

The Failure of the West and Can the South Save the West?

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Disclaimers and Introduction

This article is about people's cultural behaviour. In trying to describe this behaviour, I am aware that I am making generalisations. There are plenty of exceptions that could be cited for each of the generalisations I make, but they are not therefore untrue. It is almost certainly true, for example, that the Welsh are more musical than the English. This does not mean that all Englishmen are tone deaf, or that you might not come across a Welshman who sings flat. And if you did meet such a person it would not disprove the generalisation, only prove that there were exceptions.

Also, I realise that I come from a particular standpoint. There is no avoiding it! I am going to discuss in this article relations between the West and the South and I am unmistakably a 'Westerner' myself, though I also lived for more than twenty years in India. If it came to a debate about values, West versus South, I would be sometimes on one side and sometimes on the other.

I use the terms West and South for convenience. They are not strictly geographical terms. 'West' means predominantly the countries that are the products of the European Enlightenment (including the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand). South means what we used to call the 'Third World': sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and of course some other parts of the world.

I begin with an extract from Malcolm Muggeridge. You might call this the choice between Life (with a capital 'L') and the Legend. Muggeridge is speaking about the way things are for most of us. He says:

Let me express it, as I have often thought of it, in terms of a stage. In the middle is the workaday world where we live our daily lives, earning a living, reading newspapers, exchanging money, recording votes, chattering and eating and desiring. I call this the Café Limbo. On the left of the stage is an area of darkness, within which shapes and movements can be faintly discerned, and inconclusive noises heard...I call this Life. The right of the stage is bright with arc-lights like a television studio. This is where history is unfolded and news is made; this is where we live our public, collective lives, seat and unseat rulers, declare war and negotiate peace, glow with patriotism and get carried away with revolutionary zeal, enact laws, declaim rhetoric, swear eternal passion and sink into abysses of desolation. I call this the Legend...Those who belong exclusively or predominantly to Life are saints, mystics, artists. In extreme cases – Christ for instance – they have to be killed. Those who belong exclusively or predominantly to the Legend are power-maniacs, rulers, heroes, demagogues and liberators. In extreme cases – Hitler, for instance – they bring about their own destruction. In Life there is suffering, deprivation and sanity; in the Legend, happiness, abundance and madness (Unwin 1966, 141).

This piece provides a central *motif* for my two articles in this edition, which express in a number of ways, the belief that mission to date has been part of the Legend, and that we need a new paradigm that expresses Life. So my first heading is 'the failure of the West'.

The Failure of the West

Ever since I began to teach mission I have been taken by the idea that the modern missionary movement has been widely misrepresented by secular historians. They either never mention it or dismiss it as one aspect of colonialism. Andrew Walls (the first Redcliffe lecturer) and Brian Stanley, among others, have fought against this trend. Have you noticed, says Walls, that something really big has happened? The whole centre of gravity of Christianity has shifted (Walls 1996). Surely this is something worth recording, says Stanley (1996, 48), and worth distinguishing from empire building (Stanley 1990). After all, the empires have gone. The church continues to grow.

Recently, however, I have been having doubts. Not that there is any doubt that some sort of transfer has happened (Pocock, Van Rheenen & McConnell 2005, 132), but how shall we describe it? I increasingly believe that it is a process which has been characterised by failure. 'Failure' here does not mean the sort of failure that we all experience from time to time when, even though we have done our best, things go wrong. Nor am I questioning the sincerity and devotion of individual missionaries. What concerns me is the ideology and praxis of the missionary movement as a whole. The truth is that the gifts bestowed on the new born missionary movement mostly came from a malevolent past – Enlightenment thought, venture capitalism, a Christendom model of Christianity, denominationalism, authoritarianism, patriarchalism, and alliance with State violence. There was some hope, of course, that some of this baggage would be thrown away when it became evident that it was useless – like explorers who jettison cargo in order to lighten the ship – and this did happen from time to time. Missionaries in India were far less worried about denominational differences than their supporters at home. Sadly, however, in most cases missionaries not only took their baggage with them but were unable to let it go and even passed it on to their successors.

If the modern missionary movement was an opportunity to start something new, especially to undo the religion of power which Christianity in Europe had become, on the whole, this never happened. Our critics are right. I scarcely need to recall the dreary catalogue – commercial attitudes, cultural and linguistic imperialism, theological insensitivity, racial superiority, identification with the powerful, unwillingness to relinquish control and so on – anything but humble service of the servant Jesus. In a phrase, complicity with imperialism.

As an example we might take Henry Scott Holland and his hymn, 'Judge Eternal'. (See Appendix A for the text.) Scott Holland was a Christian socialist, a founder of the Christian Socialist Movement, and a prolific writer on social affairs at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He was also a Christian imperialist and he illustrates well what I call 'the failure of the West'. I am not trying here to describe the sort of behaviour which we all know characterised Western imperialism at its worst. It is easy to see now that that had a very dark side – from the Atlantic slave trade to the Opium wars to Leopold's Congo. But there were those, like Scott Holland, who started from a better place. Who could not hope that 'this land' would be purged of bitter things and be healed, as mentioned in the hymn. People in city and countryside alike were longing for renewal and only God himself could dispel the darkness, feed the hungry, cleanse the nation. Should we not cry to him to do so, as the hymn does?

Look a little closer, however. What are the 'wide dominions' mentioned in the first verse, who are 'the faint and hungry heathen' in the third. Doesn't the word 'empire' in the second last line come with a slight sense of shock? In fact, Scott Holland is unashamedly asking God to bless the British Empire! And this was a persistent theme of Victorian and Edwardian Christianity. It is God who has given us our Empire. Of course he gave it to us for a purpose, so that the new day of civilisation might dawn and the light of the gospel might spread. The Cambridge missionary, H. C. Carlyon, working among the Jats of the Rohak district, showed no

embarrassment in linking the success of the British in seizing India with the claims of Christianity. For example, 'Is it not strange that a handful of men from a distant country could conquer your country when it was protected by the three hundred and thirty million gods that you believe in?' (Ingleby 2000, 314).

Now this is almost a commonplace of historical research. I could have chosen a hundred examples. The difficulty is that we are speaking of the modern missionary movement and its complicity in imperialism; and we are the inheritors of this partnership. We in the West still believe that God is on *our* side, that *we* are the 'channel of blessing', that God has chosen to use us first and foremost; that *they* are the 'faint and hungry heathen', and so on. We offer them pity, salvation, and even sacrificial service, but not, I think, equality.

Brothers and sisters from the West, my civilisational kith and kin, my fellow *conquistadores* and predators, and finally also my fellow missionaries, I am not inclined, at this point in history, to let us off. I am the less inclined to do so because I see our failures still manifest. Let me give you a sample:

- There is still much racial prejudice among us
- Do you notice how we treat other cultures as 'exotic', ours as normative. The West is metropolitan, the South is suburban or rural.
- We are still beset by stereotypes: black people are lazy or late!; Orientals are devious; Arabs are oppressive of democratic values; Muslims are terrorists; foreign governments are usually corrupt (especially in Africa)
- We believe that immigrants are a threat to our way of life, except when we need them to maintain our way of life .
- The 'fashions' of the West – its managerialism, consumerism, economism, progress-driven ideology – are still held up as desirable models. Amazingly, Coca Cola is still 'the real thing'. Worse still, we Christians, like our colonial forbears, have used our faith to bolster our sense of superiority. We know that we are superior because God has demonstrated his favour to us in an unmistakable way. Otherwise how do you explain that we in the West are prosperous and powerful and others are poor and weak? Actually you could argue almost the reverse. God started to become distant to us just as we became wealthy and powerful. It is not the poor who need us so much as the wealthy who need the poor, because we can only understand how God works in the world without the distancing and distortion that wealth brings. Christianity has declined in the West (Europe i.e.) because of the way that we tied Christianity to imperialism. Callum Brown has demonstrated (Brown 2001, 195 and passim) that effective Christian piety migrated after 1800 from the public masculine sphere to the home and the feminine sphere, a necessary way of marginalising religion in the 'real' Britain, because at the time we were engaged in the essentially unchristian enterprise of capitalism and world-domination. To put it crudely, the captains of British commerce and their military allies found Christianity an inconvenient partner in their imperialistic ventures, and decided to leave it at home with the women. This 'may not have damaged institutional religion, but it may have killed the faith that gave it meaning', as Karen Armstrong has suggested. (See 'That's Us in the Corner, Losing our Religion' a review of Brown's book in the Independent 21 December 2000). Thus it was that in many cases where Christianity was exported after 1800 it reflected its increasingly institutional character. Even at home, I suspect, the godly left their values in church while they colonised and exploited their own people in the nation's mines and factories. I should add that Empire builders are permanently

at this sort of disadvantage. Think of the United States today, the world's leading imperial power. It is frequently pious in its discourse, but its foreign policy is characterised by Abu Graib and Guantanamo Bay.

- Finally, because of the failure of the secularisation theory – the belief that as modernity advances religion will inevitably recede – we Christians think sometimes that we have put secularism behind us in the West. In fact it remains a powerful force and one of our chief exports!

Our European schools and universities, our factories, and farms, our banks and politics – almost everything public – function without reference to revelation, deity, heaven, creation, redemption, miracle, prayer, worship, judgement, confessed absolutes, and eternal life. If the deep-down door of the European mind has been closed and has shut out the Gospel, will the same happen in the rest of the world – in Korea, Taiwan, Kenya, Papua, and the uttermost parts of the world. (Beeby 1994)

Many mission histories bear a proudly remembered record of the way that the missionaries 'handed over' to the national church. Well – better late than never! But the question is: what did they hand over? When one looks back to decolonisation at a national level there is a similar proud record of power being supposedly transferred. Take the traditional account of Indian independence as an example. This gives the impression that the whole process was voluntary on the part of the British (not true!) and that we handed down the very best of our heritage (also not true): we passed on superior technology, parliamentary democracy, an efficient and honest civil service and so on. But why should our Indian successors really believe that that was what we valued when we demonstrated quite *other* values when we were in power? We had certainly not ruled democratically in India. Indian industry and technology were not allowed to thrive if it competed with ours. Indians were not allowed into the top jobs in the Civil Service. Now transfer this to the church. Is it not possible that we handed down to our successors much that hindered them; that we preached the good news of the kingdom, but systematically demonstrated worldly values; that social transformation was accompanied by far more powerful social reproduction? 'I received from the missionaries, what I now pass on to you.' This is what I mean by the failure of the West. Much anxiety has been expressed that the church of the South should remain 'true to the gospel' by which we in the West mean that they should agree with us. It would be a happier situation, I suggest, if they were *less* like us.

Quite recently a student of mine from Uganda said that 'I was teaching her to hate me'. What was going on? Well, nothing personal I hope. I had recommended a film called *Mississippi Burning* as part of our studies in Postcolonialism, a film which is essentially about white racism. It was a reminder to her about the way that we whites have treated people of colour, and, I suppose, a warning to her that those attitudes are not always a thing of the past.

We white Westerners forget too easily. We would like to sweep the issues of colonialism, racial prejudice and slavery, with its accompanying tale of destruction, exploitation, greed and cruelty under the table. But that it is because we are the perpetrators and the inheritors and beneficiaries. We must remember to ask the victims what *they* think. In my MA class this year I asked the group of about half a dozen what they thought were the most important events of the last fifty years. The Europeans said the fall of Communism and the environmental crisis. Those from the global South – India, Indonesia and Uganda – all nominated the end of Western colonialism. *They* had not forgotten.

The right sort of memories matter hugely in a College like this and they need to inform any meaningful attempt to create a missiology for today. Much of our thinking about mission history and therefore about mission is still too triumphalistic, too Eurocentric, too androcentric – in a word, too colonial.

At the heart of the debate lies the question which haunts every aspect of our Christian ministry. Do you start from a position of strength or of weakness? Do we, does our mission itself, belong to Life or to the Legend? In fact, we know well enough that Jesus' master plan was that his mission was to come out of weakness and apparent defeat. About which powerful and successful leader is the author writing here?

He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account...By perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? (Isaiah 53:2,3,7a)

There is a paradox here, as we know. We almost invariably start out thinking we have something to give. We believe ourselves to be 'benefactors', but Jesus had something to say about that

The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. (Luke 22:25, 26)

In a larger sense, this is the Enlightenment and also the Development fallacy. (I was in the British Museum recently. They have a permanent exhibition on the Enlightenment and I realised after only a few minutes there that the Enlightenment was an organisational power game. There was a rage to put things in order and thus to control them and to control those who were supposedly disorganised. I am emphasising this because I want to take up the issues of order and confusion later on.)

We have to consider the possibility that it is *better* to do our ministry from the bottom up rather than the top down. On the same trip to London I was in Southall and the Bishop of Willesden, Peter Broadbent, reminded his congregation that in Southall Christianity was only the fourth largest religious group, after the Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. He suggested that there might be some advantages in witnessing to their faith in this 'non-imperialistic' (his words) situation. Well done the bishop!

Pilgrim Mission

I suspect that non-imperialistic mission is not such a new idea; there has always been an element of centre and periphery, of institution and charisma, of power and weakness in the history of the people of God – a faithful remnant with values that are counter cultural even within the religious establishment, let alone society at large. All sorts of Biblical images come to mind: younger sons like Jacob and Joseph, and David, Saul from the most insignificant clan, the despised and rejected prophet of Isaiah 53, whose description we have just read, Jesus himself, alone in the garden – 'they all forsook him and fled', the remnant of Israel reduced to a single person. The history of the church demonstrates the same pattern.

Many years ago, E. H. Broadbent, wrote a still very relevant book, called 'The Pilgrim Church'. His controlling thesis was that the *true* church, even before the time of Constantine,

was not the institutional church at all, but a myriad of small, independent movements, ranging from the Montanists in the early years of the church, through the Lollards and Husites in medieval times and the Anabaptists of the Reformation period, to comparatively recent men and movements. They were, like 'pilgrims and strangers', never settled, never part of the establishment, often persecuted, frequently on the margins of society because of their faith, but preserving something vital which the institutional church was in danger of losing. Again and again it is the alternative tradition which really builds the church on a solid foundation. But it is a lesson we find it hard to learn. We are tempted by what we think is success: institution, influence, status, reputation, security, wealth, power. But God is not there. He will not own that sort of kingdom.

If 'the pilgrim church' what about 'pilgrim mission'? Could you apply the same idea to the history of mission and deduce some missiological principles from that history? In fact, I would contend that there was from the start an alternative missionary tradition, drawing on the movements which E.H. Broadbent identified. I am not going to trace it here, but, for example, in India it would be the Lutheran Pietists rather than the imperial chaplains; the early Baptist mission at Serampore as against Alexander Duff and his successors. In terms of methodology it would be 'mass movements' as against 'trickle down' (Ingleby 2000).

This has led to what might be called 'grass roots' churches, the missionary church worldwide which has not sold out to the establishment. Often it is the persecuted church (China) or the church which continues to be part of the marginalised social group (India) or the church where 'mainstream' Christianity is 'establishment missionary' but independent churches have grown up away from missionary control (Africa). Any of these can become part of the establishment as political and social circumstances change. As and when they do, the temptation to become something less authentic will always be there. 'Power corrupts' is almost the most obvious as well as the saddest comment one can make about this stage of development.

This alternative tradition continues to describe a better way for mission. Its principles are as valid today as they have always been:

- We must remain rooted in the true humility of contextualisation.
- We must resist technological fixes, what some have called 'managerial mission'.
- We must be poor enough to help the poor.
- We must attend to the margins.
- Our strategies must be bottom up, not top down.

This is the familiar distinction between mission that is small, humble, slow, patient and simple (relating to Kosuke Koyama's 'three mile and hour God') rather than mission which is high-tech, short-term, slick, loud, and apparently successful. 'Apparently', I say, because generally it needs to be a certain sort of mission to succeed, based on money, hardware and plant. When this happens, it tends to become unsustainable, sinking down under its own weight. It looks impressive, but it is more form than substance, more maintenance than mission. Western Christendom as a whole and the missionary movement in particular failed at precisely this point. Not always or everywhere, but by and large.

Here you will say to me: 'but surely this is where your thesis breaks down'. The so-called 'colonialist' missionaries were the very ones who oversaw the huge transfer of Christianity from West to South. Whatever its faults surely you must admit that it has been a success. Perhaps. Suffice it to say that the growth of the church in itself does not validate colonial methods. We have to read the history of the expansion of Christianity with discernment. Numbers are not everything. (Dowsett 2005). We need to ask what sort of growth. In any

case I am not so sure that we Westerners can take as much credit for church growth in the South as we often claim. I suspect that the church has spread there largely through indigenous agents and more informal methods such as commercial contacts rather than direct missionary activity. Frankly, we need to look at the Western missionary effort with greater scepticism than is sometimes the fashion in evangelical circles.

Postcolonial mission

In terms of modern ideologies we could re-name 'pilgrim mission', which has a rather old-fashioned ring about it, 'postcolonial mission'. This term is particularly apt because of the way that the modern missionary movement was associated, as we have seen, with colonialism. After the fall of the colonial empires (approximately from the middle of the twentieth century) what comes next goes in two directions. One is neo-colonialism. Colonialism does not go away after all, rather it changes its spots. Now instead of being territorial, it is largely commercial and financial, though still backed up, I notice, by military power. The West, of course, remains the dominant player in world affairs. The G8 are much the same imperialist grouping that was responsible for high, classical colonialism, as are the members of the UN Security Council. To quote Edward Said, 'We are beginning to learn that de-colonisation was not the termination of imperial relationships, but merely the extending of the geo-political web which has been spinning since the Renaissance.' (Edward Said in *Tell Me No Lies* p. xxvii)]

The other much more positive direction is postcolonialism. This accepts the reality of neo-colonialism but throws the net wider. It agrees that our contemporary experience – for ex-colonisers and ex-colonised alike – is inevitably shaped by the colonial past, but explores what this might mean. Postcolonial studies began as a literary phenomenon. Essentially they were the study of literature written in English by the colonised (before and after independence) – novelists such as V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, and Chinua Achebe, and many others. The field rapidly widened, however. Edward Said, whose book *Orientalism* (1995) was seminal, wrote about literature and history and politics, and postcolonialism also became entwined with anthropological and sociological insights (Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Benita Parry etc.). This remains its chief emphasis today, with crucial contributions on such topics as *diaspora* and hybridity, which we shall look at later. Latterly the politics of the matter have become increasingly important, and with them a return to history. What actually happened in the colonial period? Have we a fair account of this? The most famous essays in this field have been the *Subaltern Studies*, which display a determination by the authors to write history from a completely new perspective. This includes an attempt at unearthing or even resurrecting the roles of those – 'natives', women, menials – whom the writers of 'colonial' history have forgotten.

Here I think we can insert something useful about the philosophy of history. Walter Benjamin thought very deeply about the meaning of history, concerned as he was about the disasters of his own day and the way that European fascism was 'junking history'. In fighting this enemy he gave the historian, at least a certain sort of historian, a key role. 'Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious'. And again, 'Every image of the past that is not recognised by the present as one of its concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably' (Benjamin 1999, 247). Thus a crucial part of the work of historians and social scientists is *retrieval*. Already contemporary thought has buried, or attempted to bury, so much along the way, that history must very often take up the role of archaeologist, or in more sinister mode gravedigger and exhumers. Benjamin sets all this under the sign of *redemption* and so should we. 'Only a *redeemed* mankind receives the fullness of its past' he says (1999, 246).

The important aspect of this historical project from a missiological point of view is its completeness. 'Nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history' – Benjamin again (1999, 246). The theological equivalent is Jesus' words: 'whosoever will may come'. Thus we are not permitted to write history that represents only the truth of the victors. From the standpoint of the gospel we hear Jesus announce 'good news to the poor' and 'the year of the Lord's acceptance' to every person, culture, nation or tradition that has been thrust beyond the margins. Benjamin makes the same point only he puts it negatively.

Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. There is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism (1999, 248).

So even our mission history is a 'document of barbarism' when it describes the triumph rather than the failure of the Western churches. It is for this reason, says Benjamin, that we must 'brush history against the grain' (1999, 248).

Benjamin's appeal to history is also a reminder that we cannot approach the future as if the past had never happened, as if the future of mankind was a 'progression through homogeneous, empty time' (1999, 255). Here again we see a road marked out for us Christians. Too often history has been written in an imperialistic or triumphalistic way! Or we think that we can forget the sorrowful past and start the future from scratch. We would like to put things right, perhaps, but we do not have the time to take the past seriously. Progress demands that we push on. In his polemic against Progress (with a capital 'p') Benjamin conjures up a picture of 'the angel of history' who is as helpless as we are to go back and 'awaken the dead' and for the same reason. The famous passage needs to be quoted in full.

A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of our feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress (1999, 249).

I have often felt that it was time that missiology took up more seriously with the social sciences – politics, economics, sociology and so on – to go along with philosophy, linguistics, ethics and of course theology, its customary partners. Yet I also feel that, as in Postcolonial studies, there is a case for a return to history. Where have all the historians gone? David Bosch's *Transforming Mission* (1991) the text book of anyone studying mission, is primarily a theology of mission. Andrew Walls and Brian Stanley, as mentioned, have produced valuable material in this area, but they are somewhat lonely voices. We have rushed headlong into the future with courses on Issues and Trends in Mission and globalisation (I have done so

myself) and books like *The Next Christendom* (Jenkins 2001) but with an inadequate historical base. Hence the need of more available and better organised missionary archives, leading to better historical research and, in general, for study centres like the Henry Martyn Institute and the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies

To return to our title, The 'failure of the West' is my attempt to redress an 'Orientalist' (in Edward Said's sense) and triumphalist view of mission history. Have we done the *history* of the growth of the church in the global South at all? The more I have looked into the question 'Can the South save the West?' (our next heading) the more doubtful I have become about my own answers, and I think there is a good reason for this. Because we have not yet written an adequate account of the West reaching the South (the modern missionary movement), I think it very unlikely that we can begin to understand the complex genesis of the church in that part of the world until we do so. Let me just give you one example. Do we really understand the dynamics of the world-wide Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, which for many mainline churches is the uninvited guest knocking loudly at the door? How does this relate to what I call 'the revenge of the pagans' the way in which the black African music and worship styles have largely taken over our churches?

Now, even I would not pretend that we can re-write the history of the modern missionary movement and world Christianity in the course of this evening! I would like to suggest, however, particularly to missiologists that they have not done enough serious thinking about the way that the history of mission has been told, or the way that identities have been formed and reformed by the colonial and postcolonial experiences. I would go further and suggest that the politics of identity are only part of a new understanding of community and that what we need is a fresh understanding of the kingdom of God, of how God rules over us, if we are to re-think mission for the twenty first century, but that is what I want to talk about tomorrow.

Southern Comfort: Can the South Save the West?

One of the questions which arises out of the failure of the West is 'can the South save the West?' The difficulty is that at the moment we have no real way of knowing. For a number of reasons:

(1) We in the West have no intention of allowing the Southerners to try. We are still very carefully retaining the power in our own hands. Think about who has the money, the technology, the publishing houses, the training institutions, the libraries. Furthermore there is collusion. Many Westernised Southern elites are accepting this situation, so long as they are allowed to buy into the action. This has always been a danger. The inheritors of colonial power – both in the state and the church – were faced from the start with the huge temptation of simply stepping into the power structures abandoned by their former colonial masters. If anything, recent events have made matters worse. Globalisation was initially seen as a promising sign, and recent publications on the world church speak approvingly of global mission. Manuel Castells writes of 'The Network Society' which might be thought to be aimed at undoing the 'us' and 'them' of the colonial era. But, as Castells admits, there is also the possibility that we have simply created new power structures not much different from the old. So, in mission circles, we hold our big conferences in the global South (Manila rather than Lausanne – I gather that the next Edinburgh Conference may be in Hong Kong) but it is still the wealthy and well-connected that attend. And we are still measuring success in the same way? All going to the same international conferences, and having degrees from Fuller, and using laptops? Our international conferences – and I have been to some – are rather too much like the Davos forum, that annual meeting in a pleasant Swiss resort where the good and the great decide how the rest of us will live. Davos is certainly an *international* event, but

it is not the feast of the kingdom. You do not see many people there from the highways and the byways. It represents not 'whosoever will may come' but another exclusive, elitist network. If mission in the past has been too closely tied to a commercial model (the trading company model, agencies rather than churches etc.) then we must be careful not to continue the partnership. Global mission – supposedly the replacement for the Christendom model, though that terminology tends to get categories confused – is, in my view, the widening of the business model which we, the beneficiaries, are unwilling to abandon. Just as globalisation *sounds* attractive, in that it (theoretically) supersedes Western political and economic domination and brings a more international mix to the market place, so global mission *sounds* as if it has replaced 'the west to the rest' model. In both cases there are hidden agendas, however. Globalisation is powered by Western capitalism. Others, like the Japanese, have been invited to join the club, and others like China and India are intent upon forcing their way into it, but forcing your way into an exclusive club, and even changing the rules a little, does not mean that there is no club and that others are not excluded. The English sahibs and the Indian rajahs have mostly departed from the clubs set up by the British Raj, but the clubs have not ceased to exist. One set of wealthy and privileged people has replaced another. The poor are still sweeping the floors and serving the drinks. In just the same way, in world mission, we have not given up our bad habits, just shared them with others when it was to our advantage to do so. Significant action remains in the West, and with those whom we have licensed in one way and another.

I went to see a play recently put on by the Royal Shakespeare Company called 'Believe What You Will' by Philip Massinger. It was set in the period when Rome was steadily building its Empire, though there were a number of cross-overs to the current world political situation. Rome offered her clients all sorts of supposed benefits as long as they were subservient, that is, they played by the Roman rules. She was the stern parent who knew best. The great crime was to say that you knew better, even if you were well aware that ultimately the rules of the game were drawn up to serve Roman interests. Rebellion led to harsh consequences. On these terms it came down to a 'lesser of the two evils' equation. Better peace with Rome even at a humiliating and unjust price, rather than war with Rome.

All this reminded me of the centre-periphery structure that we are still operating, certainly in the world at large but often in mission as well. Better to cosy up to the system than to fall out of it. Better to write in English than not to be published at all. Better to have a Western theological qualification than one that nobody really recognises and that keeps me permanently at the bottom of the church's hierarchy.

So, in summary, the West is hanging on to the power, though it is prepared to co-opt outsiders if that serves its purpose.

(2) 'Southern' alternatives have been slow to emerge. The Western overlay may be simply too strong. Way back in the early years of the last century the great Indian missionary C. F. Andrews refused to allow his Indian theological students to study the history of the church after the early period and before the modern period because he simply wanted to protect his students from the assumption that theology came from Europe! Sadly, perhaps that is still the assumption. I know that theologically some good work has been done – Liberation Theology from Latin America, Indian Christian Theology, books and articles from scholars such as Mbiti and Koyama, but I also get the impression that these contributions are seen as passing fashions and little more. Theological power also remains in the West.

(3) Where Southern alternatives *have* emerged, we are, frankly, uncertain of their meaning. I refer here to a recent article by David Martin in the *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*. (Martin 2006). Martin begins where we began with the history of the expansion of Christianity from

the West to the South. He is quite negative about this, for example, he is caustic about the way that Christianity originally spread to Latin America.

'The mass conversion of the New World was carried out in the name of a faith already deeply infiltrated by syncretism in the Old World. It then joined itself to all the religious varieties of its new environment. Latin America today exhibits a spectrum of practices all the way from virtually unreached tribes to smouldering and confused memories of solar and chthonic faiths, and thence to exuberant spiritism and orthodox Catholicism' (111).

Referring to the whole period since the arrival of Christianity through the *conquistadores* he concludes 'Half a millennium and twenty generations later the meaning of Christianity is still only dimly appropriated' (111). Further, he suggests that this process – the transfer of an incomplete version of the faith 'deeply infiltrated by syncretism' – is still going on, although the influences are now from the United States rather than Spain and Portugal. He calls this 'a religious version of the market in American goods'. His big example is Pentecostalism, the major Protestant grouping in Latin America, though, to be fair, he sees the possibility of two traditions, two contested meanings of the Pentecostal experience.

Of course, the inevitable tension arises between the older more populist Pentecostalism which values humility and acknowledges suffering and the danger of riches, and a softer, smoother Christianity illustrating precisely those dangers in tendencies to authoritarianism, personality cult, display and greed in its leadership. (120)

This is a good description. The question is: is this latter, the 'softer, smoother Christianity' authentic, and do we want to re-export it, as it were, to the West?

Let me give a couple of brief illustrations of what I have called 'inauthentic Christianity' currently developing in the South. The Christian-Muslim confrontation provides one. The spread of Islam was a cause of great concern to European statesmen right up to the end of the nineteenth century for largely colonial reasons. In the missionary movement its spread in sub-Saharan Africa in particular was viewed with suspicion. Ludwig Krapf a CMS missionary in East Africa, for example, proposed a string of missionary stations from the east coast of Africa to the west to 'hold back' the Muslim tide, and for a while this was taken up seriously by the CMS (Pirouet 1999, 72). Notice the military and territorial emphasis. Much of our thinking about Islam remains 'territorial' to this day (witness our paranoia about mosques in this country) a power game in which Christians must gain the advantage if God's kingdom is to be established and God's people protected. The carry-over of this worldview in a country like Nigeria or Indonesia is that Christians must secure 'their' territory by almost whatever means. We know that in northern Nigeria, Islam and Christianity are locked in an often-violent struggle with the Christians sometimes as violent as the Muslims. The former president of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Sunday Mbang, has commented that 'most people who kill people come to church'; and 'they will walk very holy and shout holy, holy, and you don't know them'. This has many repercussions. As Giles Fraser has suggested, Archbishop Akinola's concern about a gay bishop in New Hampshire no doubt stems from the fact that, in his opinion, it hands a propaganda coup to the Muslims keen to depict the Anglican church as part of the sexually decadent west. He also suggests that Akinola needs to realise that it is playing a dangerous game of poker, trying to outbid fundamentalist Islam with fundamentalist Christianity (Fraser 2005).

Another example of this sort of thinking is the increasing popularity of the 'prosperity gospel', or at least, a theology of power, deliverance and healing which promises God's people

release from their exiled state. You may say to me – what’s wrong with a ministry like that? For a start people are flocking into the churches, which can’t be bad. Of course, I am not saying that power is not attractive, indeed popular. When Jesus fed the five thousand (we read that he was sorry for the people because they were sheep without a shepherd, harassed and helpless) soon enough there was another crowd that wanted to be fed. What a marvellous way to build a ministry! But when he preached to them instead of feeding them, and warned them about their greed for the miraculous they left him in large numbers.

The right stance for the Western church today is not to seek to go back to yesterday’s (apparent) triumphs. Frankly, we would say to our brothers and sisters in the South, please do not help us to do so. We do not want a revival of Constantinianism, we do not need more power, bigger numbers, greater prosperity. And if that is what you have learnt from us as the true meaning of the Kingdom we beg you to lay it aside. Of course some will say: who are you to lecture us, you Westerners? You were happy to tell us how it should be done, but once we learnt to do it better than you, you are telling us to stop! Rather like the Westerners backing off ‘progress’ now they have got what they want out of it.

I see all that as very understandable, but no answer to our needs in mission. I am looking for a new paradigm of mission not a way back to former glories.

(4) Have the Southern churches really worked out the true nature of the task as they set out to evangelise Europe? If Europe – and to some extent the United States – is post-Christian, it does not need evangelising but re-evangelising. Europe has passed through the age of enchantment to the age of dis-enchantment and now needs re-enchantment. As I have already mentioned, it used to be fashionable to describe Western Christianity, with its numbers declining and influence diminishing, as in difficulties because of the onset of secularism. There is obviously some force in the idea that our churches are in decline, but not, I think, primarily because of secularism. Perhaps an analogy with OT Israel might be helpful. We are like Israel in exile. Apparently thriving under the early monarchy, Israel goes into spiritual decline during and after the reign of David. Division and infidelity to the covenant, spiritual complacency and social injustice, all take their toll. The next stage is exile, and, on some views, despite Isaiah 40-55 and the work of men like Nehemiah and Ezra, that is where they remain. Some Biblical scholars such as N.T.Wright have even suggested that that is what the story of the Prodigal Son is about: the true Israel is still in exile while the stay-at-home elder brother is the Palestinian establishment. What if the Western church were the Prodigal Son of the 21st century, once in a place of privilege, now in ‘the far country’, in exile?

Or we could give this a more positive spin. Exile (or the wilderness) is the proper place for the church to be, though it often feels that it would like to be somewhere else. We want our own territory, somewhere we can control, something more secure. But it may not be part of the agenda to go back to a place of territory and power. Think about Matthew 4 where Jesus was offered the chance to head up a new exodus and restore the nation. It sounded impressive but Jesus saw it as a temptation. Reviving the church does not mean going back to the Christendom model. We were there once, in this country, and not so long ago. The churches were full. A man like Spurgeon in Victorian London drew huge crowds. But Victorian London was a terrible place. The churches may have been full but the real church was in exile, having decamped to the slums and pitched its tent there with the Salvation Army and the Christian Social Union.

Let me ask my question again: ‘Can the South save the West?’ and let me say again: ‘I don’t know. It is too early to tell, the history has not been done, the West is not ready for it and possibly the South as well.’ Meanwhile there are warnings that can be uttered:

1. You in the South do not have to make the same mistakes that we did.
2. Our supposed successes are not as impressive as you might think, certainly not as impressive as we have made them out to be.
3. You cannot necessarily trust *your* successes either.
4. Our culture in the West is unique – something never seen before. It is post-Christendom and perhaps even post-Christian. This culture will have to be understood on its own terms. Cultural work is hard work. It takes time, but it is essential. The jewel of mission is always contextualisation, putting off the clothes of my own cultural preferences and washing the disciples' feet. Contextualisation in this sense is the opposite of empire. It means putting off my demand for power and control. It is the Philippians 2 mode. We all need to keep this lesson close to our hearts. Did Western missionaries give you the right model? Sometimes, perhaps, but not often enough.
5. The West invented the West-South divide. It is one of the products of the Enlightenment. Can we go beyond this whole paradigm of West to South, and South to West, and start again? How could we do this? How shall we describe the people of God?

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