PATHWAYS FOR ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Decolonial Horizons

Reshaping Synodality, Mission, and Social Justice

Edited by
Raimundo C. Barreto ·
Vladimir Latinovic

palgrave macmillan

Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue

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Raimundo C. Barreto • Vladimir Latinovic
Editors

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ISSN 2634-6591 ISSN 2634-6605 (electronic)
Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue
ISBN 978-3-031-44842-3 ISBN 978-3-031-44843-0 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44843-0

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Dedicated to Luis Rivera-Pagan, for his exceptional contributions to the field of decolonial theology

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CHAPTER 1

Decolonial Horizons: An Introduction

Vladimir Latinovic and Raimundo C. Barreto

This collection of chapters, the second part of a two-volume combo, emerged from the Decolonizing Churches Conference organized by the Ecclesiological Investigations International Research Network on June 22–25, 2022 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The conference took place at the Metropolitan Campus of the Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico (UIPR) in San Juan with the support and participation of the Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico, Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico, and other regional institutions. Due to the ongoing global uncertainties caused by COVID-19, the conference was held in hybrid mode.

We invited proposals for papers addressing the need and rationale for decolonizing churches and theology in the Caribbean, Latin America, and their diaspora. We also welcomed papers dealing with the topic of colonization/decolonization in other global contexts. Intrinsically related to the

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R. C. Barreto, V. Latinovic (eds.), *Decolonial Horizons*, Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44843-0_1

idea of decolonizing theologies, papers presented at this conference included topics addressing oppressions based on gender, racial, and ethnic identities; economic inequality; social vulnerabilities; climate change and global challenges such as pandemics, neoliberalism, and the role of information technology in modern society. As Ecclesiological Investigations seeks to foster interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary scholarship, we invited proposals for papers from historical, theological, social scientific, and practical disciplines. The conference welcomed paper proposals reflecting perspectives from all major Christian traditions. Some papers focused on specific case studies while others dealt with comparative ecclesiologies or theologies. Fostering what S. Wesley Ariarajah has coined as "wider ecumenism,"[1] we also welcomed proposals dealing with the need to decolonize interfaith relations and which addressed challenges and promises of pluralistic contexts.

Papers were presented in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Non-English papers were translated in advance into English and submitted to the conference planning committee so that they could be posted prior to the beginning of the conference, facilitating the participation in discussion sessions of those who do not speak those languages. Plenary sessions that were conducted in Spanish or Portuguese were translated simultaneously. While these two volumes do not exhaust the wealth and thoroughness of the conversations held during the conference, the select chapters chosen for each volume offer a good insight into the main concerns and the diversity of contexts (inter)disciplinary approaches, and language that informed those conversations. Some of the chapters the reader will access in English in these two volumes were translated, since this publication is aimed at the anglophone academia. The editors are aware of the paradox involved in the prioritization of English readers in a work meant to advance the cause of decoloniality. We accept the risks of such an enterprise, though, convinced of the need to help those operating in anglophone bubbles to engage the important scholarly production emerging, particularly on this important theme, in languages such as Spanish and Portuguese. Furthermore, as it has been the case with other publications with which the editors have been involved in the past several years, we operate in the

[1] See, for instance, chapter 6, titled "Wider Ecumenism: A Promise or a Threat?", in S. Wesley Ariarajah, *Strangers or Co-Pilgrims? The Impact of Interfaith Dialogue on Christian Faith and Practice* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 105–113.

PART I

Deimperialization, Sinodality, and Decoloniality

CHAPTER 2

Ecclesiology as Method: Deimperialization as Fundamental Decoloniality

Henry S. Kuo

In 2007, Costa Rica's President Óscar Árias made an unexpected diplomatic move by switching the country's diplomatic recognition of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the People's Republic of China (henceforth, China).[1] Before 2007, Costa Rica and almost all Latin American countries maintained diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Árias's unexpected move was mutually beneficial, at least in the short term, for Costa Rica and China. For Costa Rica, China gifted Latin America's first modern stadium, built and upgraded by Chinese government-backed companies, in San

[1] See Ben Blanchard and Ralph Jennings, "Costa Rica switches allegiance to China from Taiwan," *Reuters,* June 6, 2007, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-costarica/costa-rica-switches-allegiance-to-china-from-taiwan-idUSPEK14344320070607.

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R. C. Barreto, V. Latinovic (eds.), *Decolonial Horizons*, Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44843-0_2

José.[2] But for China, diplomatic relations with Costa Rica not only opened the Costa Rican market to Chinese goods and brands, but many Latin American countries followed by switching their recognition from Taiwan to China, oftentimes receiving investments and cheap loans in return. This narrative played out similarly in various African and Micronesian nations. However, in recent years, Chinese diplomacy and economic investments have revealed their darker, more colonial, sides. Pakistan, for example, used Chinese loans to build a multibillion-dollar seaport and is having trouble paying it back.[3] Much of the seaport's profits went to a Chinese state-owned enterprise, thereby removing a critical source of income that was sorely needed for already financially challenged country to return to good financial health.[4] Similar stories have emerged from other countries such as Tanzania and Sri Lanka.[5]

One of the critical issues in decolonial-theological discourse is that, even as it seeks to "decolonize theology," it is difficult to dislodge its situatedness in the Western Hemisphere. To name one instance, the liberation theologies of Kim Yong-Bock and Aloysius Pieris rarely attain the universality of those such as James Cone and Gustavo Gutiérrez in the Western theological academy, despite liberation theology's emphasis on amplifying voices from theology's periphery.[6] Decolonization is often framed in terms

[2] See "$10 million donation from China to fund National Stadium improvements," *The Tico Times*, February 17, 2020, https://ticotimes.net/2020/02/17/10-million-donation-from-china-to-fund-national-stadium-improvements. For a political-architectural analysis, see Valeria Guzmán Verri, "Gifting Architecture: China and the National Stadium in Costa Rica, 2007–11," *Architectural History* 63 (2020): 287–311. https://doi.org/10.1017/arh.2020.7.

[3] See "Pakistan owes USD 10 billion debt to China for Gwadar port, other projects: Top US General," *The Economic Times*, Mar. 15, 2019, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/business/pakistan-owes-usd-10-billion-debt-to-china-for-gwadar-port-other-projects-top-us-general/articleshow/68432415.cms.

[4] Abel Kinyondo, "Is China Recolonizing Africa? Some Views from Tanzania," *World Affairs* 182, no. 2 (2019): 151–152.

[5] See footnote 4 for details on Tanzania. For the case of Sri Lanka, see Ashok K. Behuria, "How Sri Lanka Walked into a Debt Trap, and the Way Out," *Strategic Analysis* 42, no. 2 (2018): 168–178. https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2018.1439327.

[6] See Aloysius Pieris, SJ, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (London: Bloomsbury, 1988). For further reading on Kim Yong-Bok, see *Minjung Theology: People as Subjects of History* (Singapore: Christian Conference of Asia, 1981) and *Messiah and Minjung: Christ's Solidarity with the People for New Life* (Singapore: Christian Conference of Asia, 1992). For one of the last articles he published before his passing away in April 2022 that reflects the latest in his thinking, see Kim Yong-Bock, "Global Study on New Models of Ministry (*Diakonia*) for *SangSaeng* (相生 = *Convivencia*-Ubuntu) and Grand Peace (太平) in the Twenty-First Century," *Reformed World* 69, no. 2 (2021): 60–71.

CHAPTER 3

Decolonizing Synodality by Engaging Those at the Existential Peripheries

Bradford E. Hinze

Pope Francis throughout his pontificate has advanced the centrality of synodality as a way of listening to others and discerning with them on the journey of Christian discipleship. This involves Catholics collaborating with other Christians and people from diverse faith traditions and world views and engaging those at the existential peripheries of the church. In this chapter, I will defend the claim that Pope Francis's approach to synodality is decolonizing, while at the same time acknowledging the obvious fact that the church is not consistently decolonizing. There are contradictions in the life of the church that reveal a darker side of its witness and actions. This church critiques colonialism and advances decolonization yet their legacy and their current practices often undermine these efforts.

No one questions that Francis's papacy is distinguished by his advocacy of synodality. But I suspect that not many would be willing to join me in defending the claim that he is espousing a decolonizing approach to synodality, and that as he is implementing it provides a decolonizing

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https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44843-0_3

instrument in both the church and society. If that claim can be demonstrated, it would be a significant feature of his papacy. Yet even if that claim can be defended, one must admit that Francis and the Catholic Church are inconsistent in their promotion of decolonizing and thus they contradict what could be a valuable mark of the church. Can these noble aspirations and efforts, to promote decolonization, work at cross purposes with their deeply flawed actions in the past and their current systems, cultures, and policies? This contradiction must be confronted.

Advocate of Synodality

Since Jorge Bergoglio's time as archbishop in Argentina beginning in 1998 and his involvement at the continental level with the Latin American Bishops Conference, known by its Spanish acronym, CELAM, he developed an appreciation for and a commitment to a synodal approach to communal discernment and decision-making at every level of the church, in base communities, parishes, dioceses, nationally, the continental level.

CELAM's special attention to social and political issues associated with liberation theology during the Second Episcopal Conference of Latin American Bishops held in Medellín in 1968, was combined with greater attention to the wisdom of local cultures, popular pieties, and the pressing needs of indigenous peoples across Latin America. This expansive pastoral orientation corresponded to Bergoglio's leadership practices dedicated to poor peoples' cultures which were employed and further developed when he became auxiliary bishop and archbishop in the megacity of Buenos Aires. His maturing vision was enriched by the theologies of Lucio Gera, Rafael Tello, and Juan Carlos Scannone. At the fifth CELAM conference held in Aparecida Brazil in 2007, Bergoglio was chosen by his fellow bishops to write their final document.[1]

In 2013, the year Francis was elected pope, at a meeting with members from the Latin American Bishops Conference he collaborated with in preparing the Aparecida Document, he posed these rhetorical questions. "Is pastoral discernment a habitual criterion through the use of councils? Do such councils [...] provide real opportunities for lay people to

[1] Diego Fares SJ, "Ten Years on from Aparecida: The Source of Francis' Pontificate, La Civilta Cattolica" (vol. 1, no. 7, August 14, 2017)). https://www.laciviltacattolica.com/category/edition/ten-years-on-from-aparecida-the-source-of-francis-pontificate/.

CHAPTER 4

Synodality, Barlaam of Calabria on the Papacy, and Conciliar Theory

Theodore G. Dedon

The Conciliarist of Today

Reflecting on the upheavals following the Second Vatican Council, the renowned historian Francis Oakley found it wise to turn to the lessons of the late medieval Church. He said: "[T]he Church, at large, then, is plunging into revolutionary turmoil, it is torn progressively by an updated variety of schism, it is undergoing increasingly an acute crisis of faith. This being so, it seems reasonable to predict that the situation will make more and more harsh demands upon all of us—shaking former loyalties,

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R. C. Barreto, V. Latinovic (eds.), *Decolonial Horizons*, Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44843-0_4

threatening old friendships, dimming familiar memories."[1] To handle this rupture, Oakley suggests there needs to be a return to history in order to make sense of it all. Specifically, because of the great turmoil in the wake of the 1960's revolutionary qualities in both society and the Church at large, Oakley turns to an era wherein that level of change was also happening—the late medieval Church. Of this he says, "[T]he medieval Church is certainly less fashionable and perhaps less readily comprehensible. At a moment when the turn from the closed worlds of the [Brennan] Mannings and the [Alisdair] MacIntyres to the infinite universes of the [Karl] Rahners and [Rosemary Radford] Ruethers is reaching a point of truly Copernican decision, the medieval experience […] is no longer exactly at a premium."[2] But more than just turning to the medieval experience in general, or a particular thinker in medieval theology, Oakley believes it is important to focus on one of the dynamics which shaped the late medieval past and everything thereafter, including the Vatican II moment: the medieval general council, the conciliarist movement, and conciliar theory. This era has lessons for us not only regarding ecclesiastical and social organization, but also for a greater sense of justice in the world order. Though no longer at a premium, as Oakley says, the late medieval experience can be rendered sensible, shedding light on the contemporary age.

When Pope John XXIII announced to a smaller assembly in 1959 his intention of summoning a general council, upon seeking advice was met with silence among the assembled cardinals, bishops, and curial attendees. As Pope John himself put it, the announcement was followed by a "devout and impressive silence," which Oakley describes as "the silence of

[1] Francis Oakley, *Council over Pope? Towards a Provisional Ecclesiology* (New York: Herder & Herder), 19. This article, following Francis Oakley and others before and after him, accepts conciliar theory as having influenced times and problems far after the conciliarist controversy of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This debate, regarding the influence of the conciliar theory, should be revived. It seems wise to situate this debate alongside, not apart from, the apparent programming shift toward synodality. Should this be left as a fringe episode in late medieval history, resulting in controversy or even heresy, the ideas at the core of the push for synodality can be weaponized against the expressed and desired ends. Reviving this debate and, as is being done here and elsewhere, taking a direct stance in favor of the length and impact of such influence can help buttress synodality not only as an ancient ideal with eschatological dimensions, but as a secular framework approaching power modeled in the Christian tradition at large. The conciliar theory, it seems, is an essential stance regarding the relationship of power spiritual and temporal.

[2] Francis Oakley, *Council over Pope?*, 20.

PART II

Reimagining Family and Gender Through a Decolonial Lens

CHAPTER 5

Decolonial Moves Beyond *"la igualdad hombre-mujer"*—A Puerto Rican Case Study of Gender, Theology and Decolonial Thinking

Rubén David Bonilla-Ramos

Decolonial Thinking, Gender, and Theology—Un bocadillo introductorio

Aníbal Quijano's concept of *colonialidad del poder*[1] helped provide decolonial thinking with an academic scenario that has become a significant framework for different disciplines, challenging established norms and

[1] Aníbal Quijano, "Colonialidad Del Poder: Cultura y Conocimiento En América Latina," *Dispositio* 24, no. 51 (1999): 137–48.

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R. C. Barreto, V. Latinovic (eds.), *Decolonial Horizons*, Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44843-0_5

inviting epistemic disobedience methodologies.[2] Though decolonial thinking and postcolonial theory share some important insights, it is essential to be aware of their differences, so as not to use them interchangeably. This is to say that acknowledging the crucial distinctions between these theoretical approaches is significant, mostly, as to not disregard the particular locations and human experiences that each one proposes and represents. By using postcolonial and decolonial interchangeably without critically analyzing their distinct intricacies, academia runs the risk of reducing them to a monolithic theoretical approach. Néstor Medina, for example, highlights the crucial difference in the use of categories of hybridity and *mestizaje*,[3] orientalism, and transmodernity, showing how their interchangeable use without critical differentiation produces a simplistic approach to decolonial thinking and postcolonial theory.[4] In a similar manner, An Yountae analyzes an important difference between both theories, specifically from their contributions to the studies of colonialism, arguing that:

> Despite his significant contributions to the study of colonialism, Said locates the origin of European colonialism in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European expansion in Asia, disregarding the sixteenth-century Ibero-Imperial colonization of the Americas. This implies that postcolonial theory presents inherent inaptitude to address the colonial problem of the Americas. Those who point out the elitist nature of postcolonial theory find a parallel between postcolonial theory's penchant for European theory and their failure to include the various anticolonial voices that existed long before the arrival of third-world intellectuals in the first-world academy.[5]

[2] See Walter D. Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 7–8 (2009): 159–81, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276409349275

[3] "'Mestizaje' in the Americas seems to refer to both a strategic social construct and a generic but ambiguous type of collective identity. Acting strategically, mestizaje can function as a register (e.g., a myth) through which a new people can be brought into existence, or as an elucidating metaphor that helps to make sense of the masking that goes on when fusion fails to take place as different people meet under asymmetrical conditions" J. Jorge Klor de Ávila cited in Néstor. Medina, *Mestizaje: (Re)Mapping Race, Culture, and Faith in Latina/o Catholicism*, Studies in Latino/a Catholicism Series (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2009), 1.

[4] Néstor Medina, "On the Ethics and Perils of Engaging Critical Theory: Let's Keep It Real," *Contending Modernities: Exploring How Religious and Secular Forces Interact in the Modern World.*, n.d., https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/decoloniality/ethics-peril-critical-theory/

[5] An Yountae, "A Decolonial Theory of Religion: Race, Coloniality, and Secularity in the Americas," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 88, no. 4 (December 31, 2020): 952–53, https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfaa057

CHAPTER 6

Decolonizing Familial Metaphors for Nationhood: Reflective Nostalgia, Christology, and *la Gran Familia Puerto Riqueña*

Emanuel Padilla

The opening exchange from Marvel's *Black Panther* film typifies conversations within families living as diaspora away from their home countries. The film opens with these lines:

> *"Bah-Bah"*
> *"Yes my son?"*
> *"Tell me a story"*
> *"Which one?"*
> *"The story of home."*[1]

[1] "Black Panther (2018) | Official Trailer, Cast, Plot, Release Date, Characters," Marvel Entertainment, https://www.marvel.com/movies/black-panther, accessed June 22, 2022.

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R. C. Barreto, V. Latinovic (eds.), *Decolonial Horizons*, Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44843-0_6

Like the young Wakandan character, I once asked my parents to narrate the identity of my people. I was prompted by a third grade schoolteacher who invited me to share about my heritage during a school wide cultural celebration. Using a poster with the faces of a young Taína, an African slave, and a Spanish conquistador, my parents narrated my identity as a *criollo* (creole, mixed) son of the Caribbean. Reinforcing the story with symbols, my father volunteered to join me in presenting our people at the celebration, and dressed as *jíbaros* with güiros, we sang, "*A Belen, a Belen pastores, A Belen, A Belen, llegaron* […]"[2] This core memory, early in life, set the markers for being part of the Puerto Rican family in southeast Detroit, and further back to New York City and further still, *la isla de Puerto Rico*.

While "family" is one of various biblical images used to identify the church, *la gran familia*—an organizing myth used to develop Puerto Rico's national identity—represents a distortion of this theological notion. In the opening pages of *La fe en Jesucristo*, Jon Sobrino writes briefly about the hypocrisy of church language when considered from the perspective of the poor. One example of the language he challenges is the common use of familial metaphors for church communities. Sobrino writes, "Inequality within the human species prohibits the use of the metaphorical, but essential in the Christian faith, language of *family*."[3] Clearly, Sobrino does not deny that familial language is important to the church, but his criticism raises concern for the *use* of this language in settings where systems of exploitation have trapped people in poverty and patriarchal abuse. His critique might be stated as a question: How could the church speak of the "family of God" in neocolonial settings of slow death?[4] This question is especially relevant for decolonial theologies of Puerto

[2] An old folk song sung by Puerto Ricans as a Christmas carol. This Christmas Carol invites everyone to sing for joy at the birth of "the love of loves" in a manger at Bethlehem.

[3] Jon Sobrino, *La fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo desde las víctimas*, 3rd edition (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, S.A., 2007), 15. Translation is my own (emphasis original).

[4] Jasbir K. Puar, *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2017), 1. Puar explains her use of Foucault's biopolitics to define slow death writing, "make die and make live (because in some cases debilitation can be harnessed into "compliant" disability rehabilitation), as well as let live and let die, a version of slow death, a gradual decay of bodies that are both overworked and underressourced [sic]" (139). In short, slow death is "the debilitating ongoingness [sic] of structural inequality and suffering" (Ibid).

CHAPTER 7

Remembrance as Decolonial Practice

Elaine Padilla

Introduction

Ten years ago, I began a project of studying the writings, pictographs, drawings, paintings, plazas, and deities (petroglyphs) of various indigenous groups in South America and the Caribbean. In the course of this project, I traveled and conducted research on indigenous sacred spaces in Puerto Rico and began to read on the wealth of Tainoan heritage. Perhaps it was an ancestral presence in the form of *animas* inviting one to indwell the moment of intimacy of these spaces. A call, a cry, a memory in need of being experienced within and voiced. Large stones and expansive plazas symmetrically aligned to welcome me into their communion with the cosmos and the divine were beckoning me to awaken to the sacredness and infinitude of this heritage.

Inhabiting the spaces of the island of Puerto Rico has invited me to forge an identity amid coloniality and at the heart of my migratory existence. As a child and adolescent, this identity meant becoming acquainted with my ancestry via novels, stories, poems, paintings, and songs of our

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R. C. Barreto, V. Latinovic (eds.), *Decolonial Horizons*, Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44843-0_7

Puerto Rican laureates who have found inspiration in their rich Tainoan and Afro heritage. I grew up affirming a Puerto Rican imaginary that embraced its variegated ethnic, racial, cultural, and linguistic entwinements. As an adult, it has entailed grappling with how my memories now also dwell miles away the island's ocean and sea, tropical forests, mountain range, and valleys. Today's insights are tinted by the many negotiations of being a Puerto Rican academic in the United States.[1]

The meaning of being "decolonial" has evolved into enlivening and embodying a memory from within the Spanish-European and Anglo structures of invisibility. For these reasons, I propose a method of decoloniality that can be described as *re*membering Tainoan personhood to defy homogeneity and fragmentation of the self and to reconfigure the discourse on ecclesiastical and doctrinal orthodoxy. With a focus on women's sexuality and capacity for (re)birthing worlds, decolonizing the Church in this chapter means remembrance in that what the Church buried underground—by establishing imperializing and colonizing structures atop the beliefs and practices of Taíno peoples—can become visible.

Implied in the meaning of underground are at least four aspects: not easily perceived, buried underneath the ground, archeologically recovered, and the dark unconscious. My use of the term underground will be principally based on archeology of the early colonial period. To establish precedence and offer a rationale for decolonizing the contemporary church, I focus on the Tainoan ceremonial plazas as well as female *cemis* (pictographs and petroglyphs) excavated in the Caribbean, particularly, the island of Puerto Rico. This is not to argue for a return to origins or an idyllic past but to offer another option in decolonizing the Church in the

[1] Subjective research has been integral in decolonial theory. It makes possible hearing voices of marginalized peoples in ways that create "space-subjectivity" for the manifestation of "self-disclosure" which can include the experiences of the author (with the use of the "I"). In that regard, the author is not an observer apart from nor above the community that "speaks" and the interpretation further arises from *within* the particular cultural contexts being engaged. Ada María Isasi-Díaz describes it as follows: "I attempt in [my essays] to make specific for the reader the person who stands behind the words by sharing some of the formative events in my life, some of the projects in which I have been and am involved." See her groundbreaking work, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 3). For other examples of this kind of methodology, see the introduction and chapter of Isasi-Díaz in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, co-edited with Eduardo Mendieta, pp. 1–18 and 44–67 (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2011).

PART III

Decolonizing Mission

CHAPTER 8

Panama, Montevideo and Havana and the Emergence of a De-colonial and Indigenous Latin American Protestant Identity: 1916–1929

Philip Wingeier-Rayo

Introduction

Latin America and the Caribbean have historically been colonized and the objects of Christian mission. The indigenous peoples such as the Tainos and the Caribs in the Caribbean and the Aztecs and Incas in Mexico and Peru, respectively, were conquered and colonized by the Spaniards, which was inclusive of religious coercion. Protestant mission efforts began in the nineteenth century after Latin American countries gained independence from Spain; however, the Monroe Doctrine began a new period of neo-colonialism. Protestantism spread throughout Latin America but largely as an object of foreign mission work from Europe and North America. This chapter will examine the process of indigenization and autonomy of Latin

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R. C. Barreto, V. Latinovic (eds.), *Decolonial Horizons*, Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44843-0_8

American Protestants through the lens of the international ecumenical movement. It will begin with a historical overview of the arrival of Christianity to Latin America and the Caribbean, both its Roman Catholic and Protestant origins, and then the struggle to contextualize the Christian message according to the regional context. Finally, the chapter will explore Latin American Protestantism's struggle to de-colonize itself from the former mission-sending churches, overcome the stereotype as a "younger church," and have a seat at the table as an equal with the churches in other parts of the world—especially those in North America and Europe.

The Conquest

When Christopher Columbus launched an expedition to find safe passage to India, he carried with him this European worldview of Christendom. The Roman Catholic Church worked beside the Conquistadores to "Christianize" the native peoples of Latin American and the Caribbean. A priest traveled with Columbus on his second voyage to the Caribbean in 1493. That same year, Pope Alexander VI granted the Spanish explorers a "Inter Caetera" or possession over newly discovered lands and the right to propagate the faith.[1] This policy was an extension of Christendom—believing that the governors of a given conquered territory (kingdom) have the authority to convert their subjects. The struggle for sovereignty, dignity and autonomy for the people of Latin America and the Caribbean has been long and suffering.

Protestant Origins in Latin America

Upon the arrival of Protestant mission efforts in the nineteenth century, national churches also had to struggle for autonomy. William Taylor was one of the first Protestant missionaries in South America and preached in Valparaiso, Chile, during a stopover as he traveled on a steam ship from New York City to San Francisco at the time of the Gold Rush in 1849. The first-known Protestant sermon in Spanish was preached by Methodist John Francis Thomson on May 25th, 1867, in Buenos Aires. After the Spanish colonial laws were rescinded and separation of church and state

[1] The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/doctrine-discovery-1493 Also see: Hugh Thomas, *El Imperio Español: De Colon a Magallanes* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2004), 237.

CHAPTER 9

Decolonizing the History of Mission: An Indonesian Lutheran Perspective

Hesron H. Sihombing

Methodological Frameworks

Decolonizing churches is a complex work, one that has to start with decolonizing the intersectional history of the Christian mission. The intersectional history of the Christian mission means the exposition of the Christian mission history through various lenses of analysis, especially ones that encompass colonization, capitalism, racism, and patriarchy. This intersectional analysis of history suggests that one should not jump to an easy conclusion about the current context of ubiquitous colonial paradigms and practices prevalent in the church without analyzing the legacy of the Christian mission and how the Christian mission has colluded with colonialism and different forms of exploitation and domination. Failing to address how churches emerged through the intersection of European mission works, racism, and colonialism, especially in the postcolonial context of the Global South, results in deteriorating the cultural integrity of one

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https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44843-0_9

particular community's history. More importantly, this approach impedes the church's ability to dismantle its existing theologies and practices of domination inherited from the Christian mission since its inception. Theological and practical constructions that the church in the postcolonial Global South preserves today are primarily rooted in the Christian mission, including how the church understands, organizes, administers, and funds itself. While some churches have successfully constructed a hybrid identity rooted within their local context, the ecclesiological understanding derived from the colonial and Christian mission era still functions in other ecclesial groups. We cannot ignore the intersectional history of the Christian mission if we want to exercise decolonization in the church.

The intersectional history of the Christian mission helps us assess the missionary work more holistically. It acknowledges reality within its wholeness and complexity. Mission work should be directed to address the fullness of life. Still, according to Kwok Pui-lan, a postcolonial Asian theologian, it has often been established as a spiritual transformation only.[1] Social and structural transformation was often not considered an integral part of the gospel. In addition, Kwok argues, modern mission works have indebted much to the "Enlightenment ideas of progress and assumed the superiority of Western ideals, values, education, and customs." Missionary works have functioned as civilizing missions that have destroyed indigenous wisdom, culture, and way of life.[2] Tink Tinker has called these practices "cultural genocide,"[3] the systematic annihilation of indigenous cultures at all levels. Given this condition, rethinking the Christian mission is vital in the process of decolonization, and situating it within its intersectional history will help reinvent constructive indigenous worldviews that have been lost.

This chapter explores the history of the Christian mission that contributed to the development of Indonesian Lutheran churches in the middle of Dutch colonialism and Eurocentric modernity. Since the history of the Christian mission, as a discourse, bestows the earliest formation of local ecclesiology, it will be argued here that all acts of church decolonization are closely connected to how churches understand their history of mission

[1] Pui-lan Kwok, *Postcolonial Politics and Theology: Unraveling Empire for a Global World*, First edition (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2021), 191.

[2] Kwok, *Postcolonial Politics*, 191.

[3] George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1993).

CHAPTER 10

"Because of This Experience It Is Much Easier to Understand": How Canadian Missionary Encounters with Minjung History Changed Them and Their Church

David Kim-Cragg

Introduction

The *minjung* has become an important historical lens through which to understand Korea history. Developed as a concept to explain a particular social force for change by theologians and intellectuals involved in the South Korean democratization movement, it has been applied retrospectively to understand events going back hundreds of years. Minjung historians will also point to the *minjung* as a useful way to understand current events, as a force in the present-day Korean reunification movement for example. Korean historians have reflected on the many ways that the *minjung* have shaped the modern nation of Korea. But few have considered the impact of minjung history outside the boundaries of the Korean

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https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44843-0_10

peninsula and nation. This chapter will focus on the impact of the history of the *minjung* on Canadians and the Canadian church over the course of the twentieth century.

By virtue of their location and period of work in modern Korea, Canadian missionaries were often caught up in the turbulent and dangerous currents of minjung history. As a result, their lives were deeply affected, their outlook on their missionary work was changed, and the Canadian mission to Korea was transformed. Partly by virtue of the missionary connection and partly as a result of globalization in the twentieth century, the church in Canada absorbed and was also shaped by minjung history. While the individual experiences of the missionaries with the *minjung* are interesting in themselves, the significance of the history of the *minjung* in shaping them and the missionary movement to which they belonged tells a significant history of decolonization that began with the missionaries in Korea but also impacted the church in Canada that had sent them overseas.

Minjung History

The concept of the *minjung* and of a minjung history came into wide use in South Korea during the democratization movement of the 1970s and 1980s. The word *minjung* is made up of two East-Asian ideograms, 民 (*min*) and 衆 (*jung*), roughly meaning people and masses. The use of this word can be traced back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was a concept used by leaders of the Donghak Uprising to refer to the oppressed peasantry. In the early twentieth century, Korea's first modern historian used it to talk about a quasi-nationalist movement in Korea that resisted both the Korean elite who claimed to represent the nation (*minjok*) and the Japanese colonial government that sought to erase Korean sovereignty and identity. The *minjung* were a group of people whose ethnic identity and nationalistic aspirations were subsumed and transformed by a multilayered experience of oppression and a desire for a new and just expression of the Korean state and nation. It was not until Christian theologians and other Korean scholars got hold of the term in the 1970s, however, that it was systematically defined and developed. These theologians, many of whom were shaped by their encounter with the Canadian mission[1], identified the *minjung* with the dispossessed and

[1] David Kim-Cragg, *Water from Dragon's Well: The History of a Korean-Canadian Church Relationship* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022), 128ff.

PART IV

Decolonizing Liberation, Social Justice, and Public Policy

CHAPTER 11

Elite Capture and Decolonizing the Church of the Poor

Michael E. Lee

Introduction

On the night he was selected to serve as the Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis famously addressed the world by expressing a desire for a different church. "Oh, how I would like a poor Church, and for the poor."[1] The phrase has a long history from John XXIII's 1962 radio address at the dawn of the Second Vatican Council describing a "Church of all and in particular the Church of the poor,"[2] through the work of Latin American liberation

[1] Philip Pullella and Catherine Hornby, "Pope Francis wants Church to be poor, and for the poor," *Reuters,* Mar. 16, 2013 (https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pope-poor/pope-francis-wants-church-to-be-poor-and-for-the-poor-idUSBRE92F05P20130316).

[2] Pope's Address to "World Month Before Council Opened," in F. Anderson, ed., *Council Daybook Vatican II. Session I*, Oct. 11 to Dec. 8, 1962 (Wash DC: National Catholic Welfare Conference 1964), 19.

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R. C. Barreto, V. Latinovic (eds.), *Decolonial Horizons*, Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44843-0_11

theologians and communities,[3] and the recent use in Francis' own ministry. Though problematic in the way the phrase identifies people with their own oppression, the vision of a church of and for the marginalized has been fruitful for Francis as he has linked it to images of a church going to the peripheries or serving as a field hospital in a wounded world.[4] Around the globe, it is a vision that has inspired hope, but not without exceptions.

In the United States, if a Catholic Church of the poor means the one that accompanies those from minoritized and marginalized communities in solidarity and joins them in the struggle against the destructive forces of neo-liberal capitalism and the historical legacies of racism, colonialism, and dispossession, then it has a long way to go. Indeed, even a cursory glance at the statements and positions taken among a sector of church leaders and wealthy Catholics today reveals a vision opposed to this committed, solidaristic church.[5] Perhaps no one figure has crystallized this counter-vision more than José Horacio Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles and president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

On November 4, 2021, 18 months after the murder of George Floyd, Archbishop Gomez delivered a video address to the Congress of Catholic and Public Life taking place in Madrid, Spain.[6] Entitled, "Reflections on the Church and America's New Religions," the lecture focused on "the rise of new secular ideologies and movements for social change in the United States and the implications for the Church." Gómez summed up his central claim in this way, "I believe the best way for the Church to understand the new social justice movements is to understand them as pseudo-religions, and even replacements and rivals to traditional Christian beliefs."

This chapter argues that the ideology Gomez puts forward in this speech is part of a wider religious and political discourse embraced by sectors of the Catholic Church in the United States that is misogynist,

[3] For instance, Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Option for the Poor," in Jon Sobrino & Ignacio Ellacuría, eds. *Mysterium Liberationis* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 225–50.

[4] Devin Watkins, "Pope at Audience: Church a 'field hospital' that cares for sick," *Vatican News,* Aug. 28, 2019 (https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-08/pope-francis-general-audience-church-cares-for-sick.html).

[5] For an examination of these critics, see John Gehring, *The Francis Effect: A Radical Pope's Challenge to the American Catholic Church* (Washington D.C.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

[6] José H. Gómez, "Reflections on the Church and America's New Religions," (https://archbishopgomez.org/blog/reflections-on-the-church-and-americas-new-religions).

CHAPTER 12

No Holiness But Decolonial Holiness: Social Holiness, REHACE, and Decoloniality

Héctor M. Varela Rios

Introduction

Social holiness is considered one of the most important values in the Methodist Church. Since its very beginnings under Anglican priests John and Charles Wesley, Methodists have considered social justice work as key

This essay was presented as a paper at the 2022 Ecclesiological Investigations Conference "Decolonizing Churches" in Puerto Rico. I must acknowledge the rightful owners of that land: the Taínes of Borikén. While the Spanish genocide all but wiped them out 530 years ago, the Taíne are present through Boricua DNA, which many of those in the conference carry in their blood, including me. This short yet sincere acknowledgment serves to honor their presence and agency. I also want to thank Dr. Glorymar Rivera Báez (Executive Director of REHACE) and Rev. Dr. Héctor Ortiz Vidal (who retired as IMPR Bishop in June 2022) for their willingness to help with my ongoing investigation and to participate in the conference panel.

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R. C. Barreto, V. Latinovic (eds.), *Decolonial Horizons*, Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44843-0_12

element of individual and communal Christian belief and practice, especially as it relates to soteriology and ecclesiology. As Methodist myself, I can personally attest to this consideration, having participated in these ecclesial activities my whole life, yet also acknowledge that local churches (i.e., the church militant) sometimes fall short of this lofty intention. However, social holiness can be colonizing because it formulates an objectifying relationship that presupposes a lack in its target context. In other words, social justice work can mask (or worse yet, serve as proxy) for colonization.

Relatedly, it is well-known that all Euro-modern Christian churches/ denominations (Catholic and Protestant both) have a tragic history with colonization. As it pertains to the context of this essay, the allegiance of empire and church from early modernity onward in what is now known as The Americas (including the Caribbean) led to atrocities that reverberate to this day. For the past half century or more, decolonial thinking has critiqued this history and its consequences on Latin American and Latinx ways of being, knowing, and living; in essence, making plain that coloniality still grips minds and bodies in so-called postcolonial contexts and this colonialized knowledge and understanding needs to be purged all together.[1]

In this chapter, I will focus on the intersection between Methodist social holiness and decoloniality. Can there be a social holiness that is aware of coloniality and seeks to subvert it? What would this "decolonial holiness" look like in *lo cotidiano*? What does it visibilize and what does it obscure even further? What are its blind spots and its potential? To answer some of these questions, I will look for decolonial traces in a Methodist faith-based organization (FBO) operating in the shadow of more than five centuries of coloniality: Rehaciendo Comunidades con Esperanza (or REHACE), the faith-based organization (FBO) of La Iglesia Metodista de Puerto Rico (IMPR). My investigation of REHACE during the past few months, via its printed and online documentation, in-person and video testimonies, and interviews with its directors and other employees, yielded insights that suggest a uniqueness and autochthonousness that encourages a decolonial understanding of doing [their] church as an expression of Wesleyan social holiness.

[1] For an introduction to coloniality, see Aníbal Quijano and Michael Ennis, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America," Nepantla: Views from South 1, issue 3 (2000): 533–580.

CHAPTER 13

Decolonizing the African Church in the Context of a Secular Public Policy

Patrick Giddy

Introduction: Two Versions of Secular Policy

While I was teaching at the University of Lesotho in the 1990s, I realized that the two main political parties, the Basotho Congress Party (BCP) and the Basotho National Party (BNP), had emerged out of the two religious traditions that had had such an impact on the population, the French Evangelical missionaries on the one hand, and the Catholic Oblate missionaries from Ottawa, on the other; both, as it happened, French-speaking.[1] But, as I came to understand it, these origins in the religious

[1] "There are two significant overlapping affiliations, the one between mountain dwellers, certain traditional persons of authority and Roman Catholics, and the one between lowlanders, non-Kwena tribal members (known as "commoners") and Protestants … These affiliations are related to the societal support bases of the ruling Basotho National Party (BNP) and the opposition Basotho Congress Party (BCP) respectively." W. J. Breytenbach, "National Integration in Lesotho." *South African Journal of African Affairs* 1 and 2 (1976): 92.

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R. C. Barreto, V. Latinovic (eds.), *Decolonial Horizons*, Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44843-0_13

past were, to my surprise, very largely unknown to present-day citizens of Lesotho. Conflicts attached to the ambivalent emergence of modernity in the developed world were to some extent determining the political landscape of an African country whose culture predates these movements.[2] You can't turn back the clock, but the way forward should be informed. A country's development depends on overcoming blind spots such as this one.[3] I want to suggest a similar situation pertains in contemporary democratic African countries in respect of the secular character of the governments. These secular approaches—the Anglo-Saxon on the one hand and the Francophone on the other—follow the two versions of the Christian religion out of which they emerged: roughly, the Protestant and the Catholic. It is important to see these links if one is to motivate the project of a decolonized ecclesiology. Very briefly, and to anticipate, the focus in the Anglo-Saxon version is on tolerance for different worldviews (with its remote origins in Protestant resistance to a religious absolute) and centred on each individual's choice of life direction. In the Francophone version the focus is on human creativity or *liberté* (with its remote origins in the Catholic idea of grace perfecting nature) which is blocked by religion's heteronomous approach. Both versions, I will argue, elide what is the foundation of African culture, the basic human need for a commitment to solidarity.

A decolonializing process must begin with tracing how the movement that began with Jesus' radical modification of the Jewish religion became enculturated in these two different ways. This will lead us to ask critical questions about the further inculturation of the faith in the African context and to suggest how an understanding of the negative aspects of those moves could help in the invention of an African church rooted in, rather than side-lining, the reality of the African lifeworld.

The version of the religion out of which Anglo-Saxon secularity emerged, sees God intervening to lift persons out of the state of sin, on the condition each individual responds with a "yes" to this gratuitous

[2] On the general impact of Protestant missions on the consciousness of black South Africans, see J. and J. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution Vol. 1. Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991). For an example of a narrow Victorian understanding of "Christian civilization," see the collection of mid-nineteenth-century letters of my ancestor, Rev Richard Giddy, to the London Missionary Society, in Karel Schoeman, ed., *The Wesleyan Mission in the O.F.S. 1833–1854* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1991), esp. 93.

[3] See James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depolitization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

CHAPTER 14

The Religion of Albizu: Spirituality in the Decolonizing Efforts of a Twentieth-Century Puerto Rican Independence Movement Leader

Efraín Agosto

Introduction

For many that grew up in the Puerto Rican diaspora of New York City, the figure of Pedro Albizu Campos, the twentieth-century Puerto Rican independence leader, seemed distant. Not much information about him was readily available on the US mainland. For those of us in the academic field of New Testament studies, for example, there was little opportunity to research about Albizu Campos, or even about Puerto Rico for that matter, a colonized territory of the US since 1898. However, as the field shifted to pay more attention to the imperial context of the Jesus movement in

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R. C. Barreto, V. Latinovic (eds.), *Decolonial Horizons*, Pathways for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44843-0_14

first century CE, comparative studies across empires and across centuries became more prevalent. This included the study of the New Testament figure, the Apostle Paul, and his writings.[1] One of the motivating factors, accordingly, in my study of Pedro Albizu Campos was finding out about his occasional designation as "Apostle of Puerto Rican independence." What parallels could be made between the first-century "Apostle of the Gentiles" and the twentieth-century "Apostle of Puerto Rican Independence"? Moreover, in this chapter, we explore the religious foundations that motivated the "apostolic" work of Pedro Albizu Campos.[2]

Before turning to particulars about Albizu Campos, a word about the use of the terms "apostle" and "apostolic" is in order, albeit briefly. In the New Testament, we learn that Paul of Tarsus considered himself called to be "apostle to the Gentiles," that is, "someone sent with the authority of the sender, a kind of ambassador (2 Cor. 5:20)," in Paul's case to bring the good news about Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ for all, including non-Jews.[3] This reference to "apostle"—"sent one"—appears in the first sentence of nine of the thirteen Pauline letters.[4] It is a mission-oriented term, from the perspective of Paul, not a hierarchical one. As Paul scholar Michael Gorman notes, "'apostle' did not mean 'bully' or even primarily 'authority figure.' It meant 'father,' 'mother,' 'pastor,' 'example,' and especially 'Christ-bearer.'"[5] These are all images, Gorman goes on to demonstrate, that are present in the Pauline writings. Similarly, as we shall see in this chapter, Pedro Albizu Campos, although he became the President of the Nationalist Party, the chief advocating entity in the first half of the twentieth century for Puerto Rico's independence from the US, saw his

[1] Among the key studies of the Roman imperial context in which the first-century Jesus movement was founded and developed was the edited volume by Richard Horsley, *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997).

[2] See a previous effort in a comparative study of Paul and Albizu Campos: Efrain Agosto, "Confronting Empire: The Apostle Paul & Pedro Albizu Campos, The Apostle of Puerto Rican Independence," *Apuntes* 35/4 (2015): 118–133; as well as a broader study on Paul and Puerto Rico that includes a brief analysis of the impact of Pedro Albizu Campos on the history of Puerto Rico: Efrain Agosto, "Islands, Borders, and Migration: Reading Paul in Light of the Crisis in Puerto Rico," in Efrain Agosto and Jacqueline Hidalgo, *Latinxs, the Bible and Migration* (Springer Nature, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 149–170.

[3] As described by Michael J. Gorman, *Reading Paul* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2008), 16.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 17.