

# Hybridity or The Third Space and How Shall We Describe the Kingdom of God



Author: Dr Jonathan Ingleby, Head of Mission Studies, Redcliffe College.

## New thinking about mission

It will be clear from what I said in my first article that I think we need changes in mission thinking in the West and South alike, both of which remain trapped in the colonial mode. Too often we see things in terms of the old 'us and them' division, with the South only knowable through an almost inevitably false representation. (This is the big idea behind Edward Said's *Orientalism*). By means of a familiar psychological mechanism the West defines its virtues by contrasting them to the South's lack of virtue, and the South responds by reproducing the behaviour of which it is accused. For a while it seemed that the idea of multiculturalism might be an antidote to this pervasive stereotyping. But I suspect it has the same divisive effect. Different groups stake out their identities in ways that tend to emphasise their differences. (There is more on identity politics below.)

In view of this *impasse*, this article puts forward a simple proposal. We need to develop ways of cultural interaction, of forming community, that both destroy existing oppositions and create newness, resulting in what I am going to refer to as 'hybridity' or 'a Third Space', following the terminologies adopted by postcolonialism.

## Strangers

What intellectual resources do we have to fund the construction of this community? The answer is 'not many', and the 'modern' situation is uniquely difficult. (I am drawing here on the analysis of the sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman, who on the whole is rather gloomy about the possibility of contemporary community building. *Life in Fragments* is the title of one of his better known books.) According to Bauman, for a large part of human history other people were either your neighbours or aliens. Aliens could enter your social space only as an enemy to be repelled or as a guest – by definition a temporary nearness and confined within certain rules, or as a neighbour-to-be, in which case the newcomer had to learn to behave like the neighbours do. The unattached person in the Middle Ages, for example, was one either condemned to exile or doomed to death. If alive, he immediately sought to attach himself, at least to a band of robbers.

A totally new situation emerges in the modern city. However much we work to avoid this, aliens appear within the confines of the life-world, and they refuse to go away. They are neighbourly aliens (actually neither neighbours nor aliens), socially distant, yet physically close. We could call them *strangers* and they create a good deal of uncomfortable confusion.

Not surprisingly, what we try to do is to select the objects of our proteophobic sentiments (*proteophobia* – the dislike of situations in which one feels confused: I mention that word because I want to have a look at the idea of confusion. True community, I would contend, thrives more often on confusion rather than certainty.) and then try to expose them to eliminating strategies. There is the *anthropophagic* strategy: we eat up, devour, and digest strangers, if they are useful to us, absorb them, make them our own. By contrast there is the *anthropoemic* strategy. We throw the carriers of danger up, expel them, either into permanent exile or in guarded enclaves where they can be safely incarcerated without hope of escaping. These *phagic* and *emic* strategies are operated in parallel. They are, however, only very partially successful. The company of strangers is now a part of normal life. The

strangeness of strangers, socially distant but physically close, is not now a curable disease. (Bauman 1993 chapter 6 *passim*).

The good news is that this may provide us with a new starting point. It may now be possible to start with the acceptance that we are all strangers, all different? I am not really referring here to the well known idea of 'cultural diversity'. This tends to put everybody else in a museum as an exhibit, something Westerners are particularly prone to because we have inherited 'modernity's monolithic discourse'. So, Westerners are 'normal' everybody else is exotic. We need to realise that Western culture does not enclose everybody else in this sense; it, too, can be marginalised; also that dominant and subordinate cultures cannot really learn about each other while leaving the structures of power intact (Hesse 2000, 8). Until we treat Christians from the South as equals, we shall not know ourselves or them. It is very difficult to learn the truth from one's subordinates. We have to change the relations of power or fear to relations of love.

As I have said, we can accommodate these differences by creating what Homi Bhabha calls a Third Space, by embracing *hybridity*. This allows neither a cosmopolitan universalism nor a particularised multiculturalism. The former lacks an ethnic enunciation, the latter has nothing else (Hesse 2000, 27). When Nelson Mandela visited the US in 1990, one of the T-shirt slogans was: 'IT'S A BLACK THING YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND'. Some reactions were understandably critical. The message should have been, people said, 'It's a *human* thing, you better understand'.

Here again we are resorting to the binary mind set. We can do better than this. The Third Space allows not so much a new identity as an identification, says Bhabha. Identity is about me, about who I am. Identification is about me and another, indeed not just another but an 'other', someone who is different from me. Of course, we carry with us the traces of feelings and practices we bring as a subject but we add traces of other meanings and discourses. This gives rise to something new and unrecognisable. The process demands 'a non-sovereign notion of self and my own culture'. It refuses to 'totalise'. Our culture is not 'the only show in town'. It also refuses to judge everything by a pre-given model or paradigm. This is difficult of course (for all of us, but for fundamentalists in particular) because they (we) find it difficult to cope with uncertainty. But we have to abandon our certainties and enter an area of *negotiation*. As someone has said, rather cynically, about marriage, 'even though there is a war on, in the end you have to *negotiate*' (Bhabha 1990, 211-6).

Culture itself, and certainly the Christian community, needs to be seen as an in-between space – a place of translation and negotiation, something different from what we have now. A simple example of this would be a cross cultural marriage. Perhaps it is through this translation and negotiation that we are going to create the multi-cultural mission teams we are all so anxious about. Each would have a brand new culture, negotiated among the members. Paul wrote to the church in Galatia that 'here there is neither Jew nor Greek'. Like him, we need to be more aware than ever of *mixed* situations, characterised by hybridity and confusion of identities. If I am neither Jew nor Greek, what am I? Too many of our mission strategies today are based on the 'people group' pattern. This clearly had its value, particularly in freeing us from our Eurocentric models, but it is an inadequate model for today's world just as it was for the Roman Empire. It owes too much to the idea of cultural purity and pays too little attention to the phenomenon I have just described.

If I may apply this for a moment to us in this country (Britain), the trouble with the English is that much of our history happened overseas, so we don't know what it means. (Bhabha 2004, 239) The immigrant has come back to remind us, uncomfortably, what that meaning is (241). So Bhabha speaks, hopefully, of 'the emergence of a hybrid national narrative' which

makes it possible for us to receive 'other histories' (240). Notice that, in terms of the nation state, this new postcolonial space never quite adds up, it is always less than one nation and double (241). Diaspora formations challenge the nation state (and globalisation) in that they are situated both inside and outside the nation. The *Umma* is part of the logic of diaspora (Hesse, 20-1) and so is the Kingdom of God; it is always less than one nation and yet much more. I should point out that in nationalist terms this is a dreadful heresy, which often makes our rulers profoundly uncomfortable (Bhabha 2004, 322). But then in this sense God's Kingdom is also heretical. It is always turning the world upside down.

## Identity

As we have seen, the 'hybridity' project raises the issue of identity, and we could do worse than begin with the testimony of Raphael Mokades. After recounting a number of incidents from his past and circumstances about his background he writes:

So there you have it. I'm black and I'm brown and I'm a brother and I'm Indian and I'm Jewish and I'm Muslim. White people have told me I'm white, too: after all I went to Oxford and I talk properly, don't I? Wherever I go I can fit in. So I'm everything. But I'm nothing. I fit in, but I'm never at home. I'm not part of a 'community'. I'm Jewish, but I don't practice, and I'm about as unlike your average north London Jew as it's possible to be.

So talk of 'people from ethnic minority communities' makes me feel a bit left out. I don't spring from a community. I'm not alone, either. Among my friends I count a woman who is half-Zimbabwean, half-English; another half-Filipino, half German Brit; a guy who is half Dutch, half Nigerian and so on. All of us have complex identities. (Mokades 2005)

You will have noticed already that the postcolonialist discourse moves away very sharply from any idea of 'essentialism'. It believes that cultural identity is a human construct. This is a great help in two ways. If you are living between two cultures and it is difficult to identify fully with either, then a *constructed* or negotiated Third Space comes in useful. Similarly, the fact that we have a *human* construct also allows us to admit that culture is not perfect, that all systems of knowledge are flawed, muddled and scrappy. Out of these 'scraps' we find a new way – a sort of 'scrapheap challenge' – which overcomes of necessity a purist way of looking at things. 'A little bit of this and a little bit of that, that's how the newness comes' as Salman Rushdie has put it. There are no thoroughbred cultures, only mongrels. Paul Gilroy describes this as a movement from 'roots' to 'routes' (McLeod 2000, 231). 'Third Space people' have decided to create new *routes* for themselves as an alternative to finding their *roots* in a particular community identity.

The difficulty is that we are talking about the considerable intellectual and emotional effort needed to construct a *new* culture. Stuart Hall encourages people to be positive – so many people are dispersed, perhaps dispersal and fragmentation become *the* representative modern experience. Dispersal becomes central (Jeater 1992, 115). Instead of accepting that cultural identities define essential differences, people can *celebrate* the complexities and interdependencies of their cultural heritages (118). Conversely, on this basis the enemy is identity politics, particularly where identity is discovered in opposition to others, as in male/female, Jewish/Palestinian, black/white etc. (116).

Is it really possible to build identities beyond cultural and national boundaries? Does this mean that we have to give away, at least to some extent, our cultural identity? Though we

should not underestimate the difficulty of this task, I believe it is certainly something to aim at as Christians. Consider the New Testament call to be 'pilgrims and strangers'. Consider also that there is nothing even vaguely like nationalism in the teaching of Jesus. Chris Sugden has put it this way:

The universality of the gospel, which relativises all other definitions of identity and claims to loyalty, does not replace or suppress people's identity; neither is it a recipe for uniformity. It is meant to create a community marked by mutuality of relationship where people have to find their identity in partnership with others who are different from them' (Kirk 1999, 80).

Do we actually see this in the church today? Multi-community churches are quite common now, but I am not sure that this is the same thing as creating a third (hybrid) space. In Ootacamund in India where I lived for many years we tried very hard to create a multi-community church and had some success, but we did not get much beyond the idea of separate communities happy to work together. We had three different congregations – English speaking, Tamil and Badaga – with shared finance and joint leadership, but creating a new culture was something else. More challenging is Paul Hiebert's 'Critical Contextualisation' (Hiebert 1987), something he developed in a church planting context. He hoped that churches would create a new Christian identity by drawing on a mixture of their new found faith, their traditional cultural practices and the invention of brand new practices where appropriate. Those *within* the culture were encouraged to evaluate practices in the light of Scripture and their new understanding of the gospel. They should decide for themselves what they were going to do about it. The missionary/pastor was consultant but not director. There were all sorts of possibilities:

- many beliefs and practices would be kept
- some would be rejected
- old practices could be given new Christian meanings
- practices drawn from their own new Christian heritage e.g. baptism were certainly admissible
- completely new, culturally appropriate, symbols and rituals could be created.

We could think of this as what Manuel Castells calls a *project* identity. Castells suggests that we all begin with what he calls a *legitimising* identity (what we grew up with) and where we feel that this is threatened it may produce a *resistance* identity. But the healthy response is to go on to a *project* identity, where we construct a new identity in response to our overriding life goals (Castells 2004, 8). Tempelman calls this a *civic* identity, whereby identity is not a given substance, but something which is determined in a pragmatic way in an ongoing dialogue between my own tendencies, impulses and needs and those of the community and even with those outside the community (Tempelman (1999, 23). So the Apostle Paul is prepared to become 'all things to all people' so that by all possible means he might save some. He adds 'I do all this for the sake of the gospel' (1 Corinthians 9: 23). The project determines the culture, rather than *vice versa*.

## Confusion

It may help us here to be a little more confused. Thomas More was reported to have said when his enemies were trying to pin him down with exact definitions: 'I trust I make myself obscure' and I've been following his example ever since!. Similarly, Ann Morrisy talks about 'obliquity' as a mission strategy (Morrisy 2004). It is not always the best tactic to come head on at something, the oblique approach may be better.

The philosopher Gillian Rose was fond of talking about 'the broken middle'. For her the middle was the space that is given us between the beginning where there is still potential, a cluster of possibilities, and the end where those possibilities are foreclosed. She thought of it as the *broken* middle because it is often a place of loneliness, fear and anxiety – and moral choice. You never do reach the End. The Middle is a place of never-ending beginnings. (Bauman, 1995, 72-5) In Laurie Anderson's song, *Big Science*, there are only imaginary traces of the future, a future which, as yet, has no representation or substance (Rutherford 1990, 13).

Hey Pal! How do I get to town from here? And he said: Well just take a right where they're going to build the new shopping mall, go straight past where they're going to put in a freeway, take a left at what's going to be the new sports centre, and keep going till you hit the place where they're thinking of building that drive in bank. You can't miss it. And I said: This must be the place.

The Kingdom is like this. We do not have a blueprint, only hints and guesses. The Third Space is a margin which resists the centre, and yet in this process of decentring it is itself transformed into something new. For example, Israel's resistance to the Egyptian 'centre' led to the creation of a new nation, an appropriate illustration because the Third Space is often thought of as a desert, 'an uncanny space', a place where the certainties are undone and people lose their original identities. As Saul Bellow has put it 'The old forms of existence have worn out, so to speak, and the new ones have not yet appeared and people are prospecting as it were in the desert for new forms.' (Rutherford 1990, 9). Think of the testimonies of Hosea and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 2:2-3, Hosea 2:14), where Israel in the desert was still waiting to be a nation and yet in some ways all the better for that.

Can we find a community where we can begin to turn our potentialities into our actualities without losing our freedom? I doubt it. Can we eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil without precipitating another fall? I think not. In the Garden everything is still potential. The attempt to realise that potential leads to disaster. When did I lose my freedom? Well, it was just at that point when I began to ask what is my freedom for?

Somehow we have to accept that the rule of God is a place where we do not know as clearly as we would like to. We see through a glass darkly. Rowan Williams in a tribute to the late Gillian Rose in December last year called it 'joyful erring'. 'We do not know what our interests are', he said, 'I must fictionalise a version of my interests because I do not recognise myself.' He argued that Rose's commitment to the 'mutual recognition of misrecognition' is a fruitful flight away from foundationalism. It is the hybridity that is so confused and confusing that every statement is a mis-statement, every sighting a mis-recognition (Rochenko 2005). We can no longer work out, for example, what it means to be British. That is a good thing. All the forms of foundationalism – based on denomination, kinship, locality, ethnicity, credal orthodoxy, gender, easily identifiable allies – are becoming confusingly muddled. Rejoice! The kingdom of God is near.

Just to pursue this a little further. Rose makes a sharp contrast between what she calls *dialectic* which implies objective and absolute truth ('We see...') and what she calls *repetition* which implies perspectivism or contextualism ('...through a glass darkly') (Rose 1992, xiv). She wants us to linger in the space between these two and not to try to mend the gap. The broken middle should remain broken. For our purposes, this might be a third space somewhere between the perspectivism of the post-Christendom West and the 'objective and absolute truths' of the global South. Rose's preferred term is 'aporetic'. An *aporia* can mean simply a 'difficulty', something which cannot be resolved, there is 'not a ford' which unites two

banks of the river: you cannot get across. It also means something which does not fit which has a crack in it ('that's how the light gets in') which allows for movement or further discussion, it is not monolithic (Rose 1992, 167).

Let me give you Rose's illustration. It is from the Abraham and Isaac story in the Bible, which she sees as a struggle between the 'law' and the 'personal appropriation of right and wrong'. How do we see Abraham's situation? In making his decision about Isaac, does the law outweigh any human perspective or do we accept this as a never-before-heard-of confrontation between the single one and his God (1992, 13). Rose suggests that both imply loss of the divine voice? Is there a middle way that recovers the divine voice? Abraham exemplifies this middle way. He is an exile and pilgrim, and his position outside a settled community makes it possible for him to hear God's voice authentically, but he is not a solitary. As Miroslav Volf puts it, 'Abraham is not "a lonely modern self". He remains bound within relationality. In effect he is surrounded by a wandering community. Contrast Odysseus who wanders on his own' (Volf 1996, 42). What we need is some sort of travelling community such as the New Testament seems to envisage and might provide a pattern for modern day missionary teams. The settled community has no need for divine intervention (it feels) because it has the law. The solitary has nothing against which to measure the message it believes to be divine. One has too much context, the other too little. Diaspora people who have created their own hybrid community are in the 'broken middle'.

Frankly, these are themes here that need to be followed up, but there is not time to do so in this lecture series. Let me just place them on record. One theme might be reconstructing the history of the last two hundred years, especially its mission history, along these lines, accepting neither the certainties of the Enlightenment nor the tyranny of context, but looking for the new hybrid communities and theologies that emerged in each new culture. Another might be to enquire how we can sustain that 'middle' place where the actuality and the potentiality meet, living in theological terms between the 'now...but not yet' principle, so beloved of theologians? A third theme could be looking harder at the characters and situations in Scripture and history that are clearly on the margins – exiled people and desert places. Might not Abraham be the paradigmatic missionary?

Let us return to the more practical matters of constructing a community. The church struggles with the whole issue of creating new community and in doing so mirrors society at large. Someone once remarked that the Notting Hill carnival was only a superficial display of cultural unity. After the carnival people went back to their own, somewhat segregated, communities. Similarly Christians go to Spring Harvest or the Keswick convention and proclaim 'All one in Christ Jesus' but go back to their local churches and find it difficult to work with other Christians, even in their own church. (The Homogeneous Unit Principle is alive and well even *within* our churches.) Are there ways in which people can *create* common cultural experiences which can bring them together? That is my question. There are plenty of superficial answers about – a shared music or support for the same football team. In this respect globalisation's business culture is interesting and so are Castells' 'resistance identities' and the cultures or sub-cultures that go with them such as the anti-globalisation movement, and, of course, various fundamentalisms.

Our faith, however, demands something deeper. Paul is very radical in this area. He speaks about the 'one new person'. Jesus is even more radical. Kinship (at the end of Matthew 12) is replaced by 'whoever does the will of my Father' (Matthew 12:49, 50) Here community is formed by building the Kingdom. One description of the Kingdom is 'all my relations', a native American expression. We cannot build the Kingdom without accepting and acting on the new relationships that Christ brings, and that means *all* my relations, not just my family and friends.

It is at this point that I want to move on and ask whether there are any Biblical resources for a description of a missional community.

## How Shall We Describe the Kingdom of God

I want to think in particular about Jesus building the Kingdom, about the parables of the Kingdom, and also, briefly, about Paul's attempt to build counter cultural community as described in Colossians.

Dick France remarks in his commentary on Mark that after the initial announcement of the Kingdom by Jesus the idea seems to disappear until some chapters later we have the calling of the disciples (France 1990, 26). In other words Jesus begins to build the Kingdom by creating a community of disciples. Also it is by the parables, particularly the parables of the Kingdom in Mark 4 and Matthew 13, that we are taught to understand the *nature* of this new community and I want to suggest three controlling metaphors that Jesus uses in his teaching which may help us further. Firstly a picture of a house that is falling. Secondly, the idea of neighbourliness. Thirdly the idea of fruitfulness.

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus warns that his teaching is the only secure foundation for the nation (Matthew 7:26,27). Later (Matthew 24) Jesus foresees the destruction of the Temple State; the vineyard is taken away from the original proprietors and given to others; those for whom the great banquet was prepared never make it to the feast. We have reached a moment of crisis in which Jesus offers a new community, a new Kingdom, but he knows that the nation is about to refuse that offer. The rich young man, who belonged to the ruling class, was offered the kingdom but refused the terms of entry. Other rich people were making the same choice for the same reasons. As N. T. Wright says: 'This was the challenge that Jesus gave to his contemporaries: give up the interpretation of the tradition that has so gripped you, which is driving you towards the cliff-edge of ruin' (Wright 1996, 383). Or to quote a twentieth century prophet: 'It's not dark yet, but it's getting there.' I dare say that Jesus says the same thing to our generation. For the purpose of these lectures we could call that tradition 'colonialism', or 'globalisation'. It refers to our unjust wealth, our superior attitudes, our determination to be rulers, to be in control. But *this house is falling*. Beware that we are not caught up in the crash.

The second 'big idea' is a re-definition of *neighbourliness*. You could obviously use different words or phrases: equality, a community of sharing, affirmation of the other, the promotion of diversity and these are some of the issues we have been thinking about. In any case this defines the Kingdom, it is its fundamental law. Jesus does not simply teach a spirituality which helps us to know ourselves better, or even a spirituality which helps us to 'to know ourselves and to know the true God' (Augustine) but rather he taught us to discover and know ourselves by knowing and loving God *through* the experience of *loving the neighbour* who images God.

But who is my neighbour? Well in Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan it is the one who comes from the 'other' community and who is in need. It is not all that difficult. I suspect that in the Third Reich it was quite specifically the Jewish family that I happened to encounter who were in trouble with the authorities. Today it might be a Muslim or a gay/lesbian/black/New Age neighbour or even someone from a group that society has taught us to despise, such as a partner-beating or child abusing neighbour – and you can insert there the name of any person or group or community which you find threatening and yet which also makes a claim on you. However, let us take 'my Muslim neighbour' as a test case.

In the parable what we might call 'the duty of care' rested on the Samaritan because the person by the wayside *needed his help*. Muslims in this country are, by and large, a beleaguered minority. They suffer the usual disadvantages of minorities and at the moment are particularly threatened by an association with terrorism. It is our responsibility as Christians to see to it that they are respected and given space to follow their own religion and culture; treated in fact in the same way that we would wish to be treated if we were living in an alien culture, where we were suspected of criminal activities despite having nothing to do with them. But, you might say, is it not true that Christians living in Muslim majority societies are routinely treated unfairly? True, but all the more reason that we Christians set an example of neighbourliness. In the parable we do not read that the Samaritan was let off helping because Samaritans were customarily treated as second class citizens by Jews. In fact, it was partly this returning of good for evil which demonstrated what it truly meant to be a neighbour.

The third controlling image is *fruitfulness*: all those images of seeds yielding a hundred fold, of a harvest growing secretly, of mustard seeds turning into big trees, of nets full of fish, of unexpected treasure, of widespread healing, of fair wages for everyone, of poverty banished, so that in the very first effective manifestation of the kingdom community in Acts 4, there were no poor people among them at all. Let me take up some of these themes. In the Bible fruitfulness and justice go together. In their fascinating commentary *Colossians Remixed* Brian Walsh and Sylvia Keesmaat claim that Colossians is contesting the contemporary political orthodoxy that 'Rome and the emperor are the beneficent providers and guarantors of all fruitfulness.' Set against this is a counter claim that the gospel is bearing fruit in the whole world (Walsh & Keesmaat 74-5). When Paul makes this counter claim he is doing so in the context of the parables of Jesus, the teaching of the Old Testament prophets (e.g. Isaiah 5), and the OT connection of prosperity (fruitfulness) with justice as in Psalm 67 or Psalm 72. He is invoking a completely different 'way of political and economic being in community' to that of the Roman empire (75). In Colossians, to quote our authors, the church is the embodiment of Christ which meets 'as a body politic, around a common meal, in alternative economic practices, in radical service to the most vulnerable, in refusal of empire, in love of this creation'; the church reimagines the world in the image of the invisible God. [Walsh & Keesmaat 87]

As the authors also say, how difficult it is to *imagine* what a life that is an alternative to the dominant culture is like (82). It is, of course, a tactic of Empire to try and make us *forget*. (This is especially true for exiles. They are expected to forget their homeland. But, beware amnesia.) I would add that Jesus also warns us against forgetting. Do you not remember? he says. So what have we forgotten, or what have we not been told? Or perhaps it is a matter of overload. To get back to Colossians again, apparently in Paul's day, Rome's image was everywhere. Walsh and Keesmaat remark 'Images of the Empire were as ubiquitous in the first century as corporate logos are in the twentieth century' (83). So I thought this quote from Barbara Ehrenreich was relevant.

Wal-Mart when you're in it, is total – a closed system, a world unto itself. I get a chill when I'm watching TV in the break room one afternoon and see...*a commercial for Wal-Mart*. When a Wal-Mart shows up within a television within a Wal-Mart, you have to question the existence of an outer world. Sure you can drive for five minutes and get somewhere else – to Kmart, that is, or Home Depot, or Target, or Burger King, or Wendy's or KFC. Wherever you look, there is no alternative to the megascale corporate order. (Ehrenreich 2002, 179)

We are too numbed or satiated by the pervasive images for the imagination to do its work (Walsh & Keesmaat, 84).

It is significant that the American farmer philosopher, Wendell Berry, insists upon calling the Kingdom of God 'the Great Economy' (Berry 1987, 56). The word 'economy' as we know, does not just have to do with money. Literally it means 'the law of the household', how we run our daily affairs. When Jesus told his disciples to 'seek first the Kingdom of Heaven (God) and its justice' he was asking them to enter a community in which daily affairs (questions of food, clothing, shelter, work, leisure) were conducted in a just way. (One is reminded of Peter's 'social security' question in Matthew 19:29.) Elsewhere Jesus calls this 'the abundant life'. I think that this idea of 'the Great Economy' is at the heart of mission. There is no mission, or to state it more carefully, we cannot be part of God's mission, without just economic arrangements.

The community which Jesus forms, is also a healing community, another description of its fruitfulness perhaps. Matthew 10:1-4 identifies the Twelve and describes their ministry as exorcism and healing. For the new community healing is what happens when the king rules. 'Then shall the eyes of the blind be open, and the ears of the deaf unstopped: then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.' (Isaiah 35:5,6). When the New Jerusalem is manifested it will have a garden and a river and a tree, 'and the leaves of the tree will be for the healing of the nations'. Matthew makes a point (in chapter 4) of describing the various sorts of people who are healed, people with 'pains' probably wounds from torture or war, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics. It is obvious that the Empire was a desperately diseased place. One of Rome's apologists, Aristides, praises Rome's accomplishment in bringing *salus*, health, to the nations (Carter 2001, 124-7). But the scenes described in the gospels show how false that impression is. And things are no different today. Why is there so much anxiety and depression, so much fear and rage? Why are our doctors' surgeries full, our counsellors and psychotherapists so much in demand? Why are there so many drugs, legal and illegal? Why so many failed marriages and lonely people? Why is 'stress' a word that everybody reaches for? All these are the diseases of our particular empire. And just as the Romans exported the diseases of Empire, so we in the West export our illnesses too. Think about 150 million street children worldwide. Why are they there? It is because of the breakdown of family life as a result of poverty. Where does poverty come from? It is a disease of Empire. We cannot pick off these problems by means of individual efforts and indeed that was never the intention. What Jesus offers is the healing community. A place where the pained, the demoniacs, the moonstruck, the paralysed of our society can come and find their illnesses begin to mend.

## Conclusions

Does the idea of the Kingdom disappear to be replaced by mission, as some scholars claim? Not at all. There is no mission without the Kingdom, and no Kingdom without mission.

'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel' asked the disciples (Acts 1:6)? Answer. 'Yes, that is what is going to happen through your going to the ends of the earth'. The kingdom is what mission in the book of Acts is all about. Jesus explained it (Acts 1:3), Philip preached it (Acts 8:12), Paul argued about it (Acts 19:8) and proclaimed it (Acts 20:25). Acts begins with restoring the kingdom, along the way the believers will enter the kingdom if only they will persevere (Acts 14:22); and right at the end when the gospel has reached Rome, Paul is still proclaiming the kingdom (Acts 28:31).

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