

# Social Struggle and Faith-Based Activism in ‘Black Empowerment’ times

An agenda for postcolonial mission - sounding the horn on some African perspectives

Desmond van der Water<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

This paper identifies and outlines certain key issues in the discourse on postcolonial mission, recognizing that half-a-century after decolonization and independence, and after the shift in World Christianity’s centre of gravity from Western Europe to the Global South, the legacies of colonialism are still very much with us. From a Two-Third’s World perspective therefore, colonialism in its multi-faceted manifestations is still very much alive. Notwithstanding significant gains within the era of ‘Black Empowerment’, the struggle against racism, oppression, and exclusion, amongst others things, continues. The Christian faith has supplied its fair share of inspiration for social activism, with particular reference to the particular ‘five marks/five faces’ of mission theology and praxis, namely proclamation; nurture; loving service; social transformation; and care for creation.

**Key words:** postcolonial, mission, holistic, voicelessness, contextualization, diaspora.

## 1. Introduction

I begin with the juxtaposition of the following three statements:

- The reason we still concern ourselves about “colonialism” and its residue in mission when the era of colonialism seems over is that...a “neo-colonialism” has emerged and permeated every sector of people’s lives in the world, without having to invade the physical territory of the colony<sup>2</sup>.
- From this it can be seen that it remains important to reflect on and engage in missiological discourse on the issue of voice and voicelessness. Undoubtedly, the African continent continues to be an echoing voice amidst the dominant discourse<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Rev Dr Des van der Water is currently a research fellow with the University of South Africa and can be contacted at [vanderwaters2002@aol.com](mailto:vanderwaters2002@aol.com)

<sup>2</sup> Namsoon Kang, ‘Constructing Postcolonial Mission in World Christianity: Mission as Radical Affirmation’, in *Postcolonial Mission: Power and Partnership in World Christianity*, (D. Van der Water, ed.), Sopher Press, 2010, p.111.

<sup>3</sup> Mokhele J.S. Madise and Itumeleng D. Mothoagae, (Guest Editors), ‘Editorial’, *Missionalia: South African Journal of Missiology*, Vol. 40, No. 3, November 2012, p. 188.

- In an age of Obama, [Martin Luther] King's legacy is more critical than ever to remind us of what remains to be done to make our nation a reflection of our noblest dreams and our highest ideals<sup>4</sup>.

A cynical view of the common sentiment running through the above three observations is that 'the more things change, the more they stay the same'. And therefore, within the perspective of such a worldview, the struggle simply continues in energy-dissipating and ultimately self-defeating perpetuity. At the other end of the ideological spectrum is the optimist's notion that history is moving, inexorably so, towards the fulfillment of humanity's highest ideals. Wherever one locates oneself along the spectrum of viewpoints, it remains incumbent upon the interested observer to both understand and engage the realities of life's unending ambiguities and contradictions. Given the broad scope of our theme, namely *Social Struggle and Faith-Based Activism in 'Black Empowerment' times*, I am locating my paper mainly within the framework of contemporary missional and missiological discourse. For the sake of brevity, I will frame my paper along the lines of the following five propositions:

- Taking the lead on an agenda for postcolonial mission
- Pushing the boundaries on context
- Reconfiguring theological education
- Transforming global ecumenical and mission organizations
- Towards an African *diaspora* network for postcolonial mission

## 2. Definition of key terms

One of the important lessons of postmodernism is that language and terminology are seldom self-evident in terms of what a word or phrase means in the mind of the user. I therefore define the sense in which I understand and will be using the terms 'mission', 'postcolonial' and 'African'.

### 2.1 Mission

The eminent South African missiologist, David Bosch, made a very simple statement about mission. In his seminal volume entitled, *Transforming Mission*, Bosch declared: 'Mission is God's "yes" to the world'<sup>5</sup>. Bosch also contended that as soon as one tried to define mission, one then imposes a limitation on its meaning. By characterizing mission as God's "yes" to the world, David Bosch set out an under-

<sup>4</sup> Michael E. Dyson, 'King's legacy in the age of Obama', *Savoy: 12th Anniversary Issue*, Spring 2013, p.52.

<sup>5</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Orbis, Maryknoll, 1991, p. 11.

standing of mission which allows for the broadest possible theological and missiological framework.

In my view, Bosch was anticipating a notion of mission that was looming on the horizon, namely that theory and praxis in mission can only be understood holistically. Missiologists from the Global North have also increasingly recognized, in an age of globalization especially, that nothing less than a holistic understanding of mission is tenable – not only in academic discourse, but also for the Church's witness and for Christian living. Andrew Kirk, for example, affirms the holistic and integrated notion by stating:

Mission is the fundamental reality of our Christian life. We are Christians because we have been called by God to work with him in the fulfillment of his purposes for humanity as a whole. Our life in this world is life in mission<sup>6</sup>.

In the Global South, within South Asia for example, the core meaning of mission as holistic finds expression from within a context of the multiplicity of cultures, languages and religions. Joshua Iyadurai, from India, for instance, suggests that 'mission in the postmodern era calls for a *celebration of pluralism*'<sup>7</sup> (italics mine). Iyadurai goes on to state that mission should 'shed its modern clothing and wear the cloths of different cultures'<sup>8</sup>. What is highlighted here is that in its holistic manifestation, mission is also manifestly *contextual*.

My discourse in this paper therefore works with the premise of a contextually-shaped, biblically based and holistic understanding of mission.

## 2.2 Postcolonial

Akin to other post-discourses - such as post-modernism and post-structuralism – 'postcolonial' is not easy to define, due to wide-ranging use of the term. On the one hand, it refers to the *historical period* of post-independence - that era in which countries, in Africa and Asia especially, achieved political and social independence. On the other hand, 'postcolonial' is used as a critical discourse of resistance and liberation. In this latter sense, the assumption is that colonialism has not disappeared after independence.

I shall be using the term 'postcolonial' in a mutually inclusive way, by which I mean to denote the historical period after colonialism, but more importantly as a

<sup>6</sup> J Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission? Theological Explorations*, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 2002, p.31

<sup>7</sup> Joshua Iyadurai, 'Mission in Postmodernity: an Asian perspective', *Dharma Deepika: a South Asian Journal of Missiological Research*, Issue 32, Vol.13, No 2 July-December 2010. p. 71.

<sup>8</sup> Iyadurai, *op cit.*, p.75.

hermeneutic that critiques colonialism, both in its historical setting and in its neo-colonial manifestations.

### 2.3 African

To many people, the meaning of the term African is obvious. Well, for one thing, many Americans think that Africa is geographically and nationally a single country. Americans are not the only culprits - ignorance, preconceptions and stereotyping about Africa and Africans abound, also in supposedly enlightened parts of Europe.

We Africans ourselves are also at odds on what it means to be African. Interestingly, for Jamaican Reggae artist, Peter Tosh, being African simply means to be black. This is how Tosh renders it in his song entitled 'African':

Don't care where you come from. As long as you're a black man (sic!), you're an African . . .

A literalistic interpretation of Tosh's song would certainly rule lighter-skinned Africans out. I'm not convinced that is what Tosh intended. His message, as I interpret it, is that black people across the world all have their *roots* in Africa – which means that all black people not living in Africa are living in *diaspora*. Most important though, for all African people - those born and living in Africa, for those who have adopted and fully embraced Africa as their homeland, and for those living in *diaspora*, Africa represents that socio-spiritual fountain that nourishes our soul. For Africans living in *diaspora* across the world, the African spirit continues to nurture and sustain us. And for Africans who have suffered, and continue to suffer from the ongoing legacies of slavery, racism, apartheid, colonialism and neo-colonialism, Africa remains a powerful and enduring symbol.

So, whilst I cannot avoid referring to Africa, whose geographical location spans all four hemispheres<sup>9</sup>, my use of the term will be more as the symbol and source from which we Africans are sustained – sustained by our cultures, customs, traditions, worldviews, cosmologies, anthropologies and philosophies of life.

## 3. Five propositions

### 3.1 Taking the lead on an agenda for postcolonial mission

It has become universally acknowledged in World Christianity that the centre of gravity of Christianity has shifted from the Global North to the Global South<sup>10</sup>. One

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.studyzone.org/testprep/ss5/b/comcontochempuli.cfm> - accessed 21/03/15.

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Dana Robert, 'Shifting Southward: Global Christianity Since 1945', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 24, No 2, 2000, pp 50-58; Andrew F Walls, 'Origins of Old Northern and New Southern Christianity', *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, Orbis, Maryknoll,; T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1996, pp. 68-75; and Todd M. Johnson and Sun Y Chun, 'Christianity's centre of gravity, AD 33-2100', *Atlas of Global Christianity*

of the clear implications of this shift is that it can no longer be business as usual, as far as global and local mission thinking and praxis are concerned. It does matter who *sets the agenda* for mission in a postcolonial era.

In recent decades, there have been numerous attempts at shifting mission discourse both within the academy and within the global ecumenical movement<sup>11</sup>, with particular reference to issues of justice, race and reconciliation, from colonial to postcolonial interpretations. Gerald West, for instance, suggests that, amongst other things, 'postmodernism and post-colonialism have provided the theoretical scaffolding for the recognition and owning of identity...'<sup>12</sup> Despite the clear paradigm shift, a global scent of colonialism still prevails. This strong residue is significantly retarding and frustrating the movement towards comprehensive freedom from colonialism. One of the reasons is that the *context* of people setting the mission agenda also shapes the *content*. What do I mean? Quite simply that the continued geographical location of the secretariats of the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Communion of Reformed Churches (formerly the World Alliance of Reformed Churches), the United Evangelical Mission, and the Evangelical Community for Apostolic Action (also known as *Cevaa*) within Western Europe, works significantly against the best interests of leadership from the Global South setting the agenda for postcolonial mission<sup>13</sup>.

For one thing, Western Europe and North America have become increasingly unwelcome, inhospitable and even hostile to citizens from the global South. Therefore, even though the centre of gravity of world Christianity - and indeed mission - has moved to the global South, the leading global ecumenical and mission institutions remain entrenched in Europe - and by implication the control of power, resources and decisions. When Africans, Asians, South Americans, Pacific Islanders or West Indians are appointed to positions of leadership within global ecumenical organizations, we are uprooted from our geographical, cultural and spiritual contexts to function within very alienating and hostile environments.

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1910-2010, Todd M. Johnston and Kenneth R. Ross (eds.), Edinburgh University Press, 2009, pp. 50-51.

<sup>11</sup> i.e. the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Council for World Mission, the United Evangelical Mission, and the Evangelical Community for Apostolic Action.

<sup>12</sup> Gerald West, 'White Theology in a Black Frame: betraying the Logic of Social Location', *Living on the Edge: Essays in Honour of Steve de Gruchy*, J.R. Cochrane, E. Bongmba, I. Phiri, D van der Water (eds.), Cluster Publications, 2012, Pietermaritzburg, p.62.

<sup>13</sup> The notable exception is the Council for World Mission (CWM) who took the bold decision in 2011 to relocate their offices and secretariat from London to Singapore, to signal that the transformation of the organisation from a colonial to a post-colonial movement was now complete (CWM Trustee Body Minutes, 19-23 June 2011, Durban, South Africa).

Another painful example of this pervasive euro-centeredness in World Christianity was the Edinburgh 2010 celebrations. When the global ecumenical bodies gathered to launch the movement, a major question was: Where shall we commemorate Edinburgh 1910? I recall my dismay during the meeting when the majority of representatives voted against having the celebrations in the Global South. What was very telling was that in this historically postcolonial era, there are still too many of us from the Global South who remain ideologically captive to colonial paradigms.

My first proposition therefore is: It does matter who sets the agenda for post-colonial mission. What also matters are the ideological positions, the theological orientations and the geographical locations of those persons that are appointed to positions of ecumenical and mission leadership. A more strategic approach is therefore fundamental.

### 3.2 Pushing the boundaries on context

It has been long-established that doing theology and engaging in praxis does not happen within a socio-historical vacuum. For too long we in the Global South have allowed theological texts and treatises from John Calvin, Martin Luther, Karl Barth and other 'big names' from the Global North to dictate and to determine the nature and content of our engagement in theology, biblical studies and missiology. I recall my own student years, in South Africa, reading Systematic Theology, for instance, where, almost exclusively, all our textbooks and references were from authors either from Western Europe or North America.

Thankfully, we have begun to move away from that theological captivity, especially with the strong emergence of Black Theology, Liberation Theology and the many variants of Contextual Theologies. But the North American and Eurocentric theological empires struck back. It still happens today, whereby contextual theologies are characterized as *particular* to the Global South, and should therefore be treated as appendices to the so-called classic texts of Systematic Theology. Although there is a growing – perhaps in some instances grudging - acceptance that theologians are indeed shaped by context, a fundamental denial still persists on the part of exponents of the 'classic texts'. This denial presents exponents from the Global South with an ongoing challenge. This challenge is as relevant to missiology as to theology, for the one feeds of the other.

I contend therefore we need a new cutting edge approach for taking up this challenge. In my view, it is about still revisiting our own spiritual wells and continuing to revitalize our narrative theologies, our oral theologies and our mother-tongue theologies. These kinds of homegrown and locally-hewed theologies enable us to work with *context differently*. It is in this regard that Johannes N.Jacobus ('Klip-

pies') Kritzinger identifies the following five areas of challenge in the process of overcoming our theological and missiological voicelessness. These are:

- Overcoming our voicelessness by loosening our own tongues
- Overcoming voicelessness by drinking from our own wells
- Overcoming our voicelessness by marching to a different drum
- Overcoming voicelessness in the academy by giving a reasonable account of the hope in us
- Overcoming voicelessness through worship<sup>14</sup>.

From within an indigenous North American (i.e. Native American) context, Terry LeBlanc puts it this way:

Contextual theology must no longer be restricted to tinkering at the edges of the '*Textus Receptus*' (i.e. the Greek Manuscripts) of Western theology...pointing us to the appropriation of a culture and theology not our own. Instead, it must open new horizons where church tradition and the Scriptures act as guide, but pre-contact histories, cultures and worldviews are not simply footnotes to someone else's history<sup>15</sup>.

Caribbean theologian, Marjorie Lewis makes the same point, with reference to the issues of Christ and culture, when she asserts:

Within the concept of contextualization is the debate about Christ and culture and the rejection of the imposition of imperial or colonial cultures and value systems from other geographical locations<sup>16</sup>.

Also from with a Caribbean context, Ashley Smith has posed a sharp question about the rootedness of Christianity in the Global South in his seminal text entitled: 'Potted Plants or real Roots?'<sup>17</sup> Smith argues that the modern missionary movement in the Caribbean bequeathed Churches that are schizophrenic, because they were not allowed to be themselves. The question raised by Smith helps us to interrogate the issue of context even further. This is not to either deny the value or minimize the importance of Global North-South, East-West collaborative work in theology and

<sup>14</sup> Johannes N. Jacobus. Kritzinger, 'Overcoming voicelessness in the new millenium', *Missionalia*, Vol 40, No. 3, November 2012, pp.242-248.

<sup>15</sup> Terry LeBlanc with Jennifer LeBlanc, 'NAITS: Contextual Mission, Indigenous Context', *Missiology*, Vol. XXXIX, No 1, January 2011, p.91.

<sup>16</sup> Marjorie Lewis, 'Contextualization, Worldviews and Plurality in the Work of the Council for World Mission: A Caribbean Womanist Reflection', *Postcolonial Mission*, p. 203.

<sup>17</sup> Ashley Smith, *Real Roots or Potted Plants*, Mandeville Publishers, Jamaica, 1984.

partnerships in mission projects across all boundaries. But this should not be done at the expense of maximizing the offerings of local context in which the voices of those marginalized especially are brought to bear on social transformation. One of the ways in which such voices from the root could be heard, according to Steve de Gruchy, is that theory be engaged and grounded in practice. De Gruchy explains:

Social theorists speak of 'grounded theory', a theory that emerges as people step into action in a certain direction, but without a clearly articulated a priori theoretical position. The theory is clarified as the praxis unfolds, through a constant hermeneutical engagement. What this means for theological education is that the world is not just a place for 'applied theology' learnt in books and classrooms, but a place in which theology itself emerges from the ground up<sup>18</sup>.

There is another immense African source that remains largely untapped. That is, the influence on world Christianity by Early African thought. It is often forgotten that Christianity has a much longer history than its Western or European expressions. In a ground-breaking monograph, entitled, 'How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind', Thomas Oden suggests that there are at least seven ways Africa contributed, apart from its cultural influences, to Christianity's intellectual formation. These are the extents to which:

- The birth of the European *university* was anticipated within African Christianity
- Christian historical and spiritual *exegesis* of Scripture first matured in Africa
- African thinkers shaped the very core of the most basic early Christian *dogma*
- Early *ecumenical* decisions followed African conciliar patterns
- Africa shaped Western forms of *spiritual formation* through monastic discipline
- Neoplatonic *philosophy* of late antiquity moved from Africa to Europe
- Influential *literary* and dialectical skills were refined in Africa<sup>19</sup>.

Oden's basic thesis is that the profound ways African teachers have shaped world Christianity have never been adequately studied or acknowledged, in either the Global North or South.

My second preposition is therefore a call on theologians, biblical scholars and church historians from the global South, (i) to fully explore Oden's assertion in order to redress the historical bias and ignorance and, (ii) to shape the debate on postcolonial mission from a radical contextually-driven agenda.

<sup>18</sup> Steve de Gruchy, 'Theological education and mission practice: a vital dialogue', in *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity*, D. Werner, D. Esterline, N. Kang, J. Raja (eds.), Regnum Books, Oxford, 2010, p.44.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity*, InterVarsity Press, Illinois, 2007, pp.42-43.

### 3.3 Reconfiguring theological education

My third proposition is that one of the main reasons why theological education for mission is at a crossroads - perhaps even a crisis - is because we in the global South have taken our original inception from Western models and systems of education.

The Edinburgh 2010 Conference raised urgent questions about the role and relevance of theological education and formation in postcolonial mission. The changing global context calls for attention to be given to the following realities:

- Unequal allocation of resources and the continuing movement of theological scholars from the South to the North
- Explosion in the demand for higher education
- Constantinian models of theological education for pre-Constantinian contexts
- Proliferation of new colleges and bible schools
- Lack of financial viability of and quality governance of theological colleges
- Shift towards state-funded departments for religious education
- Changes in the composition and background of student communities
- Lack of theological education and the growth of Christian fundamentalism
- Weakening of interdenominational cooperation and joint programmes in theological education
- Migration and theological education – new needs for theological training programmes for migrant churches<sup>20</sup>.

It could be argued that the concerns I just mentioned are relevant to theological education for mission globally, not simply in Africa. The point here however is the extent to which theological education, with particular reference to a postcolonial mission agenda, has been disadvantaged by unsustainable models, methods and paradigms from the West. In this regard, James N. Amanze remarks:

There is a need to set a new course regarding the way in which theology and religious studies are presented in the curriculum. As Puerwowidagdo (2008:62) has observed, it would be catastrophic if the same traditional patterns of theological education inherited from the past century continue unchanged<sup>21</sup>.

However, we cannot stop there in our historical analysis. Ours is the task to re-shape, renew and to revitalize theological education within the Global South - not

<sup>20</sup> Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim (eds.), 'Changing Context of Theological Education', *Edinburgh 2010, Vol II: Witnessing to Christ Today*, Regnum, 2010, pp. 161-166.

<sup>21</sup> James N. Amanze, 'The voicelessness of theology and religious studies in contemporary Africa: Who is to blame and what has to be done? Setting a new agenda', *Missionalia*, Vol 40, No. 3, November 2012, p.198.

least, because we have come to realize the extent to which theological education can never be seen as separate from mission.

One of the specific things that we can do is to reverse a particular trend, whereby theological students from the Two Thirds World *en masse* choose theological institutions of higher learning in Western Europe and North America for their post-graduate studies. For one thing, this means that they engage in theological and missional studies *out of their own context*. For another, it means that theological institutions of higher learning in the Global South continue to be disadvantaged through lack of investment, both materially and intellectually.

I am not hereby denying the importance of cross-cultural learning. Tharcisse Gatwa, Rwandan Professor of missiology, argues strongly, and rightly so, that an agenda for theological education in Africa must reckon fully with the growing movement of cross-cultural mission<sup>22</sup>. The question though is about a different point of departure taken by Africans, which our partners in the Global North have yet to accept fully. Kwame Bediako, quoting John Mbiti, makes this very point:

Theologies from the new churches of the South have made this pilgrimage to the theological learning of the older churches of the North. We had no alternative... we have eaten theology with you, we have drunk theology with you; we have dreamed theology with you... We know you theologically. The question is: do you know us theologically? Would you like to know us theologically?<sup>23</sup>

There is clearly a seminal place for *partnership* between the Global South and the Global North in shaping new models of theological education, with particular reference to postcolonial mission. But it is also about knowing *what our rightful place is* – in the best possible sense of the term - and our role is in that journey of partnership.

### 3.4 Transforming global ecumenical and mission organizations

My fourth proposition is the need to transform and renew international ecumenical organizations that are in the vanguard of global mission engagement in a postcolonial era.

At least three global mission and ecumenical organizations have, in the last 50 years or so, undergone significant and radical change. These are the Evangelical Community for Apostolic Action, the Council for World Mission and the United

<sup>22</sup> Tharcisse Gatwa, 'Cross-cultural mission: An Agenda for theological education in Africa', *Missionalia*, Vol 38, No 2, August 2010, pp 341ff.

<sup>23</sup> Kwame Bediako, 'Jesus in Africa, the Christian Gospel in African History and Experience', *Regnum and Cle*, U.K. Editions Clé and Regnum Africa, 2000, p. 124.

Evangelical Mission. The first global mission organization to embark on this bold and courageous course was the Evangelical Community for Apostolic Action, which came into being in 1971 by decision of its member churches from North and South of the former Paris Evangelical Missionary Society. This mission body resolved to enter together into *new relationships of equality and solidarity*. Today, the Evangelical Community for Apostolic Action, which is based in Montpellier, France, groups 35 Protestant churches in 21 countries, in Africa, Latin America, Europe, and in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific.

The above churches had decided to pool part of their human and financial resources and activities, in order to respond together to their calling in mission. The story of the creation of the Evangelical Community for Apostolic Action forms an integral part of the mission changes during the ferment in the 1960s, when the so-called 'younger churches', which often had achieved their autonomy before the independence of their countries, acquired a new strength and freedom, and rejected the missionary tutelage of the past. In a profound sense then, the Evangelical Community for Apostolic Action was one of the first, if not *the* first organisation who transformed itself from being a colonial style mission society to a global community of churches journeying together in mission.

The second significant development occurred in 1977 when The London Missionary Society transformed itself to becoming the Council for World Mission. Although the London Missionary Society was a ground-breaking 19th century Christian missionary society, its approach, understanding and practice was not free from the influences of colonialism, cultural imperialism and paternalism. A consultation held in Singapore in January 1975<sup>24</sup> proved to be an important turning point in the mission ethos associated with the Society, and which led to the formal constituting of the Council for World Mission two years later. This global mission body represents a good case study of power and partnership in contestation, precisely because its main predecessor, namely the London Missionary Society, had been rooted in a colonial model of mission, with the European colonial centre sending missionaries to the colonized regions of the world. The establishment of the Council for World Mission therefore represents a bold venture in postcolonial engagement of mission on the basis of partnership, in which the values of mutuality, respect and equality amongst the partners were to be paramount. This paradigm shift in relationships called for a radical departure from the power dynamics that prevailed during the colonial era.

The third significant development was the formation of the United Evangelical Mission, an international communion of 34 churches from various traditions in

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<sup>24</sup> Record of a Consultation held by the Council for World Mission (Congregational and Reformed) at Singapore, 31 December 1974 - 6 January 1975 (Unpublished paper).

Africa, Asia, and Germany. The United Evangelical Mission's roots are located in the work of the (German) Rhenish Mission (since 1828), the Bethel Mission (since 1886), and the Zaire Mission. Since 1996 the United Evangelical Mission transformed itself into a modern, international communion of churches, sharing equally in a mission partnership among all its member churches. The organization's headquarters are located in Wuppertal, Germany with regional offices in Africa and Asia.

What these three global ecumenical and mission organizations have most in common are that:

- They transformed themselves from being a North to South missionary society to being churches together in partnership in mission
- Governance and management processes are no longer dominated by the European partners and
- The theory and practice of mission is based on an holistic understanding of mission

The challenge here is that advocates of postcolonial mission from the Global South should promote and model experiments in postcolonial mission such as the Evangelical Community for Apostolic Action, the Council for World Mission and the United Evangelical Mission to challenge and encourage other global organizations to follow this example.

My fourth proposition is therefore a call for the transformation and renewal of global and regional ecumenical organizations that are in the vanguard of mission engagement in a postcolonial era.

### 3.5 Towards an African *diaspora* network for postcolonial mission

My fifth and final proposition is that Christians from the Global South in the *diaspora* should form themselves into a global network to advance the ideals and objectives of postcolonial mission

One of main strands of the postcolonial paradigm shift in the movement of missionaries is that the 'mission field' has become multi-directional – as the phrase goes 'from everywhere to everywhere'<sup>25</sup>. Human migration is a fact of history since time immemorial. Human beings are migratory by nature, because we long to explore what lies beyond, both spatially and spiritually. There are of course other reasons why people migrate. Environmental and health disasters, epidemics, famine, drought are reasons why people migrate from their places of birth and abode. Invasions, conquests, wars, slavery and human trafficking which transport people far away from their homeland are reasons why people are displaced and dispersed.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone (Christian Doctrine in Global Perspective)* InterVarsity Press, Illinois, 2003; Sam George, 'Diaspora: A Hidden Link from Everywhere to Everywhere Missiology', *Missiology*, Vol. XXXIX, No 1, January 2011.

Education, trade, and economic opportunity and security require people to migrate away from home<sup>26</sup>. The United Nations estimate that at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, there are well over 200 million international migrants in the world<sup>27</sup>. This megatrend of human dispersion is surely also having an impact on the shape of religious faiths around the world, including Christianity. For the purpose of this paper, I confine myself to the dispersed peoples of Africa, or the African *diaspora*.

*Diaspora* is a term normally used to describe a population that is considered 'de-territorialized', i.e. people and their ancestors who have originated in a land other than the one in which they currently reside, and whose social, economic, religious, cultural networks cut across the borders of nation-states and span the globe. As far as global mission is concerned, it is suggested that *diaspora* is one of the ways that the church is involved in mission globally - by virtue of the fact that the scattered people become conduits through which missional passion and influence flow between new and old heartlands of Christianity. South Asian missiologist Sam George, who refers to the *diaspora* as 'a hidden link in missiology', puts it this way:

As every missionary was a migrant, now every migrant should also be seen as a missionary<sup>28</sup>.

George goes on to suggest that *diaspora* networks weaken the hegemony of nation-states and racial/ethnic/caste hierarchies, when allegiances transcend the traditional boundaries, identities and the prevailing socio-cultural norms. He also identifies the problem that some Christian *diasporas* in the West become preoccupied with self-preservation, rather than with missional engagement. Lewin Williams (perhaps a little tongue-in-cheek) mused that the only Caribbeans certain of their *diaspora* status are the Rastafarians<sup>29</sup>.

George's position about the mission potential of *diasporas* commends itself. However, it seems that he equates mission with missionaries and speaks about missionaries as 'conduits'. For one thing, ours is a post-missionary era<sup>30</sup>. Moreover,

<sup>26</sup> According to some commentators, the following are some the factors which accelerate migration, such as an integrated global economy; rapid increase of independent states without adequate development or opportunities; industrialized and globalised labor markets; ITC and telecommunication revolution; more affordable international transportation and increased global media consumption.

<sup>27</sup> Constanza Giovannelli, 'Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision', *Eighth Coordinati-on Meeting on International Migration, New York, 16-17 November 2009*, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division/DESA.

<sup>28</sup> Sam George, *op cit*, p.53.

<sup>29</sup> Lewin Williams, *Caribbean Theology*, Peter Lang, New York, 1994, p. 69

<sup>30</sup> The term 'post-missionary' does not, as Sherron K George asserts, imply that there are no more missionaries. What it does mean however is that there should be 'no more missionary paternalism, no

in the postcolonial critique of mission, we have established that mission is not the business of a few enthusiastic and scattered missionaries who cross borders, but is the core business of the community of faith. The church, in its essence, is missional, in the celebrated phrase by Emil Brunner, ‘the church exists by mission as fire exists by burning’<sup>31</sup>.

In the process of shaping postcolonial mission, the creation of a global African *diaspora* network of individuals and communities in the *diaspora* would go a long way towards advancing our agenda for postcolonial mission.

#### 4. *Aluta continua*

Half-a-century after decolonization, and after the shift in World Christianity’s centre of gravity from Western Europe to the Global South, the legacies of colonialism are still with us. It is not difficult to pick-up the contingencies between colonialism and a host of dysfunctions, social disintegration and economic malaise in former colonial territories. While historically we are certainly in post-independence mode, we continue the search and the struggle for liberation. From a Two-Thirds World perspective therefore, colonialism in its multi-faceted manifestations is still very much alive and notwithstanding significant gains within the era of ‘Black Empowerment’, the struggle against racism, social dislocation and huge economic disparities, amongst others, continues. In this struggle, we also have to acknowledge the extent to which certain liberation movements and political parties who came into power regress into patterns of repression, abuse of political power, disregard for accountability and answerability, corruption and the self-enrichment on the part of individuals in positions of privilege and authority.

As far as the postcolonial mission discourse is concerned, the struggle continues, amongst other things, to resist and reject ‘all ideas of empire which subvert God’s sovereignty over life and which act contrary to God’s just rule’<sup>32</sup>. In this ongoing struggle we recognize that we are living in the world where injustice is so widespread that it seems there is no way to live free of the chain of injustice around us. As such the passion for postcolonial mission theory and practice is grounded in the painful awareness of the reality of injustice and our complicity with it, wittingly

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more unidirectional mission, no more binary “us” and “them” language and mentality’, ‘The Quest for Images of Missionaries in a “Post-Missionary Era”’, *Missiology*, Vol. XXX, No. 1, Jan 2002, p. 53.

<sup>31</sup> Emil Brunner, ‘The Word and the World’, in Michael Griffiths, *God’s Forgetful Pilgrims: Recalling the Church to its Reason for Being*, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1975, p. 135.

<sup>32</sup> See ‘Living out the Accra Confession’, Joint Statement by CWM and World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Kuala Lumpur, May 2006, in *Missiological and Theological Statements and Position Papers: 1975-2006* (unpublished manuscript).

and unwittingly. The need for the postcolonial mission is, for instance, out of an awareness that

My first cup of coffee each day represents a decision to accept the benefits of unjust labor practices in the so-called third world... The cotton blouse that I wear is a constant reminder of the history of slavery in the United States that made cotton "king" and put cash in the pockets of white people at the expense of black people's lives... My every breath is a compromise with injustice<sup>33</sup>.

The trajectories of social activism in Southern Africa have ebbed and flowed since the 1970s, sourcing direction from different philosophies and ideologies. The Christian faith has supplied its fair share of inspiration for social activism, with particular reference to the 'five marks/faces of mission', namely proclamation; nurture; loving service; social transformation; and care for creation<sup>34</sup>.

I have sounded the horn on postcolonial mission with five propositions. There are also other important issues to be considered, such as the particular role of gender, the non-delivery of social services by municipal authorities, the influence of language in society, the impact of environmental changes, and perhaps most important, the issue of the land in South Africa. Itumeleng Mothoagae is surely right in pointing out that 'because slavery has taken place in South Africa... one cannot claim to be liberated while one does not own the land'<sup>35</sup>. And one cannot discourse on the question of land, and land redistribution without engaging the issues of race in a country which is still hugely handicapped by the legacies of racial discrimination from its colonial/Apartheid past.

To acknowledge that the struggle continues – covertly and overtly on a myriad of fronts – does not mean capitulation to the ever-mutating forms of oppression in the world in general and within the South African context in particular. Rather, it calls for renewed commitment, courage and consistency on the part of prophets, priests,

<sup>33</sup> Karen Lebacqz, Justice in an *Unjust World: Foundations for a Christian Approach to Justice*, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1987, p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> The 'five marks' or 'five faces' of mission first appeared in the 1990s and have developed over several years. Originally only four, the 'marks' were first presented as part of the report of 'Working Section 1: Mission and Ministry' at the sixth meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) in Badagry, Nigeria. A fifth 'mark' was added at the eighth meeting of the ACC in Cardiff, Wales, in view of concerns relating to the ecological crisis. The 'five marks', which were never adopted as resolutions of the ACC or Lambeth Conference, have increasingly gained currency in ecumenical and missiological circles worldwide. Along with the 'five marks' of mission it is generally accepted that mission also involves *doxology* (praising God); *koinonia* (union with God and creation); *diakonia* (healing a hurting and unjust world); *kerygma* (sharing of the Good News); and *martyria* (sacrificial witness to truth in Christ).

<sup>35</sup> Itumeleng D. Mothoagae, 'The stony road we tread: The challenges and contributions of Black Liberation theology in post-Apartheid South Africa', *Missionalia*, Vol 40, No. 3, November 2012, p.285.

politicians, theologians, missiologists and all social-transformation activists who remain resolute and declare themselves undaunted by the ever new and formidable challenges of our times.

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