholicos fratres* 6, 7, 35 and passim). But he refused to brand them heretics (*haeretici*), calling them 'only' schismatics. This is important, because it implies that Augustine did not wish Constantine's anti-heretical laws to be applied to them, thus preventing that they would be regarded as enemies of the state (*Ad catholicos fratres* 7).

Second, in the period from 399 to 405 his tone changed. The letters he wrote in this period show that he wanted to subject his opponents to sharp interrogation, as he was used to do in his capacity as judge (Raikas 1997; Pugliese 2009). This was a clear breach of his own rules for dialogue. Thus *Epistula* 76 from 403, addressed to the Donatists in general, contains a barrage of questions (*Contra Cresconium* 2.3.4). Similarly, he acknowledged to the Donatist Cresconius at this time that the Donatists had not deviated from the orthodox teachings of the church and that they had the sacraments (*Contra Cresconium* 2.3.4). But he added a new element to his definition of 'heresy': the Donatists could nevertheless be called heretics because they persisted in their schism: "Heresy is inveterate schism" (*Contra Cresconium* 2.7.9; *Contra Cresconium* 2.8.10).[7] It appears that by 405 he was happy to see the Donatists treated in precisely the same way as the Manichaeans: as heretics for whom, pursuant to imperial laws, much stricter punishments were in order.

But this period of tougher attitudes did not last long. Between 405 and 411 Augustine wrote to the Donatist bishop Emeritus that the lack of that moderation (*moderatio*) which is akin to mildness in the mutual dealings of Christians pained him (*Epistula* 87.8.). But he did write this at a time when he was able to rely on the execution of the Emperor Honorius's laws prescribing state intervention to combat heretics in order to safeguard the unity of the church. Although he did not abandon the idea that the Donatist schism had become heresy because the Donatists persevered in it, he again called them schismatics, thus softening his rhetoric (*Epistula* 87.1–2; 87.4; 87. 6; 87.7; 87.8.). In personal correspondence after 405, it is clear that Augustine was keen to position himself as a teacher rather than as a judge. He became a teacher who explains, rather than interrogates, why the unity of the church must not be broken. This is evident for instance from *Epistula* 105 to the Donatists, written around 406. In this letter he explained why the love of Christ is effective only within Christ's body, the church (*Epistula* 105.17). This text also shows that he

7 *Contra Cresconium* 2.7.9: "haeresis autem, schisma inveteratum"; *Contra Cresconium* 2.8.10: "nam et haeretici estis, vel quod in schismate inveterato remansistis".

was convinced at this point that formation must necessary follow compulsion. His long lesson on this subject once again culminated in an entreaty which passionately invited the Donatists to love peace and unity. All this was entirely in accordance with the guidelines he gave himself in *Epistula* 93.1.3 (407–408): coercion must go hand in hand with, and must be followed by, education and formation. If not, it turns into a damnable kind of abuse of power (*Epistula* 93.2–3)

Finally, after 411 Augustine primarily manifested himself as a mystagogue, whose aim was to accompany people as a coach in the transformation that results from their relationship with God, and as a theoretician of mystagogy. Ironically it is his *Epistula* 185, the letter in which he recorded his view on the use of compulsion and coercion, in which he presented himself as a mystagogue. He points out that laws, compulsion, and coercion are justified only if their purpose is to establish unity and brotherly love (*Epistula* 185.7.25).[8] The laws serve to heighten fear, but as such they are 'merely' the prelude to reflection and growth in the faith (*Epistula* 185.2.8). He expressly situated compulsion and coercion at the beginning of an individual and collective process of formation, thus showing a mystagogical rather than a pedagogical approach. He emphasised that laws that are experienced as coercive must in the church be seen exclusively as the prelude to formation with a view to unity. He regarded this unity as the principle of people's happiness (*Epistula* 185.6.23).

Augustine's attitude to non-Catholic Christian factions is thus expressly marked by his concern for the restoration of unity, which he believes is guaranteed in the Catholic Church as the body of Christ. Initially, he considers dialogue to be the most appropriate means of restoring this unity. But if it proves unavailing, he does not hesitate to justify state coercion on behalf of this unity, and, through sharp interrogations, to confront his adversaries with what he believes are their fruitless vision and practice. But hard confrontations are the first beginnings of a process of purification and formation, which Augustine views through the eyes of the mystagogue rather than of the judge. The church as an organism and as the body of Christ experiences healing in the process. When Augustine says in *Retractationes* 2.5 that he never approved of compelling schismatics to return through pressure from the civil authorities, this is therefore no dissimulation, even though paradoxically he did justify coercion and intervention by the state.

8 Unlike in 402, he calls the Donatists heretics again at this point.

3 Augustine's Relations with Specific Heretics: A Common Thread and a Snapshot

In addition to these stages in his development, it is possible to identify a common thread in and an interesting snapshot of Augustine's attitude towards the heretics.[9] Around 392, he wrote as a young priest in *Enarratio in Psalmum* 9 that God does not want heresy, but that he permits it. Just as the darkness renders the light enjoyable, so comparison with heresy makes the discovery of the truth all the more pleasing (*Enarratio in Psalmum* 9.20).[10] Shadow and evil are useful to the extent that they contribute to the awareness that the light and the good are preferable. In this way, heterodoxies are also part of God's order. The comparison (*comparatio*) between orthodox and heterodox views contributes to the discovery of the truth, which is rather exclusively confined within the former (*Enarratio in Psalmum* 9.20). The usefulness (*utilitas*), perhaps the necessity, of these movements is situated therefore in their contrast effect.

Augustine is indebted here to the Stoic notion that good people are tested, repelled, exhorted, or corrected by unpleasant things. Seneca argued that evil is useful because it causes the good to correct themselves. Moral evil therefore has its own place in the order, and even serves it. For Plotinus, too, evil people serve *ad utilitatem sanctorum* (Bouton-Touboulic 2004, 438–39, 447, 452–60). It is not unlikely that the young Augustine had learned this principle of contrast during his formation as a *rhetor*, making him inclined later, once he had become familiar with Scripture and tradition, to agree with Tertullian's interpretation of 1 Cor. 11:19. Paul writes in the letter to the Corinthians that it is necessary that there should be different factions among the Christians, so that those who can be trusted should be clearly recognised. Because the Latin translation that Tertullian had at his disposal, used the term 'heresies' for Paul's factions, he interpreted these as heresies—the heresies thus made the Catholic faith all the more clearly recognisable.[11] The older Augustine followed him in this argument. This is clear from *De ciuitate Dei* 16.2, where he repeats his conviction already formulated in *Enarratio in Psalmum* 9 and where he also refers to 1 Cor. 11:19. Like Tertullian, he also uses the word *haereses* rather than factions, and he adds that the Catholic faith is manifested all the more clearly through the contrast effect of the teachings of the heretics (*De ciuitate Dei* 16.2).

9 Cf. Wurst 2010, 298, who briefly also mentions *De Ciuitate Dei* 18.51: "deus utitur et malis bene" (18.51).

10 *Enarratio in Psalmum* 9. 20: "Quo mysterio agitur ut etiam haereses esse permittantur … diuina … prouidentia…. tenebras autem ordinat, ut sit earum comparatione lux gratior, sicut haereticorum comparatione iucundior est inuentio ueritatis".

11 Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 4, 6; See also *Confessiones* 7.19.25.

It is true that in *De ciuitate Dei* 16.2 he clearly states that heretics are characterized by a spirit of impatience and unruliness and disrupting the peace of the saints. But here too he places this in the light of 1 Cor. 11:19. Heresies are useful for those who make progress and the orthodox are tested by them. Augustine is not so far from Origenes' thought that heresies can act as a catalyst for orthodox thinking (Ledegang 2016).

Around 418–420 Augustine delivered his *Sermo* 117. It is an 'attack' on the Arians. This *Sermo* contains a snapshot, outlining a rather exceptional perspective on the treatment of heretics (Van Geest 2011).[12] In his early period, Augustine had been very critical of anthropomorphic conceptions of God in North African and Catholic popular culture. According to him, these obstructed the realisation that God is first and foremost a mystery, and not a supreme being with the same physical features and emotions as human beings. In *sermo* 117 he raised the same point again. The Arians contended that God the Father must precede the Son in time, so that the Son cannot be equal to the Father. Augustine seems to be convinced: he even drops the word 'anathematur'. He also says that their thoughts make that they do not belong to the "societatem sanctorum" (*Sermo* 117.4.6). He thought that this approach failed to do justice to the incomprehensibility and ineffability of God, because it is too strongly premised on natural conditions on earth. According to him, the Arians' image of God was much too human, and this meant that just like the *simpliciores*, they failed to do justice to God as a mystery. His criticism of 'heretics' is essentially the same as his criticism of those who held a popular, anthropomorphic image of God. Their representation of God is too physical.

At the same time, Augustine praises the Arians in *Sermo* 117 because they clearly manifest that the Father and the Son are of the same nature. He also begins the sermon with the insight that Catholics and Arians are best advised to be silent before God rather than to speak about him, precisely because God is a mystery. This unifying statement contributes to a much milder tone than what might be expected of a sermon preached for the confounding of heresies. It is true that Augustine denounces the Arian notion that Christ was not equal to the Creator. But at the same time he argues that humans try to do the impossible if they attempt to grasp God, because they are seeking someone who is unknowable and ineffable (*Sermo* 117.2.3). Augustine consequently comments that John 1:1–3, the subject of his sermon, was not written to be understood, but to confront readers with the inadequacy of their minds, so as to tempt them to adopt the required humility which can engender longing for God

---

12 In *Sermo* 117, Augustine is much less indebted to an 'us' vs. 'them' framework than Gregory of Nyssa is in his works against the Arians (Leemans 2011).

(*Sermo* 117.3.5; cf. 5.7; 5.8). Despite the fact that he criticises the Arians, it is therefore unlikely that Augustine intended to attack them in this sermon. The emphasis on God's incomprehensibility is simply too strong, even when Augustine touches on the doctrinal differences between Catholic and Arian Christians. His main objective was to prove that it is precisely orthodoxy which intensifies the awareness that God is a mystery, and that he should not be the subject of speculation but of stillness and silence (*Sermo* 117.5.7).[13] It is true that people can understand 'in part', 'in a riddle', 'through a mirror', something about the simultaneity (*coaevitas*). Augustine emphasizes 'posse fieri', 'posse intellegi, ut et natus sit et coaeternus sit ei a quo natus est' (it can be done, it can be understood that he was both born and eternally of God the Father). But this does not alter the fact that straightaway in the following paragraph he revisits the idea that the relationship God-the-Father and Son is a *res ineffabilis*, because the similitudines are imperfect (*Sermo* 117.5.6; 6.9).

4 The Synthesis in *De Haeresibus*

At the end of his life, Augustine felt the need to create an overview and a synthesis, as is evident from the fact that he composed his *Retractationes, Speculum* and *De Haeresibus*.[14] The *praefatio* of *De Haeresibus* shows that he also wished to draw up a synthesis of existing heresies, as he writes that such a project would exceed his powers. We have the perseverance of the Carthaginian deacon, later bishop, Quodvultdeus to thank for the fact that *De Haeresibus* was eventually written (Scopello 2010: 278–290). It is clear from their correspondence and from the foreword that Augustine was always looking for excuses not to undertake this work (*Epistulae* 221–224; *De Haeresibus*, Praefatio).

Augustine's main sources were Epiphanius of Salamis's *Panarion* (Πανάριον, 'Medicine box'), and the summary of, and additions to this in the *Anakephalaiosis*, as well as Philastrius of Brescia's *Diuersarum hereseon liber* (Bardy 1931).[15] Epiphanius is the source—sometimes copied literally—for sections 1–57; Philastrius for sections 58–80. The last line of the discussion of

13 *Sermo* 117. 5.7: "Et quid facimus nos? Silebimus? Utinam liceret! Forsitan enim silendo aliquid dignum de re ineffabili cogitaretur".

14 *De Haeresibus* has been consulted mainly in the context of research of Manichaeism, Donatism, and Priscillianism. For the work itself, see: Scopello 2010; Tasca 2010; Sadowski 2015; Müller 1956; Jannacone 1952.

15 On Celsus, an author who catalogued various philosophical movements and who was possibly Origen's adversary in *Contra Celsum*, see Scopello 2010, 283–284. See for the *Panarion*: Verheyden 2011.

the Sabellians (41) shows that Augustine was a critical reader of Philastrius (*De Haeresibus* 41).[16] He probably based his treatment of the Luciferians (81) and Jovinians (82) on an *Indiculus* wrongly ascribed to Jerome, and that of an Arabian heresy on Eusebius' *Historia ecclesiastica* (83). It is striking that Augustine does not wonder whether the heresies listed in the *Panarion*, *Diuersarum hereseon liber* and *Indiculus* actually existed. The fact is that he did not all experience them at first hand. However, his lengthy description of the Pelagians (88), as well as of the Manichaeans (46) and the Donatists (69) are evidently based on personal memories. Although Augustine also had personal experience of the *Circumcelliones* (69), his choice to designate them as "genus hominum agreste", "famosissima audacia", "immania facinora" point, however, more to indebtedness to Sallust than to his own experience (Shaw 2006).

In *De Haeresibus*, in what reads simultaneously like an aide-memoire and a *monitio*, Augustine lists the most essential ideas and practices of a total of 88 heresies that had arisen since the coming of Christ, sometimes after an explanation of their names (Scopello 2010, 286). Sydney Sadowski has distinguished eleven heresies concerning the humanity of Christ, ten that denied the divinity of Christ, and one which denied that Christ had truly died (Sadowski 2015: 475, footnotes 66–68). Seventeen heresies practiced sacramental rituals that were contrary to Catholic teaching on the sacraments; nineteen had an erroneous—often Gnostic—view of the origins of creation, the world, and the angels, and fifteen taught error on the nature of God and his relationship with creation, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and humanity. In twenty heresies, Augustine identified an eschatology that was contrary to orthodoxy; three heresies erred in relation to the interpretation of the apostolic doctrine, the activity of the Holy Spirit or of the Trinity. Three heresies concerned Mary's virginity, and thirty-three heresies, finally, can be classified on the basis of a plurality of assumptions that are contrary to the Catholic faith (Sadowski 2015: 476–477, footnotes 69–78).

It is understandable, therefore, that Augustine states in the *praefatio* (7) that he finds it very difficult to say "quid faciat haereticum", and in his epilogue that it is impossible to list the points in which the heretics "a ueritate dissentiunt" (*epilogus* 3). The fact that the second, theoretical part of *De Haeresibus* never materialised was partly due to this problem. Agostino Trapè nonetheless succeeded in distilling the hermeneutical, psychological, ecclesiological, and Christological criteria from Augustine's entire oeuvre which would have furnished grounds for regarding the groups mentioned in this part as heretical. He also observed that Augustine always emphasised the importance of lovingly

16 *De Haeresibus* 41: "Et tamen Noetianos et Sabellianos sub duobus numeris tamquam duas haereses posuit; qua causa, ipse viderit".

educating 'heretics' (Trapè 1985). Sadowski deduced criteria that Augustine could have mentioned in this part from the descriptions in *De Haeresibus* itself. Like Trapè, he concluded that Augustine regarded arrogance as the motive behind breaking away from the Catholic church and thus behind heresy, something which cannot be the result of ignorance but is done by important, erudite people ("Non fecerunt haereses nisi magni homines", *Enarratio in Psalmum* 126.5). Heretics think that issues which they reject are unable to provide hope of salvation, they are perseverant, and they systematically interpret the divine revelation in an erroneous way (Sadowski 2015: 470–473).

But both Sadowski and Trapè were almost exclusively interested in discovering doctrinal criteria. In a study of the eating habits (of the Nicolaites, Priscillianists, Manichaeans, Ophites, and Cataphrygians) that Augustine denounced as despicable, Francesca Tasca has demonstrated, however, that he regarded less dogmatic aspects as at least equally important (Tasca 2010). In *De Haeresibus* 46, for instance, he stresses the connection between heresies, physical uncleanness, and the corresponding impurity of the soul (Müller 2017: 373–375). This means that Augustine also looked at other aspects of the Christian factions that he counted among the *haereses* than the doctrinal one alone. This is a very important argument to use when it comes to discussing the dominance of doctrinal theology in the past. A pattern can even be identified in *De Haeresibus*, that points to an attempt to emphasise a profound link between orthodoxy and the good life. Augustine *does not* create the dualism of orthodoxy and orthopraxis.

It is striking for instance that whenever Augustine discusses a particular Christian faction more extensively, he first condemns their sexual excesses before he denounces their abject doctrines. Thus in his discussion of the *simoniani* (1), named after Simon the Magician (Acts 8:9–25) he fulminates first against the shameless use of women as communal property ("Docebat autem detestandam turpitudinem indifferenter utendi feminis"). Only then does he criticise Simon's denial that God has created the world and that there will be a resurrection of the body (*De Haeresibus* 1). The same sequence can be found in his treatment of the Saturnians (3). They are counted among the *haeretici* firstly because they propagated the shameless practices of Simon ("turpitudinem Simonianam") in Syria, and Augustine discusses their abject creation myth only subsequently. The same pattern is visible in relation to the *Nicolaitae* (5), named after Nikolaos who was appointed one of the seven deacons by the apostles (Acts 6:5). First he takes Nikolaos to task for offering his beautiful wife to all interested parties, thus creating a shameless sect ("sectam turpissimam") whose members, like the Simonists, regarded women as communal property ("placet usus indifferens feminarum"). He criticises their view of creation only

subsequently. Similarly, Augustine's criticism of the Borborites, a subsect of the Gnostics (6), begins with a comment on their excessive shamelessness ("nimiam turpitudinem") in the performance of their rituals, before referring to their fanciful stories ("fabulis … stultissimis") about God, nature, and the soul. The same pattern occurs in his treatment of the Carpocratians (7) and the *Origeniani* (42–43) (for Origeniani cf. Grossi 1992). When he mentions the *Archontici* (20), he first explains their name, then criticises their shameful practice ("quamdam turpitudinem"); and only then censures their denial of the resurrection of the body. It is true that Augustine does not explain what the "opera turpitudinis" of the Secundians (12), the *Valesii* (37) or the Paternians (Venustians, 85) are (for Paterniani cf. Lamberigts 1985). But as has been seen, his use of a declension of the noun 'turpitudo' in the passages on the Simonists, Saturnians, and Nicolaites points to some illicit sexual practice. It is likely therefore that Augustine had some such practice in mind here too, as he had in the case of the Priscillianists (70). In his discussion of the latter Spanish sect, his examination of their abject doctrines is once again preceded by criticism of their "contaminationes et turpitudines".

The vehemence with which Augustine denounces the *turpitudines* of the sects to which he devotes an extensive discussion is almost fugal. Precisely in the condemnation of aspects of lived practice *De Haeresibus* has striking parallels with Augustine's *Speculum*, which he composed around the same time. The *Speculum* contained guidelines from Scripture so that it would reflect the image of the person who looked into it in as detailed a fashion as possible, as if in a mirror; the confrontation with one's own imperfections had to be brutal. One wonders whether Augustine's aim in writing *De Haeresibus* was not the same as for the *Speculum*—to offer his own congregation a mirror to confront them with their own life—and whether this is not the reason that he emphasises this aspect. This would also mean that he was keen not to be a hammer of heretics, but a bishop desirous of keeping his faithful together by describing views and life practices as a deterrent, using the mechanism that would later be called scapegoating.

But Augustine not only condemns sects on the basis of their sexual excesses; he also criticises the other extreme: the abstinence that some sects impose upon their members. Again, he does this before discussing their doctrinal errors. Thus he denounces the conviction of the Tatians (*Encratitae*, 25) who regarded marriage as fornication and refused to admit anyone who was married. Similarly Augustine condemns the views of the Cataphrygians (26) and the Tertullianists (86) who regarded second marriages as adultery; the Adamites (31), who, imitating Adam's nakedness, rejected marriage; the Catharists (*Novatians*, 37) who did not permit second marriages, and the Apostolici

(*Apotactitae*, 38), who declined to admit anyone who slept with a woman. He also rebukes de Abelians (*Abelites*, 87) for the same reason (Ackermans 2011). They did not have relations with women, but were not allowed to live without them either. They therefore adopted children while taking vows of sexual abstinence. Augustine clearly also views this option as sectarian and unnatural. He condemns the Hieracites (47) who admitted only monks, nuns, and unmarried people; the Aerians (53), who, like the Encratites and Apotactites, admitted only people who practiced abstinence, and the *Priscillianistae* (70.2), who tried to separate married men and women because the genesis of any kind of flesh must be ascribed to evil angels. He also rejects the Manichaean avoidance of procreation. Their idea that the divine substance is entrapped in children and therefore becomes woefully divided failed to win his approval (46.6; 46.13).

However, Augustine was certainly not the only one to express his rejection of radical asceticism on the one hand and radical body glorification on the other. He is simply following the long-standing conventions of early Christian heresiology (Gorce 1953; Hunt 2016: 47–62,114–115, 125–136, 159–183). But his almost literal indebtedness to the table of contents that precedes the description of every heresy in Philastrius' *Anakephalaiosis*, does not detract from the fact that, in *De Haeresibus*, Augustine is intent on finding a middle ground between sexual excesses and abstinence. It is evident from *De Haeresibus* that he, more than the Encratites, Gnostics, and other kinds of heretics, aspires to a life of moderation in sexual practice and a rejection of exaggerated and excessive forms life in which the care of the body is neglected, as can be deduced from his discussion of the Valesians (37), whose custom was to castrate their guests, or of the Catharists, who were reluctant even to eat plants because there is life in plants (46.11). His pursuit of balance is also evident from his condemnation of the Euchites (57 Massalians), a verdict which he had already explained at length in *De opere monachorum* in 400. The Euchites only wanted to pray; and according to Augustine they did too much of this: "Nimis hoc faciunt". His criticism is the same as that of the Euchite monks that he had criticised around 400 in *De opere monachorum* because they wanted to pray and refused to do anything to support themselves. He predicted that a life that had no variation between spiritual and physical work would disturb humans' inner balance. He rejected an excessively rigid prayer life (*De opere monachorum*, 17.20). It transpires in *De Haeresibus* that he thought such a life was not orthodox either.

A very global comparison with the sources shows that Augustine has distilled precisely those passages from his sources, which enabled him to emphasize the connection between orthodoxy and orthopraxis. In the light of his objective, it is also possible to explain why he does not dispute views that have to do with, for example, the divinity of the intellect, or theurgy. This was not

discussed in *De Haeresibus*, whereas he wants to see theurgy and demonology heavily punished in *De ciuitate Dei*. In *De Haeresibus* he explicitly wants to reduce the wrong way of life to an erroneous idea of God or to the erroneous conception of man; for example, one in which man is not held responsible for his own actions.

5 Conclusion

In 1934, in *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*, Walter Bauer remarked that in many areas a 'heresy' was the first form of Christianity (Bauer 1964). Although Turner contested this with good counter arguments, he also noted that, in all its changeability, thinking about human beings and God in the first century resembled a symphony more than a monophonic melody; the confluence of several rivulets into a single stream more than a river that seeks its way to sea without mixing with other streams (Turner 1978: 9).

Many centuries before, Irenaeus contended that the first rule of the faith was accepted by everyone everywhere (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* I, book X, par. 1.2). Historically speaking this is not correct. He implied a unity among pluralistic Christians that did not initially exist. The unity of Christendom had been realised to a much greater extent by Augustine's time. But Christianity was still a plurality, as the splits—such as that of the Donatists—or original diversity—such as the Simonists and Nikolaites—show. This is evident even from *De Haeresibus* alone. Even though he bases himself on sources and is likely that he never experienced these currents personally—it is even questionable whether they all really existed—Augustine evidently wants to explain the pluriformity and polycentricism of Christianity from its very beginnings, giving explicit consideration to the fact that unequal distribution of power has influenced the dynamics between orthodoxy and heterodox 'centres'. In a certain way he *wants* to demonstrate that in his time Christianity had failed to produce a united and univocal church with a unified theology, practice, and liturgy, despite the exertions of emperors, councils, church fathers, bishops, and popes. Nonetheless: this does not alter the fact that Augustine regarded the Catholic Church, with the bishop of Rome as the most authoritative guardian of the church's unity and wholeness, as the Body of Christ. He condemned the Donatist church for this reason. As early as 391, Augustine considered the Donatist church to be too regionally oriented to be able to safeguard the unity of the universal church. His rejection in his denunciation of Donatism of the normativity of interpretations of tradition that are too strongly rooted in one

particular context can be traced back to his vision of the Catholic church as the guardian of unity and truth.

Augustine lived in a violent time characterised by a strongly agonistic culture. Competitive disputes were fought out in courtrooms, arenas, or circuses between skilled orators who used all kinds of rhetorical devices (Humfress 2012: 323–324, 328). Given this context it is all the more remarkable that Augustine initially stressed dialogue to regain the Donatists for the Catholic Church. He drew up a number of rules for this. But as soon as this remedy proved ineffective, he did not hesitate to justify coercion by the state to achieve unity, and to employ the rhetoric of persuasion in sharp interrogation. Assisted by imperial force, he quickly abandoned this road to develop a formation process for Donatists who had returned, a process in which fear of coercion is ideally embedded in love for the unity of the church. This love is ideally aroused by the benevolence, sympathy, and love of the Catholics who coached them. But the violence that Catholics used against returning Donatists proves that this was far from being universal practice—to Augustine's great regret (*Sermo Casinensi* I. 33).[17] With regard to the Donatists, he deeply believes in dialogue, but from the conviction that the 'catholicity' is based on the universality and originality preserved and passed on in his *pars catholica*.

The common thread in his attitude to heretics, which he articulated in *Enarratio in Psalmum* 9 and *De ciuitate Dei* 16.2 shows that Augustine, like Irenaeus, espoused the historically inaccurate idea that orthodoxy had been under threat from the very beginning of Christianity by a plurality of heresies. He nevertheless formulated the value of heresies very explicitly in these texts. The comparison (*comparatio*) of orthodox and heterodox tenets contributes to the discovery of the truth of the former. The utility (*utilitas*), perhaps the necessity, of these factions is therefore situated in the fact that they highlight the contrast. And in *Sermo* 117, which is more a snapshot than anything else, he even went so far as to say something positive about the Arians because they professed that the Father and the Son were of the same nature. He looked for some kind of common ground, possibly because the Arians had ceased to be much of a threat to the unity of the church. Orthodox and heterodox Christians were both best advised to be silent about God rather than to speak about him. But at the same time he suggests that heresies are characterized by a lack of hermeneutics.

17 Cf. *Sermo Casinensi* I. 33, in: *Sancti Augustini Sermones Post Maurinos Repertos*. Ed. G. Morin (Roma, 1930), 401–412, quote: 410–411.

It is very clear from *De Haeresibus* that Augustine generally reasoned in an absolutist way, as was the custom in Antiquity. This work demonstrates that he was an exponent of the Christians who believed that there were only right and wrong answers to the question whether Jesus Christ revealed the good Creator, and whether God truly came to humankind in Christ. Criteria of truth—such as apostolicity—were developed in the heresiologies and dogmatic florilegia of the third, fourth and fifth centuries that could be used to take the measure of alleged heretics. These criteria already underlie *De Haeresibus*, albeit implicitly. It can also be observed that Augustine used rhetorical techniques—exclamations and rhetorical questions—that form a prelude to strong language against the heretics (Cameron 2012: 7–10).

But *De Haeresibus* is more than just a heresiology. Precisely because doctrine follows the description and condemnation of aspects of life praxis, *De Haeresibus* shows remarkable parallels with Augustine's *Speculum*, which, like a mirror, reflected as detailed and unpolished an image as possible of the person who looked into it, thus making a confrontation with one's own imperfections unavoidable. Practices are also listed in *De Haeresibus* that would have been suitable material for the *Speculum*. Even though he is simply following the long-standing conventions of early Christian heresiology, Augustine thought in *De Haeresibus* that orthodoxy and a balanced and good life are connected. He also condemned Encratite and Gnostic movements in the first place because the lifestyle they practiced did not foster care of the body, a balanced sexual life, inner equilibrium, or moderation. Augustine's attention to praxis in addition to the doctrine shows that representations of Christianity in the past as purely concerned with doctrine must be corrected.

The welcome news that orthodoxy, moderation, equilibrium, and the good life are even more interconnected in *De Haeresibus* than is evident at first sight does not, however, absolve us from the duty of reconstructing the doctrines of the various heresies as meticulously as possible. Only then will it be possible to determine whether the struggle against heresy was indeed fair and equitable. Or did Augustine perhaps exaggerate the *turpitudines* and abstinence which he personally witnessed, as Athanasius (*λόγοι κατά Αρειανών* 4) did when he called Arius voluptuous? Perhaps it was convenient to describe the heretics in the bleakest of terms in order to make the mirror more effective? And should the Catharists really be condemned on account of their respect for vegetable life? In their recent *Verde brillante. Sensibilità e intelligenzia del mondo vegetale*, the neurobiologists Stefano Mancuso and Alessandra Viola argue that it is ethically more responsible to eat plants than animals, because approximately 1600 kilos of plant are necessary for one kilo of meat. Does this not mean that Augustine's perspective is obsolete?

It is difficult to answer such questions. We do not even have fragments of the texts that circulated in the many *sectae*. The plurality of Christianity is nonetheless incontrovertibly clear in Augustine's *De Haeresibus*. The fact that this church father condemned moral excesses makes him a precursor not only of theologians, but also of psychologists—as is also true for the *Confessiones* and their invitation to introspection. For Augustine, confounding heretics and propagating a balanced and serene life are harmoniously linked together; they are even inseparably linked.

Bibliography

Ackermans, Gian (2011). 'Einige Rechtliche und Theologische Fragen zu den *Abeloitae* in Augustins *De Haeresibus*.' In Jacob Albert van den Berg, Annemaré Kotzé, Tobias Nicklas and Madeleine Scopello, eds. *In Search of Truth. Augustine, Manichaeism and Other Gnosticism. Studies for Johannes van Oort at Sixty*. Leiden: Brill: 123–138.

Augustinus, Aurelius (1930), *Sancti Augustini Sermones post Maurinos reperti*. Edited by Germani Morin. Rome: Typ. Polyglottis Vaticanis.

Bardy, Gustave (1931). 'Le *De Haeresibus* et Ses Sources.' *Miscellanea Agostiniana* II: 397–416.

Bauer, Walter (1964). *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum*. Tübingen: Mohr (translation: *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

Bouton-Touboulic, Anne-Isabelle (2004). *L'Ordre Caché. La Notion de l'Ordre Chez Saint Augustin*. Paris: Brepols Publishers.

Brown, Brian, John A. Doody and Kim Paffenroth (2008). 'Introduction.' In Brian Brown, John A. Doody and Kim Paffenroth, eds. *Augustine and World Religions*. Lanham: Lexington Books: vii-xii.

Cameron, Averil (2012). *The Cost of Orthodoxy*. Leiden: Brill.

Dekker, Eloi and Jean Fraipont, eds (1990). *Enarrationes in Psalmos LI-C* (2nd edition). Brepols: Turnhout.

Drecoll, Volker H. (2001). 'Etiam posteris aliquid profuturum. Zur Selbststilisierung bei Augustin und der Beeinflussung der eigenen Wirkungsgeschichte durch Bücher und Bibliothek', *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 47: 313–335.

Geest, Paul van (2011). *The Incomprehensibility of God. Augustine as a Negative Theologian*. Leuven: Peeters.

Geest, Paul van (2014). '*Quid dicam de vindicando vel non vindicando?* (*ep*. 95.3). Augustine's Legitimation of Coercion in the Light of his Role of Mediator, Judge, Teacher and Mystagogue.' In Albert Geljon and Riemer Roukema, eds. *Violence in Ancient Christianity. Victims and Perpetrators*. Leiden: Brill: 151–184.

Geest, Paul van (2015). '*Timor est servus caritatis* (*s*. 156.13–14). Augustine's Vision on Coercion in the Process of Returning Heretics to the Catholic Church and his Underlying Principles.' In Anthony Dupont, Matthew Allan Gaumer and Mathijs Lamberigts, eds. *The Uniquely African Controversy. Studies on Donatist Christianity*. Leuven: Peeters: 289–309.

Geest, Paul van (2017). 'Sed ea quae obscura sunt praetermitto' (Speculum 108). Augustine' Selection of Scriptural Quotations as Proof of his Desire to effect a Confrontation', *Rivista Augustinianum* 57: 511–532.

Geest, Paul van (2018). 'The Authenticity of Augustine's Speculum and an Unknown Reason for the Compilation of this Treatise.' In Andreas Gottsmann, Pierantonio Piatti, Andreas Rehberg, eds. *Miscellanea in Occasione del 70 Genetliaco di Mons. Sergio Pagano, Prefetto dell'Archivio Segreto Vaticano*. Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vatican.

Jannacone, Silvia (1952). *La Dottrina Eresiologia di S. Agostino*. Catania: Università, Centro di studi di letteratura cristiani antica.

Gorce, Denys (1953). 'Corps (spiritualité et hygiène), In: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 2. Paris: Beauchesne: 2338–2353.

Grossi, Vittorino (1992). 'La presenza di Origene nell'ultimo Agostino (426–430).' In Robert J. Daly, ed. *Papers of the 5th International Origen Congress. Historica, Text and Method, Biblica, Philosophica, Theologica, Origenism, and Later Developments*. Leuven: Peeters: 558–564.

Humfress, Caroline (2012). 'Controversialist. Augustine in Combat.' In Mark Vessey, ed. *A Companion to Augustine*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell: 323–335.

Hunt, Hannah, *Clothed in the Body. Asceticism, the Body and the Spiritual in the Late Antique Era*. London-New York: Routledge, 2016.

Kaufhold, Hubert (2011). 'Häresie, Schisma und Apostasie in den Kirchenrechtsquellen der Orientalischen Kirchen.' In Joseph Verheyden and Herman Teule eds. *Heretics and Heresies in the Ancient Church and in Eastern Christianity. Studies in Honour of Adelbert Davids*. Leuven: Peeters: 313–332.

Lamberigts, Mathias (1985). 'A Short Note on the Paterniani', *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 31,3–4: 270–274.

Lancel, Serge and James Alexander (1999a). 'Donatistae.' In Cornelius Mayer *et al.* eds. *Augustinuslexikon* 2, Basel: Schwabe: 606–638.

Lancel, Serge (1999b). *Saint Augustin*. Paris: Fayard.

Ledegang, Freddy (2011). 'The Ophites and the "Ophite" Diagram in Celsus and Origen.' In Joseph Verheyden and Herman Teule, eds. *Heretics and Heresies in the Ancient Church and in Eastern Christianity. Studies in Honour of Adelbert Davids*. Leuven: Peeters: 51–83.

Ledegang, Freddy (2016). 'De Antignostische Polemiek van Origenes.' In Abraham P. Bos, Gerard P. Luttikhuizen, eds. *Waar Haalden de Gnostici hun Wijsheid Vandaan? Over*

Bronnen, de Doelgroep en de Tegenstanders van de Gnostische Beweging. Budel: Damon: 117–137.

Leemans, Johan (2011). 'Preaching and the Arian Controversy. Orthodoxy and Heresy in Gregory of Nyssa's Sermons.' In Joseph Verheyden and Herman Teule, eds. *Heretics and Heresies in the Ancient Church and in Eastern Christianity. Studies in Honour of Adelbert Davids*. Leuven: Peeters: 127–142.

Migne, Jacques Paul ed. (1844). *Patrologia Latina 8*. Paris: Migne.

Müller, Daniela (2011). 'Aspekte der Ketzerverfolgung unter den Römischen Kaisern.' In Joseph Verheyden and Herman Teule, eds. *Heretics and Heresies in the Ancient Church and in Eastern Christianity. Studies in Honour of Adelbert Davids*. Leuven: Peeters: 175–193.

Müller, Daniela (2017). 'Heresy as Impurity.' In Paul van Geest, Marcel Poorthuis and Els Rose, eds. *Sanctifying Texts, Transforming Rituals. Encounters in Liturgical Studies*. Leiden: Brill: 366–384.

Müller, Liguori G. (1956). *The* De Haeresibus *of Saint Augustine*. Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press.

Pollmann, Karla, Willemien Otten *et al.* eds (2013). *The Oxford Guide of the Historical Reception of Augustine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3 vols.

Ponzio (2000). *Vita di Cipriano*. Paolino, *Vita di Ambrogio*. Possidio, *Vita di Agostino*. Introduced, translated and with a note by Manlio Simonetti. Roma: Città Nuova (3rd edition).

Pugliese, Agostino (2009).'Der hl. Augustinus als Richter. Ein Betrag zur Geschichte der "Episcopalis Audientia".' In Johannes Hellebrand, ed. *Augustinus als Richter*. Würzberg: Augustinus Verlag: 21–59.

Raikas, Kauko K. (1997). '*Audientia episcopalis*: Problematik zwischen Staat und Kirche bei Augustin.' *Augustinianum* 37,2: 459–481.

Sadowski, Sydney (2015). 'A Critical Look and Evaluation of Augustine's *De Haeresibus*. *Augustinianum* 55,2: 461–478.

Scopello, Madeleine (2010). 'Haeresibus ad Quoduultdeum (De -).' In Cornelius Meyer *et al.* eds. *Augustinus-Lexikon* 3. Basel: Swabe: 278–290.

Shaw, Brent D. (2006). 'Bad Boys. Circumcellions and Fictive Violence.' In Harold A. Drake, ed. *Violence in Late Antiquity. Perception and Practices*. Aldershot: Ashgate: 179–196.

Smither, Edward L. (2015). 'Augustin, Missionary to Heretics? An Appraisal of Augustine's Mission as Engagement with the Donatists.' In Anthony Dupont, Matthew Allan Gaumer and Mathijs Lamberigts, eds. *The Uniquely African Controversy. Studies on Donatist Christianity*. Leuven: Peeters: 269–288.

Tasca, Francesa (2010). '"Ecce Panis Haereticorum". Diversità Alimentari ed Identità Religiose nel "De Haeresibus" di Agostino.' *Augustinianum* 50,1: 233–253.

Trapè, Augostino (1985). 'Un *Libro Sulla Nozione di Eresia* mai scritto da Sant' Agostino.' Augustinianum 25, 3: 853–865.

Turner, Henry E.W. (1978). *The Pattern of Christian Truth. A Study in the Relations between Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Early Church*. London: A.R. Mowbray.

Verheyden, Joseph (2011). 'Epiphanius of Salamis on Beasts and Heretics. Some Introductory Comments.' In Joseph Verheyden and Herman Teule, eds. *Heretics and Heresies in the Ancient Church and in Eastern Christianity. Studies in Honour of Adelbert Davids*. Leuven: Peeters: 143–173.

Wurst, Gregor (2010). 'Haeresis, Haeretici.' In Cornelius *Mayer et al. Augustinus-Lexikon* 3. Basel: Schwabe: 290–302.

CHAPTER 12

The Rise of 'New Generation' Churches in Kerala Christianity

Stanley John

1 Vignette

It is 9:00 a.m. on Friday morning, the official day of worship in many Muslim countries. Migrant workers and their families arrive in the hundreds to the Heavenly Feast worship service in Jleeb Al-Shuyouk, Kuwait, locally called Abbassiya, the enclave of Malayalee immigrants in Kuwait. This is one of the fastest growing churches in Kerala and in Kuwait. Men and women, youth and children, fill the 500-seat auditorium quickly. The worship leader, who is a young man in his twenties wearing jeans and a T-shirt accompanied by an electronic keyboard, leads the congregation in song. The multi-layered sounds from the keyboard make it seem as though there is an entire orchestra hidden behind the curtains. The majority of churches in Kuwait worships on the National Evangelical Church of Kuwait compound located in Kuwait City which functions as the official and legitimate place of worship. Because of the limitation of space on the compound, scores of churches meet in basements, hotels, villas, schools, and auditoriums such as the one I am visiting today.

The auditorium fills with the sound of audience's clapping along to popular worship songs sung in many of the Pentecostal churches in Kerala. The service is almost entirely in Malayalam, the language spoken in Kerala, interspersed with English phrases and worship songs. Throughout, the worship leader encourages the audience to shake hands with their neighbors with instructions for declarations such as, "I am going to be blessed today." The worship medley of more than ten hymns strung together flows from one song to the next, interspersed with shouts of "Hallelujahs." About an hour into the singing, the pastor comes on the stage. He appears to be in his late thirties, wears a short sleeve shirt and dark trousers, and continues to lead the congregation in the singing. He declares victory and deliverance over evil spirits, specifically calling out spirits of suicide and addictions. He goes on to declare, "We will see even greater things … we will fill this hall, we will fill a stadium full of people. We will have worship in every language in Kuwait!" A spirit of expectation and anticipation is palpable in the room.

© STANLEY JOHN, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004444867_014
This is an open access chapter distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

After the worship session, one of the members is invited to share his testimony. He explains that he and his wife were trying to have children for twelve years and how God answered their prayers and gave them a child. He described how before he came to faith, he was a person filled with rage and bad behavior, but he testifies to how the Lord transformed his life. Another member testifies of receiving healing from knee pain. The pastor comes back on the stage and invites all visitors to stand and he prays for the blessing of the dozen or so visitors. He invites those who are celebrating birthdays and anniversaries to stand and prays for them. Then, he reminds the church to support the video broadcast ministries of the parent denomination Heavenly Feast from Kerala. The Kuwait branch of the Heavenly Feast church alone sponsors more than 95 episodes out of 270 episodes. The pastor encourages the people to sponsor an episode on the occasion of their birthdays and anniversaries reminding them that the media ministries is a "big part of the harvest."

Moving on to the Communion service, or the Lord's table, the pastor invites servers, which unlike other Classical Pentecostal churches include men and women. He emphasizes that communion is offered for members who have received believer's baptism to contrast against infant baptism practiced in the traditional Eastern churches. Further, he specifies, the baptism is in the name of the Trinity (to respond to the Jesus-only groups). The bread and juice is passed to the congregants as the worship leader sings songs of celebration in recognition of Christ's victory on the cross, a significant change from songs of solemnity in Eastern and Classical Pentecostal churches which recount the suffering of Christ. Next, for offering, the pastor exhorts the congregation to be generous in their giving. He reminds them, "Give, and God will bless you with an overflowing blessing." The pastor continues, "We are giving not into the offering plate, but we are giving to the hands of Jesus." The excitement stirred for giving, calls to mind the prevailing critique of 'prosperity gospel' promising generous divine endowments in return for faith-filled and sacrificial giving.

Now about two hours into the worship service, before beginning the sermon, the pastor brings greetings from the founder Thanghu Brother. He says, "The servant of God loves you and prays for you. The apostle's heart is always with the church. He is thinking of you and praying for you." The ties of the congregation in Kuwait to Kerala and vice-versa are kept alive through the regular visits and communication from the leaders, regular television programming, and remittances to the homeland. The week's worship meetings are then announced with ladies' prayer-, cell group-, and area prayer groups meeting held almost every day of the week.

As he prepares to preach, he prays "Lord, may the word that we hear be a blessing in my life. You've hidden this revelation from the wise and revealed it to children." The sermon starts in 2 Peter 1:2 on the importance of grace and peace

in a believer’s life. The pastor weaves together scripture and the narrative from Peter washing his nets (Luke 5). He exhorts, “When Peter was obedient, he was blessed! When you obey, there is a blessing. We will receive blessing if we set aside our intellect when we come to the Scriptures.” He continues, “If you invite Jesus into your boat and give him the best place, you will be blessed. God’s desire is to not just bless you here, but he has a greater place for you. God’s desire for Peter is to make him a fisher of men.” Before the sermon is over, the pastor preaches also from the Gospel of Matthew, the epistles to the Ephesians, Romans, then back to the Exodus, and finally concludes with Paul’s shipwreck in Malta (Acts 28). He declares, “No one can destroy the purposes that God has for you. The situation will change. He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world. You just have to shake it off!”

The people are enthusiastic and vibrant. They rise to their feet and the worship leader and the keyboard is now back on stage leading the congregation in songs of praise with raucous clapping. The pastor leads in declaring curses broken, sick healed, jobs for those unemployed, and visas for those who are needing residency. Three hours later the service comes to a close and the crowd disperses back to the Indian immigrant neighborhood.[1]

2 Introduction

The impact of the global growth and spread of Pentecostalism in the twentieth century can be traced on every continent (Pew Forum 2006; Dempster *et al.* 2011). Pentecostalism and charismatic movements are among the fastest growing religious movements, according to some sources numbering over 709.8 million believers or one-quarter of the world’s Christian population. (Johnson and Zurlo 2020). The *Atlas of Global Christianity* estimates over 30 million of what it terms ‘renewalists’ in India alone (not counting many more members in the Indian diaspora), which include Pentecostals, charismatics and other independent renewal groups, accounting for over 50 percent of India’s Christian population growing at a rate of 5.21% (Johnson 2009: 481). Despite the stupendous growth of the movement, the imperative remains for us to understand the growth of Pentecostalism at the grassroots and to account for the dynamism, complexity, varieties and nuances within Pentecostalism as well as its relation

1 The field research data were gathered as part of a larger research project that took place in India and Kuwait during the years 2012–2013 among thirty-five Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches in Kuwait. Translation from Malayalam to English was done by the author.

to other Christian denominations. The field of World Christianity turns our attention to the local narratives taking place within specific contexts to analyze movements within their historical contexts to discern the unique features of faith and practice in any given location as well as situate and interpret them in the light of wider trends and developments. Also, it stimulates reflection on the genealogies of terminologies, critically inquiring whether terminology, developed in one context, can adequately describe developments and movements in another context.

This chapter opened with a vignette of a worship service at Heavenly Feast, one of the prominent, so-called 'New Generation' churches that emerged in Kerala, India in the late twentieth century and that has a branch in Kuwait. The Kerala diaspora context in Kuwait presents a microcosm of the religious dynamics and diversities from the homeland.[2] The practice and organization of religion, religious belonging, and its dynamics flow organically between the diaspora and the homeland. Rather than seeing the diaspora context as wholly separate and distinct from the religious dynamics in the homeland, this chapter will demonstrate the seamless flows between the two locations. Taking the vignette as unit for reflection and analysis, this chapter, by placing India's 'New Generation' churches in their historical context, explores the terminological toolkit available for understanding these churches both in their local specificities and global connectivities.

3 'New Generation' Churches in Kerala

Pentecostal churches and movements, especially the newer movements, are flourishing across the globe. These movements, led by charismatic leaders with their emphasis on spiritual gifts and miracles, are transforming the religious landscape of traditional Kerala Eastern Christian denominations and even traditional Pentecostals or, what Johnson calls, 'Denominational Pentecostalism' (Johnson 2014: 274). The Heavenly Feast is an example of an indigenous Kerala 'New Generation' church that may be considered a sort of neo-Pentecostal church, being a new movement that does not neatly fit within previous denominations. The church is led by Mathew Kuruvilla, affectionately known as Thangu Brother. After experiencing physical healing, the former businessman

2 The diaspora community in Kuwait is inextricably tied to the homeland because of their transient or temporary tenure that necessitates the migrants' return to their homeland. The transient nature in Kuwait case does not afford any sense of permanency, in contrast to the experience of diaspora in other locations. Hence, the transnational orientation and belongings are strengthened between the diaspora and the homeland.

became an evangelist. He started a prayer fellowship in his office in 1998 and today it has become a global movement. More than three hundred churches have been planted in various parts of India and among the Indian diaspora throughout the Gulf states, Europe, and North America. Such a revivalist movement finds its way to the diaspora through personal ties with economic migrants in the Gulf and through television programs that reach Indian homes worldwide. Channels such as Power Vision, Harvest TV, and Surya regularly broadcast episodes, daily reaching homes of earnest seekers and believers in the homeland and across the diaspora. Furthermore, once congregations are established in the diaspora, the churches regularly host leaders from India for conventions, conferences, and revival meetings, further cementing the transnational belonging of the diaspora.

'New Generation' churches, such as of the Heavenly Feast, evoke the question of how to categorize these churches. Some, such as Ginu Oommen (2015) and Donald Miller (2016) have classified 'New Generation' churches such as the Heavenly Feast as neo-Pentecostal churches. By situating these churches in their historical context, this chapter investigates to what extent the notion 'neo-Pentecostal' and all the connotations that the word carries, is a suitable label to describe the distinct Kerala character and context of these 'New Generation' churches.

4 The Rise of 'New Generation' Churches in Kerala: A Historical Perspective

To understand the rise of 'New Generation' churches, we must situate them against the backdrop of Kerala's rich Christian history since they are responding and reacting to the various strands of Christianity in Kerala.

Christianity in India has a rich heritage, with some claiming that its history can be traced to the arrival of apostle Thomas in 52 CE. He is believed to have followed the trails of the Jewish diaspora that had a colony in Cochin, Kerala. Local tradition maintains that he preached to the Brahmins, the highest caste of Hindus, establishing seven churches in Kerala before traveling to the neighboring state of Tamil Nadu, where tradition claims he was martyred. Later in the fourth century, Thomas Cananea of Syria arrived on the coast of Kerala along with seventy-two Christian families and settled in Kerala. Their descendants became known as Kananaya Christians. Together with the local Christians who claim descent from the early converts of St. Thomas, the local Christian community came to be known as the Thomas Christians or Syrian Christians for their use of Syriac and links to the Church of the East.

The Catholic strand of Christianity had its start after the arrival of the colonizers and explorers in the sixteenth century. When Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese explorer, arrived on the coast of Kerala in 1498, he stumbled upon the Syrian Christian community. By 1599, Catholic missionaries sought to subsume the Syrian Christian community into the Roman Catholic Church. This succeeded briefly until some of the Syrian Christians broke the communion with Rome in revolt against the papal domination and disregard for the ancient tradition, giving rise to the Jacobite Church in 1653. Over the course of the next century, the church was plagued by many schisms resulting in multiple communities. Thus, the Thomas Christian community was divided between Orthodox West Syrians, the Roman Catholic and Nestorian branches of East Syrian episcopacy (Frykenberg 2008: 245).

The arrival of Protestant missionaries in the early eighteenth century signalled a new turn toward renewal in the Thomas Christian community. Abraham Malpan (1796–1845), who came to be known as the Martin Luther of the East (Mar Thoma 1968: 114), was vicar of Maramon when he came under the influence of Anglican missionaries from Kottayam College. Recognizing the need for reform in the Orthodox Church, Malpan engaged in multiple reforms in his local parish; he offered worship services in the native language of Malayalam instead of the ancient Syriac, removed statues of saints, abolished prayers for the dead, and thus welcomed renewal in the ancient church. The reform movement eventually led to a split in 1889, giving rise to the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. The ecclesial conflicts from the previous two centuries resulted in a church that was severely fragmented.

In response to the renewal and the evangelistic fervor that was sweeping through the Thomas Christian community, many young men and women set out as traveling evangelists throughout South India. Sadhu Kochunkunju Upadeshi (1883–1945), one of the key leaders within the Mar Thoma Church, became an evangelist writing numerous songs that shaped the theology and spirituality of Kerala Christians for the majority of the twentieth century.

While these events were taking place in Kerala, in nearby Tamil Nadu a vibrant church-planting ministry and revivals were taking place through the ministry of John Christian Arulappan (1810–1867). He was significantly influenced by a Plymouth Brethren missionary named Anthony Norris Groves. Through his evangelistic ministry, the first Brethren church in India was planted in Tirunelveli in 1842 (Lukose 2013: 29). Arulappan's church experienced a Pentecostal-like revival in 1860 accompanied by marks of prophecy, speaking in tongues and interpretation (McGee 1996: 113). Arulappan sent evangelists to Kerala who planted a Brethren congregation which became a precursor to the Kerala Pentecostal movement. After the death of Arulappan, the Brethren

movement restricted the use of spiritual gifts. The Mar Thoma church invited J. Gelson Gregson, who was a famous Keswick preacher, to speak in their churches. But his preaching on the importance of adult believer's baptism did not sit well with the church which traditionally practiced infant baptism and they did not re-invite him.

Another key leader to emerge during this time was the notable poet, Kunnampurathu Varghese Simon (1883–1944). He composed three hundred hymns and influenced Kerala Christianity greatly. However, his emphasis on adult water baptism led to his expulsion from the Mar Thoma church in 1915. He emphasized the need for holiness, piety, and separation from nominal churches, giving rise to a separatist movement called the Viyojitha Prasthanam. These churches and leaders became forerunners of the Pentecostal movement, prompting Indian church historian A.C. George (2001: 224) to observe, "The stage was set in Travancore for the Pentecostal movement of the twentieth century." Thus, at the dawn of the twentieth century, a wave of reform movements was sweeping through Kerala and Tamil Nadu with an emphasis on adult baptism that was a clear break from the Eastern Christian tradition's emphasis on infant baptism, the move away from traditional liturgy in Syriac to worship in the local Malayalam language, and an emphasis on holiness and separation from the world.

Indigenous Pentecostal evangelists were already at work in South India in the late nineteenth century, especially through the work of Ceylon Pentecostal Mission, later known as The Pentecostal Mission. The arrival of Pentecostal missionaries such as George Berg and Robert F. Cook, and their work alongside local evangelists, gave rise to several Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God and Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee). K.E. Abraham, who worked alongside Cook, founded the Indian Pentecostal Church which is arguably one of the largest Pentecostal denominations in India. He came from a Syrian Christian background, received adult baptism from K.V. Simon, learned about the baptism of the Holy Spirit from a tract written by George Berg, and received Spirit baptism through the ministry of C. Mannesse, a Dalit Pentecostal preacher (Das 2001: 83).

By the third decade of the twentieth century, there were four significant Pentecostal denominations in Kerala: Assemblies of God, Ceylon Pentecostal Mission, Church of God, and Indian Pentecostal Church. Each of these Pentecostal denominations were actively involved in church planting, sending missionaries throughout India. By the end of the twentieth century, several new movements emerged that shared the sociological and doctrinal markers of these Pentecostal denominations. Notable among them were Sharon Fellowship Church (1975) founded by P.J. Thomas, New India Church

of God founded by V.A. Thampy, and New India Bible Church founded by Thomas Philip.

'New Generation' churches developed at the turn of the twentieth century as a response to renewal that individuals were experiencing through prayer, miraculous healings, and an eagerness for mission and evangelism which the existing structures of the Eastern churches could not accommodate. The formalized clergy-laity distinction, well-developed liturgy, and widespread nominalism provided little room for active participation and spiritual vitality for these newly energized members. The Pentecostal churches, which were the previous destination point for many that wanted to leave traditional churches, were no longer attractive; they were fraught by internal political conflicts and dissonance with doctrinal nuances which will be discussed in the next section.

5 Doctrinal Roots of Kerala Pentecostalism and Their Relationship to 'New Generation' Churches

Each of the movements that preceded Pentecostalism influenced it greatly, giving rise to the unique doctrinal and practical emphasis in the Pentecostal movement in Kerala. The doctrine of believer's baptism, with its emphasis on adult baptism by immersion in the name of the triune God, developed in Kerala as the result of Protestant missionary endeavors. These efforts surfaced in Kerala through the ministry of Gregson and took root in the writings of Brethren missionary Volbrecht Nagel (1867–1921), becoming the cardinal doctrine of the Kerala Brethren fellowship. Many of those who would later become the early Pentecostal leaders left the Syrian Christian churches and joined the Brethren church and Viyojitha Prasthanam. Thus, a major emphasis in evangelism to those within the Eastern and Catholic stream of Christianity related to the importance of adult baptism. This trajectory continued in Kerala Pentecostalism, since the majority of early Pentecostals came from a Syrian Christian ecclesial affiliation.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit features prominently in Kerala Pentecostalism and, until recently, was perceived as a distinctly Pentecostal emphasis. The experiences of speaking in tongues, prophecy, dancing in the Spirit, and visions were all common spiritual phenomena in the revivals of the nineteenth century in the Mar Thoma Church and the Brethren Church in Kerala. However, the churches did not provide affirmation for the continued practice and expression of these spiritual gifts. The doctrine of cessation (of miraculous gifts) embraced by the Brethren Church and the reluctance to embrace the spiritual phenomena in the Mar Thoma Church led many who experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit to leave these churches and join Pentecostal churches.

Another practice inherited by Kerala Pentecostalism that is elevated to biblical proportions regards the rejection of the use of jewelry, locally called ornaments. Many of the early Pentecostal leaders retained this practice from the tradition set by the Brethren Churches and the Viyojitha Prasthanam. The oft-stated reason for the rejection of jewelry is maintaining equity between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. However, a practice that was initiated for reasons of social harmony and equality soon took on biblical connotations and urgency, which elevated it to doctrinal status in Kerala Pentecostal churches. In Syrian Christianity, a woman's gold necklace functioned as the symbol of marriage, akin to the Western wedding ring. A woman's adornment with jewelry, especially on her wedding day, also displayed the family's social and economic status. The persistent refusal to allow these symbols, citing biblical injunctions against jewelry, became a reason for strife in many early Pentecostal families. Narratives are told and retold of the sacrifices made by the early Pentecostal mothers and the ostracism they experienced from their families and the Syrian Christian ecclesial community, based on their refusal to allow adornment with jewelry.

To support their injunctions against jewelry, Denominational Pentecostals in Kerala refuse adult baptism and participation in Holy Communion to those wearing jewelry. These strictures create not only social rejection but also spiritual rejection. The refusal to allow participation in these sacraments excludes believers from participating in the community of God, as manifested in the church. The sacrifices and social ostracism of the early Pentecostals are viewed as a sacred heritage that must be continued and defended (Bergunder 2008: 184).

Closely related to the two doctrines discussed above is the fascination of Kerala Pentecostalism with holiness (*vishudhu*) and separation (*verpadu*) (See: Bergunder 2008: 181–190). They emphasize separating from the world, adhering to a narrow definition of the church, and espousing a remnant theology with an emphasis on eschatology. Furthermore, these members adhere to certain outward expressions of their separation from the world. Along with the abstinence of wearing jewelry, their clergy do not wear priestly vestments, and among some groups, members wear white garments for the worship services to signify purity and simplicity.

6 Mutual Exclusion

The key criterion for distinguishing between Denominational Pentecostals and 'New Generation' churches is their self-definition. Pentecostals in Kerala were initially quite leery of the 'New Generation' churches. Still, the signs and

wonders that characterized these revivalist meetings affirmed to them the authenticity of the movement. People gathered at these large-scale evangelistic campaigns in the thousands and would testify of miracles and healings. However, the people did not look and act like Pentecostals, with regard to their attire of plain or white clothes, or their use of jewelry. In these new movements, the clergy and people did not seem to follow these defining social characteristics of Pentecostals.

The 'New Generation' movements, in many ways, were a reaction to Pentecostals. First, they did not want to be associated with these churches. They charged them with being "traditional Pentecostals." The congregational nature of the ecclesial leadership among Pentecostal groups appeared to 'New Generation' groups as 'politics', devoid of spirituality. They contended that there was no difference between the Pentecostal church and the world. The critique is especially poignant because Kerala political discourse is heavily charged and Kerala Pentecostal denominations have been guilty of bitter strife and embarrassing lobbying for leadership positions and clergy appointments.

Second, the revivalist movements deemed the Pentecostal groups as hypocritical. The principle of abstaining from wearing jewelry is enforced in Pentecostal churches by refusing to serve communion and offer baptism to individuals who wear jewelry. The churches however made exceptions for certain members based on their social status. Believers wearing makeup and jewelry to church were charged by 'New Generation' churches as being worldly, while the consumerism and materialism exhibited by some undermined the principles of modesty and simplicity at the core of the doctrine. In 2010 the Church of God in Kuwait went through a split based on the pastor's openness to serve Holy Communion to members wearing jewelry. The pastor at the center of the controversy came to the church in Kuwait after having served among the Indian diaspora in the United States. A group within the church saw this as a weakening stance on holiness and parted ways. For Pentecostals, wearing jewelry in Pentecostal churches is viewed as diluting the faith and expressing disregard for the historical narratives of the early leaders. The revivalist movements, however, do not share the historical narratives of the early Pentecostal leaders. Thus, the divide separating Pentecostalism and 'New Generation' churches continues to grow by narratives of mutual exclusion.

Pentecostals react to the revivalist movements by considering them shallow, lacking sound biblical teaching, holiness, and separation (*visudhi* and *verpadu*). They decry the lack of discipleship and 'proper teaching' in the new revivalist movements, especially because the majority of the revivalist leaders are not theologically educated. They support their critique with narratives of

people who left the 'New Generation' churches to join the Pentecostals for its 'depth' in biblical teaching.

7 Methodological Consideration

How do we begin to conceptualize 'New Generation' movements in Kerala and among its diaspora? Before exploring possible conceptualizations of 'New Generation' movements, it is necessary to explore discussions of and proposals for Pentecostal taxonomy more generally. Global Pentecostalism is increasingly difficult to define because of the complexities and variety encompassed within its broad taxonomy (Anderson *et al.* 2010: 13). Some scholars employ the plural form of the term (Pentecostalisms) to highlight the variety of traditions represented by the movement (Hollenweger 2004: 125).

Bauman speaks of two distinct processes that one must consider when attempting to define Pentecostalism in India (Bauman 2015: 37–39). The first refers to "the Pentecostalization of Indian evangelicalism," highlighting how across India, Christians are influenced by Pentecostalism and distinctly Pentecostal marks such as speaking in tongues although not having any conscious or demonstrable connections to it. The second refers to the "Evangelicalization of Indian Pentecostals" referring to the diminishing importance of the distinctive Pentecostal traits among the well-established, and highly educated and presumably 'respected' Pentecostals. Agreeing with Miller and Yamamori, Bauman contends that these may be best seen as "routinized Pentecostals." (Miller and Yamamori in Bauman 2015: 39). In light of such complexity in identifying and defining Indian Pentecostals, Bauman affirms the importance of self-identification whether as 'Pentecostal' or 'Charismatic' (Bauman 2015: 39).

Definition of the Pentecostal movement and appropriate taxonomy depends on the criteria employed (Anderson et al. 2010: 13–27). Anderson identifies five types of definitions: typological, socioscientific, historical, theological, and family-resemblance.

Typological categories follow Burgess's three types of Pentecostalism: Classical Pentecostals, the Charismatic renewal movement, and neo-charismatics (Hollenweger 1997; Barrett et al. 2001; Burgess and Mass 2002: xvii). Classical Pentecostal groups are identified as historically rooted in the revival at Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, and the subsequent outpouring at Azusa Street through the ministry of William Seymour (Burgess 2002: xviii). The Charismatic renewal movement's roots are traced to the ministry of Dennis Bennett at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California, in

the 1960s (xix). "Neo-charismatics" is a "catch-all category" (xx) that includes "Pentecostal-like independent churches" (Hollenweger 1997: 1). To these, Anderson (2010: 18) adds a fourth category, "Older Independent and Spirit Churches," which includes the churches experiencing healing, prayer, and spiritual gifts apart from their association with the revival in North America.

The second type of definitions follows a socioscientific approach defined according to shared characteristics or phenomena (Anderson 2010: 20; see also Lee, Poloma, and Post 2013). The third, historical approach defines Pentecostalism as all movements that have diachronic and/or synchronic links that connect it with this 20th century revitalization movement that held firmly to a global revival and strong eschatological fervor. (Anderson 2010: 22). The fourth, the theological approach, defines Pentecostalism based on the movements that share a particular theology and emphasis on the Holy Spirit (Dayton 1987).

Anderson proposes a fifth type, which he calls family-resemblance. It incorporates typological, historical, theological, and sociological foci (Anderson et al. 2010: 27). This approach allows the researcher to understand Pentecostalism with historical roots, theological affirmations, and shared phenomenology.

While the classic three-part typological definitions (Hollenweger 1997; Burgess 2002; Anderson 2010) offer a heuristic framework to understand Pentecostal churches, there are several difficulties that hamper its applicability to the Kerala Pentecostal context. The biggest difficulty is the implicit assumption that the North American Pentecostal experience and historiography are normative for global Pentecostalism. Anderson's proposal of "Older Independent and Spirit Churches" attempts to address this deficiency (Anderson 2010: 18). However, importing this category to Pentecostalism in Majority World contexts places the so-called 'Classical Pentecostals,' defined as movements tracing their lineage to Azusa Street, as authentic expressions, leaving Pentecostal movements that are indigenous to other contexts, in a somewhat lesser rest-category.

Todd Johnson, editor of the *Atlas of Global Christianity* and the *World Christian Database*, offers a three-part typology on global Pentecostalism (Johnson 2014: 274). Denominational Pentecostalism refers to those movements that emerge in the early part of the twentieth century. He defines them as "all associated with explicitly pentecostal denominations that identify themselves in explicitly pentecostal terms, or with other denominations that as a whole are phenomenologically pentecostal in teaching and practice" (Johnson 2014: 275). Charismatics are defined as "Christians affiliated to nonpentecostal denominations (Anglican, Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox) who receive the experiences above in what has been termed the charismatic movement"

(Johnson 2014: 275). Most significantly they remain within the mainline denominations rather than leaving to join Pentecostal denominations.

Independent Charismatics are those that while resembling the previous two categories do not neatly fit their definitions (Johnson 2014: 277). They have also been referred to as neo-Charismatics or neo-Pentecostals. Johnson defines these as those movements "who are not in Protestant pentecostal denominations, nor are they individual Charismatics in the traditional churches." They are "pentecostal or semi-pentecostal members of the 250-year-old Independent movement of Christians, primarily in the Global South, of churches begun without reference to Western Christianity. These indigenous movements, though not all explicitly pentecostal, nevertheless have the main features of Pentecostalism." They "exhibit pentecostal and charismatic phenomena but combine this with rejection of pentecostal terminology" (Johnson 2014: 277). In essence, they are not tied to denominational Pentecostalism or mainline denominations, but have left their prior membership to form their own networks.

Johnson's typology moves us beyond a geographic starting point to recognize the diverse starting points of global Pentecostalism, while still grounding the categories of global Pentecostalism within the historical development of the twentieth century. The typology he proposes identifies clearly a three-part progression from early Pentecostal denominations, later movements within mainline Protestant, Orthodox, and Catholic churches, and recent movements that are embracing a separate ecclesial identity apart from the previous two categories. While acknowledging the strengths of the terms suggested, there remains several challenges.

When discerning appropriate categories for local contexts, we must not assume a 'one-size fits all' typological approach. What qualifies as Classical or Denominational Pentecostalism must be defined with attention to the history of Pentecostalism in local contexts. The need is to clarify and expand the definition of these terms informed by local context. Furthermore, this typology must take seriously the self-definition of the various ecclesial fellowships. Following a socio-scientific approach, one might conclude that some groups fit squarely within the Pentecostal typology; however, their reluctance to self-identify as Pentecostal warrants reflection.

Thus, in this chapter, I consider Kerala Pentecostalism in primarily two categories: Denominational Pentecostalism and Neo-Pentecostalism. The term Denominational Pentecostals refers to those Pentecostal denominations that trace their lineage to Western Protestant missionaries as well as those indigenous movements that identify themselves with Pentecostal groups. Neo-Pentecostalism is seen as renewal movements that share the phenomenological

markers of Denominational Pentecostalism without the insistence on speaking in tongues as evidence and do not self-identify with Pentecostal denominations. Members and leaders of neo-Pentecostal groups typically do not hold prior ecclesial membership in Pentecostal denominations. In Kerala, they often emerge out of churches that are non-Pentecostal, such as those that identify primarily with the Eastern and Catholic Christian tradition.

8 Understanding 'New Generation' Churches

'New Generation' churches do not share the historical antecedents, early missionaries, or early indigenous leaders of Denominational Pentecostalism. Churches such as Heavenly Feast and Church of the Eternity have emerged since the mid-1990s as a response to the renewal experienced by members belonging to the Catholic Church, Orthodox Church, Jacobite Church, Mar Thoma Church, and other mainline churches, as well as conversion from other faiths. People join these churches when they experience physical healing or deliverance from evil spirits, attend revival meetings, or hear the gospel over television or through various other forms of media. Fueled by the currents of the "globalization of Pentecostalism" (Robbins 2004; Dempster *et al.* 2011), charismatic movements and healing evangelists emerged preaching a message of revival and healing. These churches stand in stark contrast to the insistence of Denominational Pentecostal churches that their members use no jewelry, yet they espouse the importance of believer's baptism and emphasize the gifts of the Spirit, including speaking in tongues, healing, and deliverance from evil spirits. Hence, they are called 'New Generation' churches by the Denomination Pentecostals in Kerala.

There are two types of 'New Generation' churches: denominational and independent. Denominationally affiliated 'New Generation' churches are part of a fellowship of churches that is organized as a network or a denomination, albeit in its early stages. With a large following garnered through revival meetings, churches are established in various locations. In a short time, these congregations are organized into a fellowship that functions as a denomination. When these churches are established in the diaspora, they remain connected to the charismatic leader and founder of the movement. In contrast, independent 'New Generation' churches do not have official membership or oversight from any fellowship or denomination. They remain autonomous but are held together through the personal social networks of the founder.

When the desire for spiritual vitality and ministerial engagement goes unmet within the traditional framework of the Eastern and mainline churches,

charismatic fellowships typically emerge as prayer fellowships.[3] Although part of the phenomenon of 'New Generation' churches, a charismatic fellowship remains distinctly one fellowship, choosing to remain an informal movement rather than an institution and maintain membership within its prior ecclesial identity in the traditional church. Openness to spiritual gifts, prayer, intercession, and missional outreach characterize these fellowships. They are led by the laity and become avenues for leadership and ministerial practice for those who experience a call to ministry. Often, these informal prayer fellowships eventually break off from their previous ecclesial affiliations to form distinct churches.

9 Studies of 'New Generation' Churches

'New Generation' churches in Kerala Christianity have received very little attention in the literature so far with no thorough treatment of the subject to date. Prema Kurien, professor of sociology at Syracuse University, explores the growing influence of 'New Generation' churches and the impact of transnational migration on religion in the sending context (Kurien 2014). She analyzes the migration of people from Kerala to the Gulf States and their direct and indirect effects in transforming the Mar Thoma denomination. Kurien argues that the cultural and social change of international migration, financial prosperity, change in household experienced by migrant workers and their families place new demands and expectations of the church. Furthermore, the social problems rising from migration, familial breakdown, competitive consumerism, all contribute to the rise of what Kurien calls, "new evangelical and charismatic transdenominational movements" challenging the function of "traditional episcopal denominations" (Kurien 2014: 110).

Kurien further reflects on the change in migrant religiosity from traditional churches to neo-Pentecostal movements employing a three-pronged theoretical paradigm. First, she uses Stark and Finke's (2000) theory on religious economies to emphasize the rising competition from new religious suppliers in a dynamic religious environment. Next, DiMaggio's (1998) neo-institutionalism theory helps her to describe the resistance of long-established institutions to change preferring "stability and legitimacy" over "efficiency and growth" (Kurien 2014: 111). The third approach (Spickard 2004) highlights the difficulty of

3 Similar to the argument on the historicity of Classical Pentecostals, charismatic fellowships may be defined with respect to the history of the local context, without assuming their lineage from North American contexts.

hierarchical and centralized institutions to engage in transnationalism managing the complexity of cultures and locations in varied regions. In this way, she describes the innovation through media and technology and the malleability of neo-Pentecostal churches in contrast to the institutionalism of Eastern traditional churches such as the Mar Thoma and their reluctance to change.

Ginu Zachariah Oommen examines the growing importance of what he classifies as neo-Pentecostal groups in Kuwait, although with an overall negative assessment of the movement (Oommen 2011: 2015). He sees the growing influence of neo-Pentecostal churches as an opportunistic response to the social context marked by the region's political instability, hostile social environment, social alienation from host country, and economic insecurity among migrants (Oommen 2015: 16). He argues,

> Consequently in Kuwait, 'popular religion' like neo-Pentecostals have attained an upper hand over the 'official religion' since the popular religion emphatically stresses on the prosperity gospel. The volatile situation is being exploited successfully by the former with a large number of immigrants especially the youth moving toward the new religious movement (ibid: 17).

Oommen describes the traditional churches as "highly organized, with a muscular hierarchy, ritualistic in nature and as oriental-ecclesiastical traditions" (ibid: 19). For this reason, he claims, Pentecostalism of the twentieth century "couldn't penetrate within the Syrian denominations and have made some inroads among the downtrodden and lower-caste sections in Southern India" (ibid: 19). Furthermore, he treats neo-Pentecostal churches as an extension of the American church. He claims, "The neo-pentecostal is also predominantly an American based movement and its theology is centered on the 'Prosperity Gospel'" (ibid: 20).

Oommen's claims are quite problematic for several reasons that I will outline below. For one, it is difficult, if not impossible, to demonstrate the connection of any 'New Generation' church in Kerala with Denominational Pentecostal groups in America. Whereas a clear connection can be found between Denominational Pentecostalism in the United States such as the Assemblies of God, Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) with Denominational Pentecostal groups in India. Second, even a casual observer of Indian Pentecostalism can discern the significant impact of Pentecostalism in Kerala over the course of the twentieth century. In *The South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the Twentieth Century*, Bergunder (2008) identifies the Syrian Christian background of many of the early leaders and believers of Kerala Pentecostalism. Many of these leaders were ostracized by their families for leaving their prior ecclesial

background in Mar Thoma churches, Church of South India (CSI), Orthodox and Jacobite churches, and Catholic church to join Pentecostal churches. The Syrian Christian influence in Denominational Pentecostalism in Kerala was precisely what was contested because of the exclusion of *dalit* Pentecostals in the otherwise Syrian Christian dominated leadership of Pentecostal churches, giving rise to churches that were primarily *dalit*-led such as Church of God (Full Gospel) Kerala Region. Thus negating the assertion of the lack of Syrian Christians among Denominational Pentecostalism. Furthermore, it is one thing to claim that the neo-Pentecostal movement in Kerala shares salient features with the global Pentecostal/Charismatic movement and it is a whole another thing to claim that they are an "American based movement." And speaking of the origins of Heavenly Feast, Oommen's claim that the "cradle of the neo-pentecostalism is among the migrant workers in Gulf region" (ibid: 21) is difficult to sustain since the movement had its origins in Kerala.

To contrast, Kurien cites interviews with several interlocutors from the Mar Thoma church in Kerala discussing the powerful draw of Heavenly Feast (Kurien 2014: 123–124). They cite faith-healing claims of the preachers, spirited homilies of the preachers, lively singing and dancing in the churches, and gaining an intense spiritual experience that brought peace of mind as reasons for their attraction to the movement. They further describe the personal and pastoral care of their ministers and members, the informality in worship and singing with the use of drums and guitars, and lively and practically oriented sermons.

Samuel compares the pneumatological emphases between denominational Pentecostals and 'New Generation' churches, which he terms Neocharismatics. While sharing similar phenomenology of spiritual gifts, healing, exorcism, and spiritual warfare with denominational Pentecostals, 'New Generation' churches add the emphasis on prosperity or material blessings with a "wider understanding of the ministry of the Holy Spirit." (Samuel 2018: 255) Furthermore, Samuel notes the egalitarian praxis of the Heavenly Feast across caste and class distinctions which some Denominational Pentecostal movements found insurmountable (ibid: 236). He contends, these churches have been able to contextualize Pentecostalism to address "the daily Christian experience with struggles and pain" and that "shapes the pneumatology of the Neocharismatics" (ibid: 3).

Perhaps the rise of 'New Generation' churches at the turn of the twenty-first century and its growth in the first two decades of the century can best be understood to represent a wave of revitalization in Kerala Christianity (Street and Miller 2013: 21). After nearly a century of history of Pentecostalism in Kerala, the denominations are, arguably, undergoing institutionalization and routinization (Weber 2010: 363). Through structures of hierarchy and facilities for

theological education, the Pentecostal Churches have institutionalized and affirmed their positions of influence and recognition within the larger Christian community. With this inward focus, however, the churches lose their missional emphasis and spiritual vitality.

'New Generation' churches arose in the climate of growing institutionalization and routinization in the Denominational Pentecostal churches. These new churches expressed spiritual vitality and missional passion. Without any reluctance to utilize media, they took to the airwaves and employed technology to broadcast their message. Through power encounters, spiritual warfare, deliverance, and healings, they addressed the spiritual and physical needs of the people, the very features that characterized Kerala Pentecostalism in its inception.

Denominational Pentecostalism draws criticism from 'New Generation' churches because of its fissiparous nature and church splits, and the political infighting within the movement continued to grow at the turn of the century. For Denominational Pentecostals, displeasure with the leadership of the church often leads to an exodus of the dissenting group from the church. Often, the dissenters are given official recognition by their respective denominations and thus another church is formed. The situation of multiple Pentecostal churches affiliated with the same denomination and within close geographic proximity of one another draws condemnation from mainline Christians. Some critics of the Denominational Pentecostals compare the election of church officials to the hyper-enthusiasm characteristic of politicians.

'New Generation' groups also react negatively to Eastern Orthodox churches, mainline denominations, and the Catholic Church. They regard the traditional and liturgical Eastern churches as lacking in spiritual vitality. 'New Generation' churches are willing to set aside their ecclesial membership for experiencing exuberant worship and embracing the spiritual gifts. Thus, the 'New Generation' churches are caught in between the Denominational Pentecostals and mainline churches.

10 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the development of 'New Generation' churches in Kerala Christianity shaped within a context of traditional Eastern Christianity and Pentecostalism. The chapter cautions us from creating an assumption of normativity of Pentecostalism's origin and features, instead inclining our ears to understand contemporary movements within local contexts shaped by the movements and denominations to which they are responding and reacting. Any attempt to define and describe global

Pentecostalism often comes with the acknowledgement of the diversity and complexity of the subject being described. Hence, in a World Christianity approach the validity of typological and methodological categories must be discerned by its ability to adequately describe local phenomenon. This assessment is then followed by description of local phenomenon, explanation, analysis, supplementation, and further proposals of typologies.

Shall we conclude, then, along with Oommen that these movements are radical religious groups and compare them in the same breath with Muslim groups such as Jamaat e Islami, Hindu fundamentalists such as the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), and various other cults (Oommen 2011: 44)? Quite the contrary, 'New Generation' churches ought to be understood through the lens of renewal movements within the Kerala context and its diasporic communities and as an expression of spiritual vitality in a climate of institutionalization and routinization affecting traditional Eastern churches and Denominational Pentecostals. While on the one hand they reject the traditionalism of the Eastern churches, they reject the routinization in Denominational Pentecostalism, giving rise to new movements. These new movements present unique possibilities for renewal and revitalization and respond to the spiritual hunger of many religious seekers. Churches like Heavenly Feast address this deep yearning and hunger for deeper spiritual experience through worship, Bible teachings, revival meetings, and miracles. As incipient movements, however, they remain leery of established institutions and seek to sustain their movement instead through spiritual vitality. Although relatively recent as a movement, these new churches are increasing in membership. They are planting churches and expanding their network and influence on a significant scale. The deeper call for the church in Kerala is to move past language of exclusion of these movements to a deeper ecumenism marked by collaboration and partnership, allowing the vitality of these new movements to benefit the institutional churches, while affirming the catholicity of church in the face of increasing vulnerability of Christians in today's socio-political climate in India.

Bibliography

Anderson, Allan, Michael Bergunder, Andre Droogers, and Cornelis Van Der Laan (2010). *Studying Global Pentecostalism. Theories and Methods*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Barrett, David B., George Thomas Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson (2001). *World Christian Encyclopedia. A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bergunder, Michael (2008). *The South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the Twentieth Century*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Burgess, Stanley M., and Ed M. van der Maas (2002). *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Das, Yesunatha (2001). 'An Evaluation of the History of Pentecostal Dalits in Kerala.' MTh Thesis. Southern Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies.

Dayton, Donald W. (1987). *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Dempster, Murray W., Bryan D. Klaus, and Douglas Petersen, eds. (2011). *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*. Irvine, CA: Regnum.

DiMaggio, Paul J. (1998). 'The Relevance of Organizational Theory to the Study of Religion.' In N.J. Demerath III, Peter Dobkin Hall, Terry Schmitt, and Rhys H. Williams, eds. *Sacred Companies. Organizational Aspects of Religion and Religious Aspects of Organizations*, New York: Oxford University Press: 7–23.

Frykenberg, Robert Eric (2008). *History of Christianity in India. From Beginnings to the Present*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

George, A.C. 2001. 'Pentecostal Beginnings in Travancore.' *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4,2: 215–37.

Hollenweger, Walter J. (1997). *Pentecostalism. Origins and Developments Worldwide*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.

Hollenweger, Walter J. (2004). 'An Introduction to Pentecostalisms.' *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 25,2: 125–37.

Johnson, Todd M. (2014). 'Counting Pentecostals Worldwide.' *Pneuma* 36,2: 265–288.

Johnson, Todd M. (2009). 'The Global Demographics of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal.' *Society* 46,6: 479–483.

Johnson, Todd Michael and Kenneth R. Ross (2013). *Atlas of Global Christianity. 1910–2010*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Johnson, Todd M. and Gina A. Zurlo eds. (2020). *World Christian Database*. Leiden/ Boston: Brill.

Kurien, Prema (2014). 'The Impact of International Migration on Home Churches. The Mar Thoma Syrian Christian Church in India.' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 53,1: 109–129.

Lee, Matthew T., Margaret M. Poloma, and Stephen Garrard Post (2013). *The Heart of Religion/ Spiritual Empowerment, Benevolence, and the Experience of God's Love*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lukose, Wessly (2013). *Contextual Missiology of the Spirit. Pentecostalism in Rajasthan, India*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Mar Thoma, Juhanon (1968). *Christianity in India and a Brief History of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church*. Madras: K.M. Cherian.

McGee, Gary B. (1996). 'Pentecostal Phenomena and Revivals in India. Implications for Indigenous Church Leadership.' *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20,3: 112–17.

Miller, Donald E. (2016). 'Where the Spirit Leads. Global Pentecostalism and Freedom.' In Allan D. Hertzke and Timothy S. Shah, eds. *Christianity and Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 87–106.

Oommen, Ginu Zacharia (2011). 'The Assertion of Religion among Indian Immigrants in West Asia. A Case Study of the Syrian Christians of Kerala in Kuwait.' *International Politics* 4,7: 25–48.

Oommen, Ginu Zacharia (2015). *Gulf Migration, Social Remittances and Religion. The Changing dynamics of Kerala Christians*. New Dehli: India Centre for Migration, Ministry of External Affairs.

Oommen, Ginu Zacharia (2020) 'Gulf Migration, Remittances and Religion. Interplay of Faith and Prosperity Amongst Syrian Christians in Kerala.' In S. Iridaya Rajan and Ginu Z. Oommen, eds. *Asianization of Migrant Workers in the Gulf Countries*. Springer, Singapore: 247–266.

Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (2006). *Spirit and Power. A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals*. Washington DC: Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. http://pewforum.org/newassets/surveys/pentecostal/pentecostals-08.pdf.

Robbins, Joel (2004). 'The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity.' *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33:117–143.

Samuel, Joy T. (2018). *The Pneumatic Experiences of the Indian Neocharismatics*. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Birmingham.

Spickard, James V. (2004). 'Globalization and Religious Organizations. Rethinking the Relationship between Church, Culture, and Market.' *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 18, 1/2: 47–83.

Stark, Rodney and Roger Finke (2000). *Acts of Faith. Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Street, Nick, and Donald E. Miller (2013). *Moved by the Spirit. Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in the Global South*. Los Angeles: Center for Religion and Civic Culture, University of Southern California.

Weber, M., and T. Parsons (2010). *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York: Free Press.

World Christian database (2004). http://www.worldchristiandatabase (2004).org/wcd/.

CHAPTER 13

Methodological Considerations: Convergences

Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy

1 Introduction

Nemere Kerezsi's artwork *In the apiary* depicted on the cover of this book encapsulates several of the features that we as editors consider distinctive for a World Christianity approach. It epitomizes simultaneity of difference and balances uniqueness and connectedness in such a way that each geometric form is both distinct and complete, and a constitutive part of a larger entity. The fluid transitions between the forms project togetherness and oneness, yet there is no apparent center. To us, *In the apiary* represents a conceptual design that visualizes some of the fundamental theoretical ideas of a World Christianity approach. This World Christianity approach is still very much 'in the making'. Frederiks in this volume tentatively sketches some of the contours of such an approach from a religious studies perspective, stating that it

> entails the conscious and consistent endeavour to study particular Christian communities, beliefs, or practices in the light of and in relation to Christianity's wider (hi)story, mindful of integrative and globalizing forces as well as of its multiple 'centers', trajectories, and agents, aware that Christianity's manifestations always shape and are shaped by broader political, socio-economic, and religious dynamics, cognizant of the diversity of beliefs and practices this has produced across time and space.
>
> Frederiks, this volume

Nagy, working as a missiologist-theologian, has proposed diversity, unity, locality, and connectivity as the central concepts in a World Christianity approach. For her:

> These concepts are all interrelated, creating overlapping webs of meaning. For example, unity and diversity gain meaning only through their connection through specific locations where these characteristics are expressed. In a sense, a single locality may contain multiple worlds, demonstrating complex change over time (chronology is also a key factor). Furthermore, these interactions are moderated through various types of

© Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy, 2021 | DOI:10.1163/9789004444867_015
This is an open access chapter distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

> power relations, which regulate all interactions in which humans are involved. Perceiving the world as constituted by multiple contexts in which humans interact with each other and with God (Nagy 2009:6), the researcher can define the context of a concrete research area only by pinning down the specific locality.
>
> Nagy 2017: 147

As may be evident from the diverse disciplinary backgrounds of the contributors in this book, we as editors do not consider a World Christianity approach to be the proprium of theology and/or religious studies. Rather, we advocate multiple perspectivity, both in terms of multidisciplinary and in terms of representing a diversity of contexts and viewpoints. In this closing chapter we revisit the contributions to this volume in order to discern how the range of methods, perspectives, and insights discussed in the previous chapters, aid us in further developing and operationalizing a World Christianity approach.

As outlined in the introduction, the central concern of this book has been methodology. We have therefore structured this last chapter around five methodological clusters. Each cluster represents a methodological aspect that we consider critical to a World Christianity approach. The clusters converge around the topics of context, analytical concepts, methods, sources, and choosing a unit of analysis.

2 Context

A key feature of a World Christianity approach as we envisage it, is attentiveness to Christianity/ies' entanglements with a wide variety of contexts. Christianity/ies shape and are shaped by contexts; imaginaries of connectedness and integrative forces that connect local expressions of Christianity/Christianities only exist by virtue of these local manifestations. Or in the words of Nagy cited above, "unity and diversity gain meaning only through their connection through specific locations where these characteristics are expressed." A World Christianity approach therefore explicitly takes cognizance of the fact that ever-changing contexts constantly interact on manifestations, beliefs, and practices of the Christian tradition and, vice versa, that Christianity/ies also (co)shape and transform these contexts.

The chapters in this volume exemplify some of the manifold ways in which Christianities in context interact with and in their settings. As Nagy argues in her contribution and is evidenced in other contributions in this volume as well, contexts are not confined to the socio-economic and political configurations

that shape a locality or particular geopolitical setting. Rather, contexts encompass "a diversity of perceptions, experiences, and processes of cohabitation within shared localities and beyond" (Nagy, this volume). Contexts can be digitally or discursively constructed as Van Liere demonstrates in his analysis of the representations of the Coptic migrant workers. They can consist of translocal networks as shown by both John and Lee and Chow. But they can also comprise of visions or globally connected movements in which people from different localities participate as Wild-Wood argues in her contribution on missionary sources, or of theological constructs, as Barreto's exposition on liberation theology shows. A World Christianity approach takes this wide diversity of contexts, and the way these contexts interact on each other and on Christianity/ies into account.

Several contributors signpost that also religious configurations are contexts that shape Christianity/ies; they observe that these religious contexts affect and fashion the modalities of interaction between Christianity/ies and other religious traditions. Van Liere for example highlights modalities of competition and rivalry, Haug's case-study of Thai comparative theology foregrounds convergences and a shared worldview, while Williams' research in Nigeria underscores the fuzziness and fluidity of religious belonging and identity, thus drawing attention to forms of 'boundary-crossing' between religious traditions. The chapters by Haug and Ariarajah underscore that the manner and extent to which Christianity is shaped by its religiously plural contexts, hinges on a constellation of factors, such as the size of the Christian community in relation to its a religiously plural context (minority/majority) and its theological conviction. Not every Christian community situated in a religiously plural setting for example allows the religious other(s) to interrogate and transform its faith expressions and theology. The contributions by Pratt on institutional responses to multireligiosity and by Ariarajah on the theological implications of living in a religiously plural world make clear that also within contexts, there can be different modalities of interaction simultaneously, depending on the situationality of the actors: where Pratt homes in on global institutional responses, Ariarajah argues that the attention for pluriformity in World Christianity discourses should also have implications for theological assessments of the religiously others.

The chapters by Pratt and by John underscore that religious contexts are not limited to the religiously other; the dynamics between various Christian expressions in past and present are also part of the religious configurations that interact on particular local Christianities. And as Van Geest and Wild-Wood make clear, often times these interactions are hierarchical and buttressed by power (be it military, political, economic or ideological); they often

represent a quest to proclaim a particular interpretation 'catholic', and hence universally normative.

Several contributions also explicitly flag academia as a context of Christianity/ies, because of the critical role the academia plays in how Christian manifestations, beliefs, and practices are perceived, represented, and interpreted. It is predominantly the prerogative (and hence the power) of the academia, to develop concepts, theories, and interpretational frameworks for the study of Christianity/ies. Frederiks (2019, and this volume) for example points to the selective representation of Christianity/ies in current World Christianity debates, resulting in an underrepresentation (factual as well as theoretical) of for example minority churches in the Sahel and North Africa, and Eastern and Oriental Orthodoxy. John interrogates the validity and hegemony of American Protestant-based taxonomies of Pentecostalism and argues its limited value for settings such as Kerala, where the 'New Generation' churches split off from Orthodox churches. Barreto flags the absence of Latin American voices and experiences in World Christianity debates and points to the way in which African experiences have dominated in fashioning current conceptualization of World Christianity. Each of these contributions draws attention to the processes of exclusion and inclusion, and to privileging of certain voices and experiences in knowledge production in the academia over others, and flags how this selectiveness shapes theory as well as discourse. Thus, these observations pinpoint that power dynamics not merely play a role within Christianity/ies in past and present, but also in the representation and study of both current and past manifestations of Christianity.

3 Typologies, Terminologies, and Conceptual Categories

A second cluster of methodological issues that is central to a World Christianity approach, is a concern over the validity of typological and methodological categories in a diversity of local contexts. John's critical inquiry into taxonomies of Pentecostalism was already mentioned above. Likewise, also Barreto, Williams, Nagy and Frederiks argue that typologies and terminologies are developed in particular settings at particular moments in time, and hence may not be transferable to other settings nor may be apposite categories to study Christian manifestations worldwide. Several contributions in this volume explore this in some depth.

Frederiks and Nagy each examine the situationality of conceptual categories in their explorations, focusing in particular on the concept World Christianity itself. Frederiks, referencing work by scholars such as Paul Kollman, Thomas

Thangaraj and Dana Robert, discusses the long genealogy and multiple recalibrations of World Christianity and argues that in its most recent stipulation, the discursive concept 'World Christianity'

> is embedded in theories on the translatability and inculturation of the gospel (Sanneh 1989; Walls 1990, 1982) with a strong emphasis on the vitality and growth of 'Southern Christianity', most clearly expressed through the popular phrase that the 'center of gravity of Christianity is moving South'. The postulated but frequently implicit background to this conceptualization of World Christianity seems to be a representation of European Christianity as a tale of secularisation and decline. Against this context, the construct 'World Christianity' seems to function as a discursive reassurance that due to the 'meteoric rise of non-Western Christianity' (both in loci and in its migration settings) there is hope for the Christian faith after all.
>
> Frederiks, this volume

Nagy in her contribution probes the modifier 'world' in World Christianity, and explores parallel 'worldling' trends within the Humanities (e.g. World Philosophy, World Literature and World History). She writes: "The recognition of a shared humanity seems to be one of the starting points based on which worlding approaches operate. While acknowledging the legitimacy of researching Christians and Christian communities worldwide (a position I repeatedly articulate), researching them does not mean a limited and exclusive attention to Christians only." And she concludes:

> Placed in a global context, the modifier 'world' assumes multiple meanings, referring not only to geo-political places, but also to a diversity of perceptions, experiences, and processes of cohabitation within shared localities and beyond. This is why I argue that when placed before 'Christianity', 'world' may refer to parallel worlds within a shared locality, or worlds that are constructed and owned by people with different conceptual, ritual, and virtual domains, such as the digital world, the overlapping worlds of particular confessions or movements, or different social worlds.
>
> Nagy, this volume

Van Liere's contribution on strategies of framing flags another issue. His case-study of how Islamic State through media, words, and deeds constructs World Christianities, spells out that the conceptualization and stipulation of discursive categories is not merely the prerogative of the academia; concepts are also

forged by public discourses, and by agents from within as well as outside the Christian tradition.

Corey Williams' and Stanley John's contributions both focus on the transferability of typologies and categories from one context to another. Williams' observations are more generic in nature. His inquiry into the notion of religious belonging establishes that analytical categories are often tailored on institutionalized forms of religion, making them unfit to study religion or religiosity that is less public or less institutionalized (like African indigenous religions). Williams also brings up the Protestant bias in the theorization of concepts pertaining to religion, and argues that categories tailored on Christianity may prove unsuitable for research in religiously plural settings. Stanley John in his quest for apposite taxonomies for Kerala's 'New Generation' churches, questions whether typologies developed based on a North American Protestant experience are meaningful categories to describe and analyze churches that emerged out of indigenous Pentecostal and Oriental Orthodox churches. His chapter represent a wider entreaty to interrogate the transferability of concepts and models developed on the basis of Christianity in Europe or North America and, like Frederiks and Barreto in their contributions, makes a case to extend World Christianity's multiple center approach to conceptual categories and periodization.

Finally, Haug's examination of the notions of '*karma*' and 'God' sensitizes researchers to the fact that the use of analogous categories by informants does not necessarily imply that the notions have similar inferences. Haug shows that though her Christian informants indicated that the term *karma* could be used to describe Christian theological insights, none of them shared the cyclical understanding of reality this term implied. Likewise, some Buddhist informants, like Christian respondents, expressed the conviction, that God could intervene in the law of *karma*. Yet, where Christian respondents experienced this as hopeful and comforting, the Buddhist informants perceived this as something negative, because it implied "that the outcome of human action does not depend solely on one's own, but that it depends on someone outside of himself." Haug therefor makes clear that concepts never stand-alone but are always part of a wider discursive field that shapes their connotation.

4 Working with Sources

Another methodological cluster that emerges from the chapters pertains to sources. The contributions address various aspects of what a World Christianity approach in relation to sources could involve. Paul van Geest's chapter on heresy in the works of Augustine of Hippo evidences that a World Christianity

approach is productive for texts from the recent as well as the more distant past. Without explicitly using the term, Van Geest experiments with a World Christianity approach by reading patristic texts in a manner that acknowledges and affirms the pluriformity of Christianity's history. Van Geest's methodological choice to temporarily bracket out Augustine's standing as the bedrock of the Latin Church (a position attributed to him only in hindsight anyway), and to read Augustine's texts as one voice amidst others in the heresy debate, allows him to appreciate Augustine in his contextual connectivities. The chapter evidences how Augustine, rather than being an acontextual and a-historic authority, constantly rehashes his theological understandings of heresy, both in conversation with different opponents and in relation to altering religious and political circumstances. The chapter also makes clear that according to Augustine heterodox movements served a purpose in helping to establish 'orthodoxy'. Augustine's main objection to these movements—the claims of regional interpretations of Christianity to be normative for the whole of Christianity—sounds uncannily modern to people attuned to current World Christianity debates. Thus, Van Geest persuasively demonstrates that a World Christianity approach yields fresh perspectives, even for well-read patristic sources.

Both Emma Wild-Wood's chapter on studying the history of Christianity/ies in Africa and Joseph Lee and Christie Chow's chapter on interpreting Christianity/ies in China, make working with sources the central concern of their contribution. Much has already been said and written about the "interpretation, problems and possibilities of working with missionary sources in the history of Christianity", to quote the title of Wild-Wood's chapter to this volume. In order to negotiate the limitations of their main archival sources both Wild-Wood and Lee and Chow devise multiple primary source strategies; by doing this, they are able to widen the scope of their source materials and incorporate multiple voices and perspectives. Wild-Wood, working mainly on colonial Africa, advocates the use of private papers as well as regional sources produced by local elites (e.g. anthropological works, newspapers) to complement missionary perspectives. Lee and Chow consulted government archives (national, regional, local), diaries, sermons, and personal papers (China being a highly literate society) and material culture as resources to supplement the (often scanty or absent) Chinese church archives. Chow also experimented with social media (Facebook/Twitter) to generate data. In their contributions both Wild-Wood and Lee and Chow make a convincing case for a historiography based on more than just internal Christian sources. They also argue that intersecting textual materials with oral history and material sources (e.g. photographs, films, audiotapes, grave-stones, and archaeological evidence) is a

productive historiographic strategy to ensure the multiperspectivity central to a World Christianity approach.

In their discussion of sources Lee and Chow also raise the critical issue of language. They argue that drawing on sources in languages other than the dominant one can be an effective strategy to subvert or nuance hegemonic narratives. Also Wild-Wood draws attention to power dynamics in relation to sources. Examining the role of editors of missionary sources, Wild-Wood argues that an analysis of a story recurring in a variety sources may shed light on the trajectories of materials through editorial processes and reveal how narratives were fashioned to meet the expectations of particular audiences.

The multiple primary source method proposed by Wild-Wood and Lee and Chow may also prove to be an effective method to dispel some of the tenacious binaries (indigenous/missionary, north/south) that continue to mar many a contribution to the World Christianity debates (Jones 2014; Frederiks, this volume). Wild-Wood as well as Lee and Chow problematize bi-polar lines of thinking that pit missionary over and against indigenous perspectives, be it each for different reasons. Wild-Wood's work evinces that local agents like Apolo Kivebulaya were gradually drawn into universal missionary visions and cosmopolitan networks; Kivebulaya eventually became a cross-cultural missionary himself, thus in his very person blurring the categories of missionary and indigenous agent. For China, Lee and Chow criticize historiographic reproductions of the binary 'indigenous' versus 'missionary' because they replicate the nationalist agenda of the Communist state. Lee and Chow interrogate and contest this agenda by demonstrating that even during the Maoist era, local appropriation processes of missionary ideas continued, with extended kinship networks functioning as channels of transnational exchange.

Lee and Chow's chapter as well as Van Liere's contribution on discursive framings of the execution of Coptic migrant workers in January 2015 by Islamic State, flag one the concerns of a World Christianity approach, which is the situationality of concepts, theories, and sources. Both Lee and Chow and Van Liere demonstrate how sources are shaped by changing religious and political constellations. Their contributions signpost that institutions and organisations—through the production and framing of sources—have the power to shape both sources and realities. Their chapters also evidence how sources are produced and positioned to play a part in larger ideological frameworks and official historiographic narratives. Lee and Chow in their discussion of sources fashioned and fabricated by Maoist ideology, write: "[S]cholars have to be critical of the ideological settings in which these materials were produced, catalogued and preserved by government officials, and the anti-religious biases that were

mobilized to interpret the faith experience of individual believers and church communities" (Lee and Chow, this volume). And as Van Liere's contribution makes clear, sources are not merely profoundly affected by ideologies, but at times are the products of power discourses and even orchestrated to support particular ideologies.

The cases of IS and Maoist China are two blatant examples of power dynamics at play. In many other cases the power dynamics will be more subtle, though no less effective, be it that the subtlety will also make power more elusive and hence more difficult to trace. Yet, as Frederiks argues in her contribution to in this volume, power is at the very heart of both knowledge production and knowledge construction.

5 Methods

Methodologically speaking, a World Christianity approach does not privilege particular methods. On the contrary, it fosters multi- and interdisciplinarity and as an approach interacts on existing methods, bringing certain themes and perspectives (e.g. power dynamics, multiple centers, connectivities, diversity) to the fore. The aim of a World Christianity approach is to create awareness of the complex methodological issues at stake when working with terms that are often taken for granted. As argued by Frederiks and Nagy in this volume, the very term World Christianity is a case in point. By using World Christianity as the name of an approach (rather than to describe a field of studies or a subject matter), the editors aim at testing its translatability and operationability through various methods and fields (as well as languages, and contexts).

By underscoring the fruitfulness of the multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinariy of a World Christianity approach the editors urge scholars to step out of their comfort zones and explore alternative methods, intersecting methods or even create new methods. Several contributions in this volume exemplify the productivity of such a venture. Van Geest's contribution for example shows how a World Christianity approach yields new research questions—and new insights—for traditional philological and theological text inquiries, even when applied to thoroughly scrutinized patristic sources as such as the Augustinian corpus. Van Liere's chapter shows the productiveness of intersecting a World Christianity approach with discourse analysis, evidencing that not only persons, objects or ideas, but also frames can construct religious connectivities. Van Liere demonstrates how frames, brought into play by actors as disparate as IS (crusader frame), Pope Francis (martyr/ecumenism of blood frame), and North American evangelicals (martyr/

convert frame), discursively interconnect religious communities across time and space, and fortify translocal bonds.

Wild-Wood and Lee and Chow expand well-worn historiographical methods by mining unconventional sources as well as by widening their scope to include non-textual sources, such as oral history and material culture. Wild-Wood uses a multiple primary source approach and triangulation to trace and engage a multiplicity of voices and perspectives, which enable her to probe longstanding conventional classifications and dichotomies (missionary/indigenous). Lee and Chow opt for a mixed method approach; intersecting historical and ethnographic methods aids Lee and Chow in meeting the challenges posed by the gaps in historical records as well as in interpreting sources profoundly shaped by Maoist ideology.

Both Williams and John primarily use ethnographic methods; but where John's investigation of Kerala 'New Generation' churches studies one particular group in multiple contexts, Williams investigates multiple groups in one particular locality. Frederiks in her contribution argues that such forms of synchronic (and diachronic) comparative research are an important feature of a World Christianity approach.

Williams operationalizes his comparative research into plural religious settings by introducing the notion of a 'religious field' (in his case: the Egúngún festival). Kari Haug in her chapter on Thai comparative theology opts for a different strategy. Rather than studying Thai Christians and Buddhists in a joint setting, Haug creates a common textual field (i.e. two passages from the Old Testament) and has representatives of both groups reflect on this, independently of each other. By creatively intersecting text-based research, comparative theology, and ethnography Haug is able to investigate how the predominantly Buddhist context of Thailand affects Thai Christian self-understanding. Her methodology and the data this yields, allow her to critically interrogate one dimensional 'translation'-type of analyses; her findings among people who share a worldview and culture, but whose religious socialization differs, show convergences as well as divergences. Haug argues that developing comparative theology into a more empirical direction could deepen scholarly knowledge about the complex interactions and negotiations of Christians in plural religious societies and could shed light on the multiple entanglements of religious traditions that co-exist in a given setting. She concludes by stating "[t]hat using an empirical comparative theological approach in studying the phenomenon of World Christianity can contribute with in-depth knowledge of both the agency of local Christians and local and contextualized forms of Christian theology and practice" and "might sensitize and alert the researcher to the constructive theological work done by local Christians" (Haug, this volume).

Douglas Pratt and Wesley Ariarajah also use theological methods to explore interreligious encounters, with Pratt mapping models and typologies of interreligious relating and Ariarajah reflecting on the multiple ways in which Christians and Christianity/ies shape and were shaped by the encounter with other religious traditions. While endorsing the necessity of re-conceptualizing Christian history/ies and theology/theologies on a more general level, Ariarajah concurrently argues that a reformulation that merely extends Western theology to accommodate 'non-Western theology' is not sufficiently radical. Reflecting on a life-time of interreligious encounters, Ariarajah calls upon World Christianity scholars to embark on a more fundamental theological project that interrogates the exclusivist claims undergirding most Christian theology/ies. In his contribution, Ariarajah therefore makes a case for a World Christianity project that encompasses all religious traditions and considers these traditions alongside Christianity to be part of the human 'heilsgeschichte', with resources salient to the Christian faith. Barreto seems to point in a similar direction, when he writes with approbation how the Commission for the Study of Church History in Latin America and the Caribbean (CEHILA) now studies the history of Christianity as part of the wider history of religions. Methodologically, the trend to study Christianity as a religious tradition amongst others, signals a new development. For most of its history, Christianity was mainly studied within a theological framework, with theological methods and conceptualized as 'church history'. Only recently, Christianity has become a subject matter for religious studies or anthropology. A World Christianity approach endorses and encourages these multidisciplinary approaches to Christianity/ies as well as initiatives to study Christianity/ies alongside other religious traditions or as part of a wider religious landscape.

6 Unit of Analysis

Several contributions in this volume flag the need for careful reflection in the processes of choosing a unit of analysis. The design of a research unit (conceptual, spatial, temporal) is a foundational building block in the construction of representation and impacts data generation, collection as well as data interpretation. Therefore, a thorough scrutiny of the pros and cons of choosing a particular set of criteria to demarcate the unit of analysis—and of the implications these choices have for the research—remains vital, especially for research projects purporting to employ a new lens or approach to the study of

Christianity/ies. Corey Williams, in his chapter on multiple religious belonging in contemporary Nigeria for example, ruminates on conceptual demarcation. In his contribution Williams examines the fluidity of religious identities. He argues that a narrow conceptualization of religious belonging—one that hinges on formal criteria of religious belonging (e.g. membership)—prevents the researcher from seeing the diversity in modes of belonging. By widening the conceptual boundaries of religious belonging resulting in a broader research population, Williams designs a research unit that enables him to study a variety of modes of religious belonging. He writes:

> This broadening allows for a wider range of belonging, which at times is official and formalized, while at other times more serendipitous, at times more public, while at other times mainly private. This more inclusive understanding provides two primary benefits. First, some religious traditions are more institutionally bound and public than others. For instance, participation in AIR [African Indigenous Religions, eds] is often private and without institutional (i.e. official) acceptance. Second, with a more institutional understanding of belonging, it is often those who exist on the margins of communities or privately belong who often end up being excluded from consideration.
>
> Williams, this volume

Williams' deliberations on the most apt conceptualization of 'religious belonging' for his research raise several issues: they interrogate the suitability of conceptualizations and analytical categories that are tailored on Christianity (e.g. understanding belonging in terms of membership) for research in plural religious settings, and draw attention to the fluidity and transience of religious belonging, be it qualitatively over time, be it because "people can live and act across categorical boundaries of religions and are not necessarily limited to a singular religious affiliation", thus implicitly exposing the limitations of statistical approaches to religious belonging (Williams, this volume).

Williams' conceptual explorations of religious belonging also make him reconsider the spatial demarcation of his research unit. While acknowledging that an in-depth study of a single religious group or tradition will yield data concerning pluriformity, transnational networks or translocal connectivities, Williams draws on Birgit Meyer's and Marloes Janson's notion of a 'religious field' "in which several religious groups coexist in ever shifting dynamics of similarity and difference", to obtain a more dynamic research unit and to conduct longitudinal multi-site fieldwork at the popular and widely attended Yoruba Egúngún festival. He concludes:

> This highlights the necessity (…) for more multi-method, multi-site, longitudinal studies that are able to take such fluidity and context into account. For studies in World Christianity, this means expanding the horizon of religious life. In fieldwork studies, for instance, what happens in the town hall, forest festival, university club, etc., can be equally as important to research as the Sunday service or Wednesday night Bible study. Finding diverse angles, methods, and points in time to interrogate religious life is integral for a more holistic understanding.
>
> Williams, this volume

Also Dorottya Nagy in her exploration of the modifier 'world' in World Christianity in this volume draws attention to the necessity of reflecting on the spatial demarcation of a research design. Nagy repeatedly cautions against tendencies that consider nation states "the sole analytic unit for research"; she entreats researchers working with a World Christianity approach to move beyond denominational labels or national institutions (e.g. churches) as research units, and makes a case for "an open understanding of space", studying

> relations, the connections of Christians and Christian communities with larger social settings, and avoiding internalist paradigms. Such a research focus does not recreate the old Christian and non-Christian dichotomy, but looks at cohabitation or living together from the perspective of a shared humanity, and at boundaries set by complex power relations.
>
> Nagy, this volume

Raimundo Barreto alerts the readers to the temporal properties of a research unit. Extensively referencing Enrique Dussel's life-long quest for a revision of the Eurocentric periodization of Latin America's history with Christianity, Barreto highlights the importance of critical inquiry into the *terminus a quo et ad quem* of research designs, and states that there needs to be correlation between the locus of research and the temporal demarcations used. Where Barreto discusses temporal concerns in relation to the locality of the research, Emma Wild-Wood flags temporal concerns in relation to sources. In her chapter on the problems and possibilities of missionary sources in the history of Christianity, Wild-Wood signals that researchers often tend to underpin their temporal demarcations by referencing matters extraneous to the context (e.g. the start date of an archival corpus or the arrival of missionaries in a certain area), thus not only re-enforcing a familiar periodization, but also unaware that through such a demarcation rationale, contextual continuities such as "prior

healing, renewalist or resistance movements can be overlooked" (Wild-Wood, this volume).

7 In Conclusion

This volume has been a quest in methodology. At heart of this quest has been the proposal to consider World Christianity to be a particular multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach of studying Christianity/ies in past and present, an approach that is sensitive to the multiple perspectives, manifestations, contexts and actors of Christianity/ies as well as to the translocal connectivities, and integrative forces that conjoin these local Christianities. Based on the methods, observations, and insights of the contributors to this volume, in this closing chapter we have presented five methodological clusters that tentatively begin to sketch the contours of what such a World Christianity approach could entail. The approach is still very much in the making. We hope that proposal will evoke much discussion, so that the tentative contours will slowly begin to crystalize, eventually resulting in a dynamic multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary approach of studying and narrating Christianity/ies' (hi)stories from multiple perspectives.

Index

Abraham, K.C. 277
Abya Yala 76, 83
Abyssinian 23
Achebe, Chinua 82
accessibility 22–23, 102, 122, 130
al-Adnani, Sheikh Abu Muhammad 208–209
Adogame, Afe 75, 82
African Independent Churches 28, 180
African indigenous religion 225, 297, 303
agency/agent 3, 5, 17, 19, 21, 27–28, 30–31, 41, 43, 47, 49–52, 56–58, 66–68, 93–94, 96, 101, 103, 107–108, 116, 119–120, 124, 130, 153, 163, 168, 173, 204–205, 215, 217–218, 240, 245, 292, 297, 299, 301
alterity 43, 48, 50–52, 55, 58, 60, 94
Amsterdam (Faith and Order 1948) 184
ancestor 129, 229, 236–238
Anderson, Allan 281–282
Anglican/Anglican Church 17, 27, 98, 100, 106, 113, 180–181, 214, 218, 276, 282
Angaelos, Bishop Amba 216
Anis, Bishop Mouneer 218
anthropology 2, 16, 55, 105–106, 192, 227, 251, 302
appropriation 95, 173, 299
Apter, Emily 45, 48
archives 4, 21, 92–95, 98, 100, 102–103, 106–108, 114, 120–125, 127–128, 130–131, 298
Ariarajah, Wesley 5, 19, 30, 153–154, 179, 294, 302
Arinze, Cardinal Francis 179, 198
Arulappan, John Christian 276
Assemblies of God 277, 286
Assmann, Aleida 211
Atlantic
  Atlantic slavery 22
  Atlantic trade 28
  Black Atlantic 28
  North Atlantic 15–16, 18, 24
Augustin, Aurelius 7, 251–269, 298
Auerbach, Erich 47
Azusa Street 281–282
Baghdad 10, 207, 219
al-Baghdadi, Abu Bakr 209
baptism 78, 125, 215, 251, 272, 277–278, 280, 284
  baptism of blood 204, 215
Baptist/Baptist Church 104, 113, 123, 127, 129, 158, 230, 231
Baptist Missionary Society 94
Barreto, Raimundo 20, 30, 40, 294–295, 297, 302, 304
Barrett, David 1
Basel Mission 27
Bauman, Chad 281
Bays, Daniel H. 117
Bediako, Kwame 13–14, 23, 76
Beijing 122, 129
Beijing Tabernacle 116
belonging 2, 27, 29, 95, 101, 144, 152, 179, 225, 229, 232, 234, 239–243, 246, 274–275, 303
  religious belonging 6, 228, 235, 241–242, 246, 274, 294, 297, 303
  multiple religious belonging 6, 225, 227, 229, 237–239, 242, 303
Berg, George 277
Bergunder, Michael 286
Bible 26, 29, 66, 104, 115, 131, 144, 161–162, 164, 173, 214, 218, 230, 232–235, 242, 278, 289, 304
Biti, Vladimir 42, 48
Boehm, Christopher 206
Boender, Welmoet 30
Boff, Leonardo 24
Boon-Itt, Bantoon 160–162
Bosch, David 137, 143, 148
Bourdieu, Pierre 20
Brubaker, Rogers 239–240
Buddhism/Buddhist 5, 10, 30, 114–115, 127–128, 138, 145–147, 149–151, 158–174, 187, 197, 297, 301
Buganda 98, 101, 104–105
Bunyan, John 28
Bunyoro 99

Cabrita, Joel 2, 14, 41
Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide 105
Caribbean 66, 76–77, 302
Carthage 253
Castro Maia, Rodrigo Moacir de 78
catechism 192
catholicity 24, 179, 265, 289
Ceylon Pentecostal Mission 277
censorship 114, 120, 130
center of gravity of Christianity 13, 17, 136, 296
change: cultural change 93–97
  see also: transformation
Chakrabarty, Dipesh 25
Chaozhou 123, 125–127, 129
Charismatic 281, 283, 285
  Charismatic movement 273, 281–282, 284, 287
Cheah, Pheng 48
Chow, Christi 4–5, 21, 117, 119, 122, 129, 294, 298–301
Christendom 66–67, 71–72, 79, 84, 146, 228, 251, 254, 264
Christian Base Communities (CEBS) 84
Christocentrism 184, 193
Church of the Almighty God 113
Church of God 277, 280, 286–287
Church of the East 10, 11, 114–115, 275
Church Missionary Society 4, 97, 103
church planting 107, 276–277
church-state relations 114, 123–124, 127, 130
Clarke, Sanianathan 14, 26, 163
Clooney, Francis X. 163
coexistence 5, 118, 226
Cohen, Myron 127
colonialism 18, 22, 71, 78, 81, 85, 94, 96, 108, 144
  colonial project/rule 17–18, 21–23, 66–67, 73, 77, 80, 83, 94–96, 100, 106, 135, 137, 139–140, 143, 150, 152, 298
  colonial Christianity 76, 79, 84
  colonial evangelization 77
  neocolonialism 78
colonization 75–78, 143, 146, 228
coloniality 81–82, 85
Comaroff, Jean and John 93–94
Comisión para el Estudio de La Historia de las Inglesias en América Latina y el Caribe (CEHILA) 68, 70–75, 82, 302
Comissão Ecumênica de Combate ao Racismo—CENACORA 85
commensurability 52, 58–59
communist 4, 28, 113–115, 117–124, 126–127, 129, 299
comparability 49–51, 60
comparative approach/methods 5, 25, 53, 162, 173, 301
comparative theology 5, 147, 158, 162–164, 172–173, 294, 301
conflict 25, 124, 138, 151, 191, 205, 209–211, 226, 238, 244–245, 276, 278
Confucianism 118
Congar, Yves 146
connections 6, 18, 26, 54–57, 69, 75, 104, 108, 135, 159–160, 227, 304
connectivity/ies 3, 7, 11, 27–28, 41, 47, 49, 54, 204, 219, 292, 298, 300
  translocal connectivities 1, 6, 11, 16–17, 19, 26–28, 31, 104, 204, 227, 303, 305
Conrad, Sebastian 54–56, 58, 60
Consejo de Pueblos y Organizaciones Indigenas Evangelicas de Ecuador (FEINE) 85
consciousness 48, 94, 97, 114, 120, 179, 235
Constantine (emperor) 11, 253, 255
contextual theologies 42, 85, 146
conversion/converts 67, 77, 92–96, 103, 108, 115–116, 120, 123, 143–144, 150–151, 160, 198, 206, 211, 2170219, 231–233, 243, 275, 284, 301
Cook, Guillermo 77
Coptic Church 6, 204–214, 216–217, 219, 294, 299
Cornille, Catherine 241
cosmopolitan/cosmopolitianism 41, 48–49, 108
Coutinho, Sérgio R. 71
Cracknell, Kenneth 147–148
Chrislam 245
crusade(r) 205, 207–210, 213, 219
culture
  cultural assault 93
  cultural brokers 96

cultural change (see change)
cultural exchange 4, 48, 93–95, 98, 108
cultural forces 99, 101
cultural responses 100
cultural superiority 77, 100
cultural turn 45
interculturality 65, 69, 80–82, 86
intercultural encounter 103, 106
Cyprian of Carthage 254

Danmolé, Hakeem O. 242
Daoism/Daoist 10, 30, 114–115, 127–128, 138
Dar es Salaam (1976) 69–70, 72
Daughrity, Dyron 2, 16, 18, 23
decoloniality 65, 69, 76, 78, 80–81
decolonization 66, 81, 146, 155
Dennis, James 145
Dennison, Stephanie 14
denominationalism 117
Devanandan, Paul 179, 185
dialogue
Christian-Muslim dialogue 185
interfaith dialogue (see interfaith)
interreligious dialogue (see interreligious)
models of 6, 180, 194–198, 302
rationales for 190–193, 195, 244
theology of 160
diaspora 273–275, 280–281, 284
dichotomy 46, 50, 56, 57, 60, 304
DiMaggio, Paul J. 285
Diocletian (emperor) 211, 253
diversity 1, 3, 7, 13, 15, 19, 24, 31, 41, 43–44, 50, 54, 56–57, 67, 116, 125, 156, 173, 180, 187, 190–193, 200, 264, 289, 292–296, 300, 303
doctrine 113, 142, 146, 150, 187, 194, 252, 260–262, 266, 278–280
Dolan, Cardinal Timothy M. 212–213
Donatus of Casae Nigra 253
Donatist 251–256, 260, 264–265
Dunch, Ryan 118
Dusen, Henry van 13, 179
Dussel, Enrique 1, 20, 68, 70–73, 79, 83–84, 146, 304
Duta, Henry Wright 104

East African Revival 105
Ecclesiam Suam (ES) 186
Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) 69–73, 79, 85
ecumenism vii, xi, 12–13, 153–155, 179, 180, 214, 219, 289
ecumenism of blood 214–217, 219, 301
wider ecumenism 5, 152–155
Edelglass, William 45
Edinburgh 1910 (see World Missionary Conference)
Egúngún 228–231, 233, 236–238
Egypt 204–213, 217–219
Eid al-Fitr 197, 228, 234
Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God 17
empire 11, 22, 25, 84, 93–94, 149
empirical studies 160, 163, 173
encounter
Buddhist-Christian encounter 146, 160–161
Christian-Muslim encounter 185
cross-cultural encounter 22, 53, 66, 69, 115, 126, 299
intercultural encounter 106
interfaith encounter 5
entanglement 2, 11, 29–31, 118, 173, 243, 293, 301
epistemology 42, 52, 69, 81, 83, 146
Ethiopianism 28
ethnography 73, 114, 120, 123, 125, 129–130, 164, 301
Eurocentric 20–21, 24–25, 45, 50, 58, 65–66, 70–71, 80–83, 146, 304
Europe 2, 15, 17–18, 27, 67, 83–84, 92, 102, 115, 137, 141, 204–205, 209, 275, 297
Western Europe 27, 30, 49, 84
Central Europe 18
Eastern Europe 18
evangelicalism 98, 281
evangelist/evangelization 25, 27, 28, 77–78, 120, 141, 143–144, 184, 275–276
Evanston (WCC 1954) 184
exclusivism 144, 186, 193

Farhadian, Charles 15, 26
Faure, David 125
festival 6, 82, 228–230, 233, 236–238, 242, 301, 303–304
Fleming, Kenneth 160, 163
fluidity 7, 242, 294, 303–304

frame/framing 6, 7, 13, 43, 45, 102, 127, 171, 204–205, 210–211, 213, 215, 217–219, 227, 239, 242–244, 246, 296, 299–301
framework 7, 18, 43, 45, 57, 66, 68–69, 76, 81, 86, 117–118, 149, 160, 168–170, 172–173, 185–186, 189, 239–240, 258, 282, 284, 295, 299, 302
Frederiks, Martha 2, 3, 292, 295–297, 299–301
Freston, Paul 18
fundamentalism 145, 155, 180

Garcia-Arenal, Mercedes 28
Garfield, Jay L. 45
Geest, Paul van 7, 294, 297–298, 300
gender 17, 29–30, 80–81, 99, 243
global
  global Christianity 6, 15, 113, 138, 179, 185, 204–205, 210, 212, 219, 273, 282
  global North 115
  global South 2, 27, 43, 54, 65, 72, 83, 93, 115, 283
globalization 41, 45, 47, 49, 115, 154, 284
glocalization/glocal 43
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang 46–51
González, Justo 1, 16, 20–21, 24, 26, 54, 67, 73
gospel 11, 13, 67, 100–101, 103, 116, 118, 131, 136, 140–145, 152, 161–162, 182, 185, 194, 212, 273, 284, 296
  prosperity gospel 272, 286
government 119, 121, 126–127, 130–131, 158–159, 196, 212, 253, 298, 300
Great Schism (1054 CE) 11
Gregg, Stephen 243
Gregson, J. Gelson 277–278
Grim, Brian 225
Groves, Anthony Norris 276
Guha, Ranajit 42, 54–55
Gutierrez, Gustavo 80

Hackett, Rosalind 229
Hall, Stuart 239–240
Hanks, William 77
Harries, Patrick 29
Haug, Kari Storstein 5, 294, 297, 301
Heavenly Feast 7, 271–272, 274–275, 284, 287, 289
Hegel, George W.F. 54
hegemony 1, 18, 24, 58, 66–68, 83–84, 94, 294–295, 299
Hegghammer, Thomas 209
heritage 44, 95, 135, 151, 188, 229, 235–236, 238, 275, 279
Hernandez, Eleazar Lopez 85
Hinduism/Hindu 30, 138, 140–142, 145, 147, 151, 154, 159, 187, 197, 275, 289
historiography 4, 5, 21, 23, 26–27, 40, 42, 54–55, 58, 68–73, 79, 82, 120, 130, 282, 298
history (discipline) 3, 25, 40, 42, 44–45, 52–57, 59–60, 67, 70–71, 73, 93–95, 129, 146
Hock, Klaus 25
Hong Kong 119, 125–127, 161
house church 119, 123
humanity (shared) 47–52, 57, 60, 296, 304
Hunt, Nancy Rose 94, 97, 104
Husserl, Edmund 50, 55

Ibrahim, Ishak 212
Ibrahim, Vivian 211
identity 6, 51–52, 65, 76, 126, 129, 131, 144, 159, 187, 197–198, 225, 239–241, 246, 283, 285
  religious identity 85, 113, 211, 231–233, 235, 238–239, 242, 246, 294
Iglesia y Sociedad en America Latina (ISAL) 84
imperialism 120, 127, 183
  cultural imperialism 127
inclusivity 45–46, 156, 179, 184
India/Indians 7, 10, 17, 23, 28, 30, 77, 139, 140, 142, 145, 149–152, 154, 159, 183, 273–278, 280–281, 286, 289
Indian Pentecostal Church 277
indigenous
  indigenous agents 21, 299
  indigenous church 4, 113, 117
  indigenous culture 66, 77, 93–94, 106
  indigenous populations 93–94, 108
  indigenous voices 21, 73, 108
indigenization 116, 118, 131
interconnection, interconnectedness 25, 30, 53, 59, 135
interculturality (see culture)
intercultural encounter (see culture)

interdisciplinary 23, 31, 41–42, 44, 114, 135, 300, 305
interfaith
  interfaith dialogue 153
  interfaith encounters 5
  interfaith organizations 153, 181–182
  interfaith relations 5, 6, 135–136, 138, 144, 149, 154, 179, 181, 190, 199
interreligious
  interreligious coexistence 5
  interreligious dialogue 5–6, 160, 179, 181–187, 189–194, 196, 198, 199, 227
  interreligious encounters 163, 225, 227–228, 244, 302
  interreligious relations 75–76, 185, 196
Iraq 206–207, 210
Irenaeus of Lyon 264–265
Islam/Muslims 10, 22, 25, 137, 149–151, 159, 179, 181, 185–189, 197, 206, 209–210, 213–214, 218, 225–228, 230–234, 237, 242, 244
Islamic State 6, 204–211, 214, 218–219, 296, 299
Irvin, Dale 15–18, 21, 25–26, 40, 43, 67, 73, 180

Jacobite Church 276, 284, 287
Jainism 151
Janson, Marloes 6, 226–227, 238, 303
Jasper, Karl 51
Jenkins, Philip 10, 53, 115
Jerusalem (IMC 1928) 182–183, 198
Jews (see Judaism)
John, Stanley 7, 294–295, 297, 301
Johnson, Todd 225, 274, 282–283
Johnston, Anna 29
Jones, Arun 1, 18
Jones, Terry 207
Judaism (Jews) 25, 151, 184, 186, 188
justice 46, 80, 83, 85, 153, 155, 164, 167, 183, 190–191, 195, 198, 216, 258

Kagwa, Apolo 105–106
Kananaya Christians 275
Kang, Namsoon 14
Kant, Immanuel 50
karma 159–160, 164–166, 168–173, 297
  law of karma 167–173, 297
  discourses on karma 170–171

Kerala 7, 25, 140, 271–289, 295, 297, 301
Kim, Kirsteen and Sebastian 15
Kivebulaya, Apolo 97–101, 103–104, 299
knowledge construction 41, 43, 46, 58–60, 300
knowledge production 4, 19–23, 31, 81, 104, 295, 300
Kollman, Paul 1, 12–13, 15, 295
Koschorke, Klaus 15–16, 18, 24, 26, 68–70, 72
Kraemer, Hendrik 183
Kurien, Prema 285, 287
Kuruvilla, Mathew 274

Language 1, 2, 29, 40–49, 52, 58–59, 67, 72, 81, 93, 94, 96, 125, 128, 142, 150, 165, 167, 171, 184, 197, 266, 271, 276–277, 289, 299–300
Larkin, Brian 243
Lagos 233, 234, 236
Latourette, Kenneth Scott 13, 65
Lee, Joseph 4, 5, 21, 115, 118–119, 122–129, 294, 298–301
Lehmann, Hartmut 26
Lertjitlekha, Cherdhai 161, 162
liberation theology 16, 74, 79, 80, 294
Libya 6, 205, 207, 210, 218
Liere, Lucien van 6, 28, 294, 296, 299, 300
Lim, Song Hwee 14
lineage 123, 128, 238, 282–283, 285
linguistics 29
Little Flock 113, 116, 117, 123
lived religion (see religion) 6, 226–227, 239, 241, 246
locality 3, 10, 18, 40, 41, 43, 50, 54, 56, 57, 94, 125, 130, 131, 216, 292, 293, 294, 296, 301, 304
London Missionary Society 93
longitudinal research 128, 130
Lorgunpai, Seree 161, 162
Lubac, Henri de 146
Lumen Gentium [LM] 186, 189, 193

Malabar 139
Malpan, Abraham 276
Maluleke, Tinyiku 1, 17
Mancuso, Stefano 266
Manichaeism/Manichean 114, 252, 259
Mannesse, C. 277

marginalized 5, 15–16, 18, 54, 67–68, 86, 145, 148, 154
Mar Thoma 276–278, 284–287
martyr/martyrdom 6, 103, 140, 204–205, 210–219, 275, 300, 301
Maxwell, David 2, 4, 12–14, 27, 41, 52, 65, 86, 93, 105–106, 179
Mao, Zedong 127, 129
McConnell, Francis John 13
Mediterranean 22, 84, 213–214
Mejudhon, Nantachai 161
Mejudhon, Ubolwan 161–162
memory 6, 25, 48, 81, 114, 120, 129, 209, 211
Methodist/Methodism 17
methodology 1, 2, 3, 79, 141, 293, 301, 305
metropole/metropolis/metropolitan 29, 84, 94–95, 103, 106–108, 128, 146
Meyer, Birgit 6, 25, 95, 226–227, 238, 303
Middle East 22, 198, 212–213
Midgley, Claire 28
Mignolo, Walter 73, 81
migrant/migration 2, 6, 17, 22, 23, 27, 49, 53, 55, 58, 74, 119, 128, 129, 185, 205, 206, 207, 209, 210, 212, 217, 218, 219, 242, 271, 273, 274, 275, 285, 286, 287, 294, 296, 299
Miller, Donald 275, 281, 287
Mingdao, Wang 116, 122
missiology/mission studies 2, 5, 12, 55, 58, 135–136, 148, 152
modernity 30, 48, 81, 83, 116
Moltmann, Jürgen 7
Morris, Mike 239, 240
Morrison, Robert 115
Mott, John R. 141, 182
Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem-Terra (MST) 85
Mudimbe,Valentin-Yves 93
multilingualism 49
multi-religious 225, 227, 228, 229, 234, 242, 244, 245
  multireligious belonging, see multiple religious belonging
Muslims: see Islam
Münich School of World Christianity 58, 68, 68

Nagel, Volbrecht 278
Nagy, Dorottya 1–3, 12, 14, 16–19, 292–293, 295–296, 300, 304
National Evangelical Church of Kuwait 271
nationalism 119
  Chinese nationalism 117
  ethno-nationalism 104
  transnationalism 93, 286
negotiation 95, 158, 163, 173, 301
Nee (Watchman Nee) 113, 116, 117, 123
network 21, 26, 27, 68, 72–75, 106, 108, 115, 119, 123–124, 129, 130, 154, 159, 179, 205, 210–211, 217, 242, 283–284, 289, 294, 299, 303
New Generation churches 287, 295, 297, 301
New India Bible Church 278
New India Church of God 277–278
Nigeria 6, 28, 82, 226–230, 239, 241, 242, 244–245, 294, 303
Nolte, Insa 226–227
normativity 44, 48, 49, 53, 55, 58, 60, 252, 265, 288
Nostra Aetate (NA) 186–189, 193

Ogbómòsó 228–230, 233–238, 241, 243
Olupona, Jacob 246
Oommen, Ginu 275, 286–287, 289
orthodoxy 7, 259–266, 298
Orthodoxy 16, 295
  Eastern Orthodox 16, 180, 295
  Oriental Orthodox 295
otherness/othering 18, 28, 43

Pacific 14
Parker, Adele 49
Parliament of World's Religions 153
Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) 85
Peel, John D.Y. 94, 95, 120, 227, 241–242, 245
Pentecostal/Pentecostalism 224
  classical Pentecostalism 272, 281, 282, 285
  indigenous Pentecostalism 277, 297
  neo-Pentecostalism 274, 275, 283–287
  Pentecostal boom 76, 80
persecution 103, 113–115, 119–122, 124, 129, 131, 151, 188, 211, 213, 253–254

Petchongkram, Wan 161
Phan, Peter C. 2, 12, 15, 19, 23, 30, 40, 43, 44, 46, 52, 54, 58, 180
Phongpit, Michael Seri 160, 162
photography/photographs 106–107, 120, 122, 129, 299
Pieris, Aloysius 79, 146–148
pluralism 189, 213, 241
plurality 26–27, 74, 75, 92, 146, 151, 155–156, 182, 189–190, 193, 252, 260, 264–265, 267
pluriformity 6, 7, 227, 264, 294, 298, 303
Plymouth Brethren 276
politics 50, 67, 77, 118, 119, 121, 154, 225, 226, 280
polycentric/polycentrism 6, 16, 24, 26, 53, 67–69, 82, 108, 227, 264
polyvocal 107
Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue 181, 196
Pope Francis 213–217, 219, 300
Pope John Paul II 190
Pope John XXIII 186
Pope Paul VI 186
Pope Tawadros II 214
postcolonial 1, 2, 13, 14, 21, 29, 45, 49, 54, 66, 76, 93, 144, 152
poverty 137, 143
power
  matrix of power 80
  power dynamics 1, 17, 49, 299–300
  power relations 4, 45, 46, 48–49, 57–58, 126, 143, 293, 304
  power structures 56–57
Prashad, Vijay 73
Prasthanam, Viyojitha 277–279
Pratt, Douglas 5–6, 294, 302
Presbyterian/Presbyterian Church 123, 129, 213
prosperity gospel (see gospel) 272, 286
public sphere/domain 84, 119, 226

Quijano, Aquino 81

Racism 77, 85, 143
Rahner, Karl 146
Ratzinger, Joseph (Cardinal) 24
recognition 11, 25, 31, 49–52, 55, 57–60, 139, 153, 189, 191, 195, 199, 226, 244, 272, 288, 288, 296
relativism 143, 184
relationality 55, 56, 57, 192
religion
  African Indigenous Religions (see African) 225, 297, 303
  lived religion 6, 226, 227, 239, 241, 246
Religions for Peace 153
religious
  religious belonging 6, 225, 227–229, 235, 237–243, 246, 274, 294, 297, 303
  religious field 6, 7, 227, 238–239, 242–246, 301, 303
  religious pluralism 213, 241
remittances 17, 28, 119, 272
renewalist 96, 273, 305
representation 2, 6, 13, 17, 19, 22, 26, 29, 52, 53, 55, 58, 196, 204–205, 209, 219, 229, 240, 258, 266, 294, 295, 296, 302
retribution 167
revival 119, 228, 237, 276, 278, 281, 282, 284, 289
  East African Revival 105
revivalists 116, 275, 280
Rezk, Tony 212
Richard, Pablo 71
ritual 28, 44, 100, 105, 106, 108, 128, 142, 145, 163, 215, 228, 229, 241, 260, 262, 296
Robbins, Joel 15, 16, 27, 42, 284
Robert, Dana L. 13, 43, 44, 53, 58, 116, 179, 296
Roman Catholic/Roman Catholic Church 17, 24, 75, 104, 124, 139, 140, 159, 180, 181, 185, 186, 189, 193, 197, 216, 276
Rome 10, 188, 205, 208, 209, 210, 213, 214, 264, 276
Rorty, Richard 50
Roscoe, John 105, 106

Salazar, Vitalino Similox 77–78
Sadowski, Sydney 259–261
Sané, Pierre 51
Sanneh, Lamin 12–15, 29, 53, 65–67, 72, 227, 296
Scholefield, Lynne 243

Scripture (see Bible) 149–151, 257, 262, 273
secularization/secularization 13, 41, 190, 296
secularism 182–183, 190
self-reflexivity 55–56
Seymour, William 281
Sharon Fellowship Church 277
Sikhism 151, 159
Silk Route/Silk Road 28, 139
Simon, Kunnampurathu Varghese 277
al-Sisi, Abdel Fattah 210–211
Smith, Wilfred Cantwell 11, 147–148, 152
Soares, Benjamin 225–227
social media 17, 129, 131, 298
social sciences 42
solidarity 83, 191, 204–205, 212–213, 217
Song, C.S. 146
Song, Hwee Lim 14
Song, John 116
sources
  archival sources 131, 298
  historical sources 22, 73
  indigenous sources 107
  material sources 298
  metropolitan sources 94
  missionary sources 4, 21, 92–96, 98, 100–102, 106–108, 294, 298, 299, 304
  patristic sources 298, 300
  primary sources 10–11, 73, 114, 130
  regional sources 4, 298
  textual/ non-textual sources 20, 301
Spiro, Melford 159–160
Spivak, Gayatri 28
Stanley, Brian 11–12, 53, 58, 131, 141
Starr, Chloë F. 130
Strangor, Charles 209
Sugirtharajah, R.S. 144
superiority 51, 77, 98–100, 128, 137, 183
syncretism 12, 115, 143, 184
Syriac 114–115, 275–277
Sunquist, Scott 10, 12, 21, 29, 54
Swanson, Herbert R. 160–161, 163

Tagore, Rabindranath 42
Tagore, Saranindranath 50–52, 54–55
Tambaram (IMC 1938) 183
Tamil Nadu 275–277
Tasca, Francesca 259, 261
taxonomy 7, 43, 281–282
Taylor, Charles 50–51
Taylor, Steve 161, 173
teologia india (see theology) 85
Tertullian of Carthage 254, 257, 262
Thailand 5, 149, 158–165, 170, 173, 301
Thangaraj, Thomas 13, 15, 41, 44, 296
theology
  African theology 72
  Asian theology 79, 138
  black theology 85
  comparative theology 5, 147, 162–164, 174, 294, 301
  Christian theology 5, 30, 66–67, 135–136, 146–147, 152, 172–173, 301–302
  Coptic theology 211
  ecumenical theology 135
  Eurocentric theology 146
  evangelical theology 215
  Latino-German theology 146
  liberation theology 16, 74, 79–80, 294
  pluralistic theology 79
  popular versus academic theology 47
  postcolonial theology 152
  public theology 5, 154–155
  Roman Catholic theology 24, 215
  systematic theology 59, 135
  Thai theology 161–163
  teologia india 85
  theology for/of dialogue 189, 191
  theology of religions 193, 200
  western theology 135, 302
  world theology 148
Thomas Christians 140, 275–276
Thomas, M.M. 179
Three-Self Patriotic Movement 117, 119, 121, 129
Tiedemann, Rolf Gerhard 117
Timothy I, Patriarch 10
Todroz, Mariz 213
Tomalin, Marcus 29
Torres, Sergio 69–70, 72
transformation/transformations 25, 29, 48, 54–58, 69, 74–75, 96, 130–131, 138, 140, 184, 226, 256
translation 4, 29, 47–48, 66, 144, 257, 273, 301

transnationalism/transnational 6, 59, 75, 92–96, 101, 104, 108, 113, 123, 130, 159, 227, 242, 274, 286, 303
Trapé, Augostino 260–261
triangulation 4, 21, 107, 301
Tripoli 204, 207, 219
typology 6, 282–283

Uganda 4, 96, 98, 100, 104–105
universalism 253
universality 70, 81, 84, 108, 189, 191, 192–193, 265
United Kingdom 18
United States of America 22, 30, 280, 286
unity 3, 13, 41, 44, 50, 53–54, 56–57, 118, 153, 155, 179–180, 187–189, 191, 204, 213, 215–217, 219, 251–256, 264–265, 292–293
Upadeshi, Sadhu Kochunkunju 276

Vatican 5, 6, 179–180, 182, 186, 189, 193–194, 196–199, 214
Vatican II 74, 180, 186, 188–189
Vischer, Lukas 70
Viola, Alessandra 266
Violence 76–77, 81, 86, 118–119, 121, 124, 150, 209–211, 217–219, 225, 232, 245, 254, 265

Wagua, Aiban 77
Walls, Andrew 13–14, 20, 25, 53, 58, 65–66, 72, 296
Wei, Maoping 47–48
Wenzhou 119, 122, 125, 129
Wigg-Stevenson, Natalie 163
Wild-Wood, Emma 4, 12, 21, 41, 52, 57–58, 96, 104, 294, 298–299, 301, 304–305
Wilfred, Felix 138, 154
Williams, Corey L. 6, 294–295, 297, 301, 303
Working Commission on Church History 69–70
World Council of Church (WCC) 5, 179–180, 184
World Christianity
  concept of World Christianity 11–12, 14–15, 17, 31, 52, 295–296
  discipline of World Christianity 41–42, 49, 152, 155
  field of World Christianity 5, 16, 44, 65, 67–68, 72–74, 83, 86, 135–136, 138–140, 145, 148, 155, 274
  studies in/study of World Christianity 180, 227, 242
  World Christianity as phenomenon 15, 41–42, 44, 49, 173–174, 301
world history 42, 45, 52–57, 79, 83, 95, 143
world literature 14, 42, 44–50, 56–57, 59
world-mindedness 3, 42–44
World Missionary Conference 1910 141, 182
  Commission I 141, 182
  Commission IV 141, 142, 182
world philosophy 42, 44, 45, 50, 51, 52, 56, 57, 59, 296
World Religion Database 225, 242
World Social Forum (WSF) 72
World Forum on Theology and Liberation (WFTL) 72
worldview 128, 130, 161, 172, 173, 194, 294, 301
Wuthnow, Robert 115

Yamamori, Tetsunao 281
Yoruba 6, 95, 227–228, 229, 233–238, 241, 245, 303
  Yorubaland 228, 233–234, 237, 241
Yu, Dora 116

Xavier, Subha 49

Zehner, Edwin 160, 163
Zoroastrianism 114