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Nigel Rooms
and Steve Taylor

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EDITORIAL

Editorial Volume 5 Issue 2

Steve Taylor

Welcome to what is the tenth issue of *Ecclesial Futures*, a journal focused on the mission of God in the world, particularly in local Christian communities and the systems that support them.

The journal began in June 2020, publishing print only through Wipf and Stock. Ten issues later, in December, 2024, we are online and open access, thanks to the support of Radboud University Press and Open Journals, who provide a professional Open-Access publishing platform for scholarly, peer-reviewed journals.

In this issue you will find eight book reviews, a wonderful testimony to a growing community of scholars who are reading, thinking and interacting together.

You will also find five articles that explore the nature of the mission of God as analysed in local church partnerships, spiritual practices, liturgy, patterns of migration and liberative readings of Scripture. The authors are located in South Africa, Philippines, Zimbabwe and United Kingdom and work within Anglican, Catholic, Pentecostal and Reformed denominational systems. The articles and book reviews contribute to a growing body original research about the mission of God in the world in and through Christian communities.

As always, my thanks to my colleagues Nigel Rooms (co-editor), Patrick Todjeras (editor of book reviews), Chris Pipe (copy-editor) and the team at Radboud University Press and Open Journals for their skill and care.

Original research

In a **first** article, Ian Terry explores the role of partnerships in transforming unjust structures of society. The research is located in a local church context, as a Church of England parish embraces mission with the homeless. A feature of the research was gathering the voices and experiences of the homeless, including eighty participants in five focus groups. These lived experiences are then read in dialogue with common good thinking, as a tool for analysis.

The article offers missiologically formed suggestions to empower rough sleepers. Four practical steps forward are outlined. These include the role of listening in giving voice to those who are vulnerable, providing opportunities to empower rough sleepers, offering personal mentoring in the finding of work and working toward advocacy with, not for the homeless, as they challenge bureaucracies to operate in more user-friendly, less de-personalised ways. A feature of the research is the case study approach, that weaves local ministry, research with the homeless and theological reflection on "common good building" among the homelessness. Concretely, the article argues that local churches build associations, local groupings, to encourage respectful listening and shared decision-making with the homeless.

In a **second** article, Mookgo Solomon Kgatle argues for a pneumatological missional imagination as a way of understanding migration and mission. The article outlines a lack of theoretical frameworks to understand the intersections of migration and mission. Three theories are proposed. The pneumatological imagination draws on Spirit-mediated encounters, including between God and human beings and among human beings. The missiological spirit understands God the Spirit as the missiological Spirit, empowering believers to move beyond the local area to other nations in sharing of gospel love. The missional imagination involves the orientation of the whole church towards the mission of God. The article proposes these three be woven together as a pneumatological missional imagination, defined as the orientation of the migrant church towards the mission of God through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in encountering people of other nations. This pneumatological missional imagination is relevant for witnessing to others, speaking foreign languages, and orientation to the mission of God.

An illustrative example is used, drawing from the challenges facing the Apostolic Faith Mission Ministry International in the United Kingdom (AFMIMUK). This allows empirical research, particularly participant observation, to be a resource in examining mission and migration. The article argues that the pneumatological missional imagination can empower God's migrant people amid the challenges of ministering with cultural relevance in a new country, navigating cultural difference and orientation to the mission of God.

The dynamic relationship between culture and faith is explored in a **third** article. Kevin Maicom assesses the reception of Vatican II's *Directory of Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines* (DPPL) in the Philippines. Issued in 2001, the DPPL provided guidance in integrating popular piety with the liturgy. The article provides an initial overview of the complicated interactions between Filipino popular piety and the Catholic liturgy. Festivals incorporate connections to societal issues and human

emotions. Gestures, including dance resonate with the expressive dimensions of Filipino culture. Prayers address socio-political dimensions like poverty, health, education and food. Music draws on cultural elements including the “kundiman”, sad Filipino songs about the wounded hero sacrificing everything for love. Popular piety can allow people to express their communion with God and within the ecclesial community in local cultural forms. Equally, it can distort Christian doctrine in liturgical practice.

The article then outlines a framework within the DPPL for assessing popular piety in the liturgy. Four areas – biblical, liturgical, ecumenical, and anthropological – are outlined and tested with an illustrative example. The “Salubong” is a common Catholic practice which imagines the encounter between Jesus and Mary, his mother following the resurrection. The article teases out connections that are liturgical, ecumenical, and anthropological and offers a creative re-reading of Biblical texts that could be used to deepen the integration between Catholic faith and popular piety. Rather than settle for static approaches to culture, the article demonstrates how popular piety can enrich the liturgy in dynamic relationships that enhance the lived experiences of the People of God. A dynamic approach to liturgy emphasises the value of theological education for the future life of the church.

A dynamic approach to Christian life is the focus of a **fourth** article. Peter Ruxton assesses New Monasticism in Britain in light of the missional spirituality of the Celtic *peregrini* who from the sixth century established monastic centres for mission and evangelism in Britain and Ireland. The article groups the spiritual practices of the Celtic *peregrini* into two categories, one distinctively Celtic, the other shared in common with other monastic movements. Aware of the danger of romanticising the past, Ruxton employs a method of “looking through” original texts. The five distinctly Celtic practices involve a intense sense of God’s sacramental presence, a commitment to risky living, a season of formation, an embrace of silence, solitude, evangelism and service and bounded sense of sacred space. Two practices are shared with other monastic movements: a daily rhythm of prayer and Scripture and shared values in a rule of life.

The article then brings the spirituality of the original Celtic *peregrini* into dialogue with four New Monastic expressions. The Iona Community, the Community of Aidan and Hilda, the Northumbria Community and the 24-7 Prayer movement are described. Finally, the life of these new monastic expressions is assessed against the spiritual practices of the Celtic *peregrini*. Ruxton argues that in an age increasingly ambivalent toward institutions, an increased focus on the original spiritual attributes of these Celtic Christians will enrich contemporary expressions of New Monasticism.

In a **fifth** article, Pieter Labuschagne uses decoloniality to interrogate the biblical text. The article uses a method of exegesis by story, which Labuschagne asserts allows modern readers to dwell in their world yet engage with how an ancient community received and utilised the Biblical text. Labuschagne demonstrates the "coloniality" present in Gideon's initial interaction and yet the possibilities for transformation of identity. The argument is that within the Biblical narrative is the challenge of realising that Gideon's real prison was not built by his coloniser but was located within in his own mind and heart.

Several conversation partners strengthen the reading offered by Labuschagne. One conversation partner is the sermons of Martin Luther King Jr, in particular his use of the Zaccheus narrative in a sermon in 1957. A second conversation partner is the literature on decoloniality, particularly in the African context which explores the interplay between oppression and agency. The third conversation partner is a careful reading of the impact of apartheid in South Africa on all peoples and analysis of the limits of blaming other cultures.

The article raises important questions for a journal focused on the mission of God in the world. Christian mission has a history deeply entangled in colonialisation. Within the limits of a single article, Labuschagne offers a constructive approach, working with a single Bible text to test a liberative reading of Scripture. As editors, we welcome further thinking on what it means to share good news among communities enmeshed in coloniality.

A growing body of *Ecclesial Futures* research

With ten issues and over fifty articles, as a journal we are now seeing themes not only within an issue but between issues as well. I highlight three examples.

- Read the article in this issue by Ian Terry on mission with the homeless alongside the article in volume 3, issue 2 by Sally Mann on the place of storytelling in ministry amongst the homeless.[1]
- Read the article in this issue by Mookgo Solomon Kgatle on mission and African migration in conversation with the article in volume 3, issue 1 by Naar M'fundisi-Holloway on women from Southern Africa who adopt an entrepreneurial approach in local diaspora networks in the United Kingdom.[2]
- Read the article in this issue on new monastic spiritualities alongside the article in volume 2, issue 2, by James Fox-Robinson on the Franciscan Vow of Poverty as an Ancient and Modern Resource for Innovative Missional Practice.[3]

For authors looking to submit articles in the future, we as editors encourage a reading through previous issues of *Ecclesial Futures* to explore the richness of scholarship that is developing around the journal's focus on the mission of God in the world embodied in local Christian communities and the systems that support them.

Transitions and partnerships

We bid farewell Dr Darren Cronshaw, who has moved into a different ministry context. Darren has been on the *Ecclesial Futures* editorial board since the journal began five years ago. As editors, we are thankful for Darren's ministry, in particular the promptness and the constructive tone of his reviews.

As a journal, we welcome Dr Tanya Riches to the Editorial Board. As Director of Master of Transformational Development, Eastern College, Australia, she works with students applying transformational development in the Middle Eastern, African, Asian and Australian contexts. Tanya undertook PhD research that investigated links between urban Aboriginal-led congregations' worship practices and their social justice initiatives. We look forward to being enriched by her research expertise in ethnography, global Pentecostalism, missiology and development studies.

Ecclesial Futures continues to be grateful for the partnership with Radboud University Press and Open Journals. Over the last months, Open Journals has worked with us to upgrade the website at https://ecclesialfutures.org/ and update policies around transparency in authorship and ethics. Through Diamond Open Access, original research is available free to authors and readers. To receive updates via the newsletter, sign up at https://ecclesialfutures.org/.

About the Author

Steve Taylor, Director AngelWings Ltd and Research Affiliate, University of Otago, Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka. Contact: s.j.taylor@otago.ac.nz

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ARTICLE

Characteristics of a 'common good building' Church of England church: a case study in a UK southern coastal town

Ian Terry

Abstract

This paper investigates the question, What does a "common good building" church, that partners with others to serve homeless people, look like? This investigation will assist church leaders in focusing resources and training on an outworking of the *Missio Dei* that aspires to common good building. The method employed for this investigation was a critical correlation which prioritized the givenness of God within the constructivist approach of producing a qualitative grounded theory. This theory tested qualitative data from focus groups against theoretical sensitizing and further tested it in a "common good building" conference and in abductive reflection with a range of theologians. The research outcome emphasizes the significance of respectful listening in empowering, particularly those with subjugated knowledge of themselves. Further conversations are needed between understandings of mission and those of work. How power is used and abused is critical; subsidiarity is central to mission.

Keywords: Partnering, Common good, Empowering, Listening, Human dignity, Work, Subsidiarity

1 Introduction

In this paper I explore those qualitative characteristics of an Anglican parish church which have emerged from fieldwork focused on what to do about homelessness. The fieldwork was central to a research project exploring churches building common good in partnership with others. This research project was a personal and professional response to my repeated horror at finding homeless people all around me in my daily life as a parish minister.

Homelessness was very much in the public eye in the UK southern coastal town where I ministered. Homeless people camped in churchyards and slept in shop doorways, under the pier, in the woods and on park benches. Soup kitchens were so well established that there was competition between them. Food banks proliferated. The same people were seen, year after year, and some were vulnerable teenagers. Although this town had a tourist industry, finance and creative digital sectors, and thriving universities, nonetheless, there were also two residential areas of significant deprivation. I felt impotent at the increasing complexity of the problem, locally as well as nationally. What became obvious to me was that homelessness was a bigger challenge than any one agency could solve by itself; partnerships with others were necessary. The question for me, leading a parish church, was "Can a parish church build such partnerships?"

First, I explored that question in practice by beginning to build relationships locally. Secondly, I analysed the effectiveness of those partnerships in addressing the root causes of the national problem of homelessness. In doing this, I discovered common good thinking, as set out in Catholic social thought, as a tool for analysis. As I delved more deeply into understandings of the common good it became clear that because all human context is contingent and continually changing, so "common good building" is a process. It is most effective for change as a process in which one actively engages with others to build what is agreed upon as the common good, rather than as a system of thought that one might apply in practice. Agreeing can be elusive. In my daily ministerial practice, this took me some time to learn. As a result of that learning, I use "common good" primarily as part of an adverb and will refer mostly in this paper to "common good building".

I discovered, after some well-intentioned failures in offering practical help, that "common good building" is about negotiating inclusive empowerment. In this way of trial and error, I realized that partnerships for sustainable empowerment of homeless people must include them as active agents for their own good. This became a guiding principle (the research ethics principle, "not about me, without me") as I researched inclusive partnerships for "common good building" in the coastal town in which I was parish priest.

My experience as a parish priest suggested to me that partnerships with others are fundamental to "common good building". In the research project described here, I tested this initial hypothesis by taking a sample of practical partnership workings. The focus of that partnership working was on homelessness in the town. During the research project, it became clear that for churches to be effective in partnerships for

common good building they must aspire to, and demonstrate in practice, characteristics that I shall draw out in this paper.

Research Ethics

The source of my research ethics cover was the doctoral programme (DTh Winchester) in which I was engaged. Informed consent was obtained from all participants; it covered future publication of research outcomes as well as the initial recording and transcribing of conversations in focus groups. In describing the research to participants, at this very early stage, I summarized the main common good principles as understood within Catholic social teaching (CST) and invited participants to comment in focus groups on their experience of the practice of those principles. Thus, participants were explicitly invited to contribute in two ways: first, to share their own lived experience of homelessness; secondly, to frame it, to whatever extent they were comfortable, within understandings of common good building.

Research Methodology

Critical correlation is a methodology combining a constructivist social sciences approach of seeking empirical qualitative data to analyse and evaluate in forming a qualitative grounded theory, with the critical realist approach of my own Christian faith. Swinton and Mowat (2006: 83, 95) propose *critical correlation* as prioritizing the givenness of God within a mutually respectful conversation between theology and social sciences. From a constructivist perspective, this approach is interpretive and dialogical. From a critical realist perspective, it approaches belief with the respect that Swinton and Mowat refer to as *critical faithfulness*; that is, Christian belief, open to exploration and cherishing mutually critical dialogue (2006: 95). The practical theologian Pete Ward helped my understanding, speaking of knowledge of God as "a spiritual discipline of participation in divine being" and suggested that the pursuit of this discipline needs both subjective faith and objective analysis (2018). For me that meant acknowledging where I was situated not just geographically but also spiritually and in terms of my personal beliefs about God. Epistemologically, situation forms knowledge and understanding; and therefore I acknowledge my faith as inevitably personal. This sits, in critical correlation, alongside the qualitative analysis of grounded theory.

2 Building Grounded Theory

As qualitative analysis, I built a theory that was grounded (Glaser & Strauss (1967) 2006; Corbin & Strauss 1998), using data from rough sleepers and those who work with them; altogether, 80 people contributed. Meeting between December 2018 and March 2019, a sample of rough sleepers and others, meeting in five focus groups,

shared their situation. Themes emerging from these focus groups were shared at a "common good building" conference facilitated by the trust *Together for the Common Good* (T4CG) and also beforehand (by email) and in personal conversation. The nature of the trauma experienced by homeless people – differently for each person – renders impossible any attempt at uniformity of approach. That is usual with qualitative research. The research outcomes will therefore be like a series of snapshot photographs which make no claims for universal application. Different participants might well have given different outcomes. This research is specific and personal and should not be likened to quantitative research. Nonetheless, these outcomes can, I believe, enrich understandings of human meaning.

During the afternoon of the conference, participants talked in four more focus groups. The models or pictures, shared in this paper, of "common good building" churches emerged from my reflection on analysis of transcripts of those discussions. The analysis and the interpretive lens through which I saw the transcript data, and from which I formed these four models, inevitably reflects how I was formed by my own lived experience and the range of partners with whom I chose to reflect upon it. A significant partner with whom I have reflected has been the trust T4CG, which has its theoretical roots in Catholic Social Teaching (CST). Further, I have reflected on what emerged from the research using abductive reasoning (Reed 2010: 41) to interpret the results. I see this method, "especially suited to believers engaged reading Scripture and performing the liturgy" (Reed 2010: 41), as consistent with my pastoral and spiritual practice as an Anglican priest.

3 "Common good building" as *missio Dei*

From this pastoral and spiritual perspective, I see common good building as central to God's whole purpose, sometimes called the *missio Dei*. Quite simply, it is about sharing the wisdom of the heart, focused on the love of God as shown in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

For me, in practical terms, God's mission (*missio Dei*) was serving the town centre of my parish. I understand the whole mission of God as God loving the cosmos into fullness of life. We can be sure that God will not only love the church. Equally, it would be inconsistent with the all-inclusive loving purposes of God for the church to be God's only agency of loving. Further, my research and parochial experience prompt me to believe that Christians can learn much from such partners. On both grounds, therefore, the church can partner with others in serving this universal mission of God for loving all the cosmos, which is the *missio Dei.*

For coherence in serving the *missio Dei*, some churches identify five marks of mission (Walls & Ross 2008). Cathy Ross argues that these marks "form a good working basis for a holistic approach to mission" (2008: xiv). In the following I will lean on this understanding. This research on homelessness is located within the working out of the fourth mark of global mission; it is seeking to transform unjust structures of society. This incorporates David Bosch's overall view of mission, which "opens the door" for partnerships in God's mission with a range of individuals and associations:

> *The missio Dei is God's activity, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church may be privileged to participate (Bosch 1991: 391).*

Bosch's understanding is that God's activity is always ahead of the church and is not limited by it. Seen thus, the Spirit of God initiates and directs God's mission. This was accepted by the Roman Catholic Church in the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* which says, referring to the social order and its development toward service to common good building:

> *The Spirit of God, who, with wondrous providence, directs the course of time and renews the faith of the earth, assists at this development. (Vatican II, 1966: 26)*

Thus, it expounds mission pneumatologically, seeing the Holy Spirit as directing all development, in the church and in the social order of the wider world, towards common good building. The document adds:

> *Such progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God, in so far as it can contribute to the better ordering of human society. (1966: 39)*

Thomas Aquinas (1948), a scholar whose writing has influenced many theologians, reconciled the political philosophy of Aristotle with Christian faith. In doing so, he argued that a just ruler or government must work for the "common good" of all. Social groups find order by sharing a common goal; this is the common good, which is the whole network of social conditions which enable human individuals and groups to flourish and live a fully, genuinely human life. Aquinas argues paradoxically that while law is an intelligent instruction directed to reason, it can also be coercive. That is easy to see with both eternal and natural law, because both are sufficiently general to make disagreement in principle hard; however, legitimate human law evolves to serve changing situations and can be open to a variety of interpretations and abuses. Aquinas pointed to this danger in his *Summa Theologiae* 1:96:

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> *Someone exercises dominion over another as a free person, when he directs him to the proper good of the one being directed, or to the common good. … But the social life of a multitude is not possible, unless someone is in charge, who aims at the common good (1948: 4).*

Whilst I agree with Aquinas that social life benefits pragmatically from there being "someone in charge, who aims at the common good", I suggest that such power can be abused, and therefore must be subject to accountability. From my experience in governance, accountability works most effectively when exercised by a quite small (8–10) local group who can meet regularly. I suggest that relationships of mutual exchange can develop over time in such a group. I am attracted to the insights of J. Neville Figgis CR, an Anglican priest and historian who argued for seeing sovereignty in local groups or 'associations' (1913, 1914). This approach has been supported by David Nicholls, an Anglican theologian (1995) and by Alastair Redfern, a diocesan bishop (2009). They argue that "associations" can meet the need for local relationships of fellowship, solidarity and mutual support. Churches can be such "associations", promoting accountability, respect for human dignity and the dignity of work. This is true both individually and socially. CST suggests that relationships that facilitate "common good building" are underpinned by reconciliation, solidarity, participation, association, the operation of subsidiarity and careful stewardship of the natural world.

I have been influenced by Together for the Common Good (T4CG), which builds its understandings of the common good on biblical perspectives (2017: 3). It appropriates to the church the words of the prophet Jeremiah, "Seek the welfare of the city … for in its welfare you will find your peace" (Jer. 29.7 NRSV).

T4CG (2017: 15) further appropriates for the church Amos 5.14-15, suggesting that "common good building" has both ethical and spiritual dimensions:

> *Seek good and not evil,*
> *that you may live;*
> *and so the Lord, the God of hosts,*
> *will be with you …*
> *Hate evil and love good,*
> *and establish justice in the gate. (NRSV)*

I suggest that these ethical and spiritual dimensions were focused sharply for the early Christian community, as recorded by Luke in Acts:

> *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. … All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. (Acts 2.42-47 NRSV)*

"Having the goodwill of all the people" (v 44) on their hearts prioritizes the welfare of all people, as does "common good building".

This paper explains how, within a research project (DTh) on partnerships for putting common good principles into practice, I have interpreted focus group data as showing four pictures of "common good building" churches.

It will be suggested, on the basis of the empirical data, that such partnerships can benefit all concerned. The practical theologian Dustin Benac (2022: 119) shows that only two or three such partnerships are needed to improve the sustainability of Northwest Pacific Coast churches and to create a sufficiently substantial base for resourcing mission. Benac's analysis of his local examples of churches in partnerships suggests that churches which partner to serve God's mission can be more effective together than they are alone.

My focus in this paper, however, is on what can be learned from the research on three local churches in what was my parish. It will give a snapshot picture, valid for that sample, and for the moment at which the snapshot was taken. As such, it bears comparison with other such ethnographic outcome pictures.

As explained above (in *Building Grounded Theory*), four pictures are here outlined of churches building the common good. They have emerged from focus groups consisting of rough sleepers and others. Such churches:

- affirm human dignity, giving voices to those who are vulnerable;
- empower everyone;
- affirm the dignity of work;
- operate lateral subsidiarity, working "alongside", sharing power.

3.1 Affirm human dignity, giving voice to those who are vulnerable

First, for human dignity to be affirmed, each person must be listened to and given respectful attention. A homeless man summed it up for me:

> *Talking like this is helping me. Because I don't talk about my problems to no-one. I normally keep it in. And then I'll go in the corner and cry. You've got to accept the help and talk about your problems. (Focus Group, December 2018)*

Secondly, there is no substitute for listening to such lived experience. A homelessness worker suggested that you do not know what it is like living on the streets until you have done it:

> *If we're going to collaborate, we need their voice, we need to hear them, we need to include them, because it's their voice we're representing. (Group 2, Conference)*

Thirdly, one should not underestimate the boost that can be given to self-worth by knowing, in faith, that one matters to God. A rough sleeper spoke about his faith keeping him alive:

> *I'm grateful to the Lord Jesus for being there. Without him, there's no way I'd be alive today. (Focus Group, December 2018).*

I found this gratitude in a significant minority of homeless people.

Moving to reflection on those three insights, I looked to the practical theologian Eric Stoddart as one who not only affirms those insights from his own pastoral experience (2014: 27), but also adds another dimension, namely, that of God's future. Stoddart recognized that, instead of looking backwards to understand the present, looking forwards gives hope, because the present can be understood through what is believed about the future. This can be a transformational insight for those who have lost their human dignity, for whom looking back is depressing and further compounds their loss. Rough sleepers, whose past is traumatic, can be locked, psychologically and emotionally, into looking backwards. Looking back at past trauma does not bring hope. "Hopelessness" was said by one rough sleeper to be the main problem at the heart of homelessness.

By contrast, hope is constructed by unlocking the toxic habit of looking back at past trauma. Instead, one looks forward with hope for the future. Rough sleepers can see themselves through God's eyes, and trust a God to whom all, with no exceptions, are of worth.

Anglican New Testament scholar N. T. Wright argues that nurturing such trust is the role of the church:

> *A strong sense of the dignity and intrinsic worth of all human beings, made lively through explicit eschatological hope, is what the church brings to partnerships for building the common good. (2019: 190)*

A 'common good building' church can share tears and joys and find unexpected hope in the synergy and dynamism of partnerships. The Anglican theologian A. M. Allchin suggests that such synergy and dynamism are a lively participation in the love of God, where those who carry the pain of troubles discover freedom and peace:

> *In the descent of God's joy into the centre of our world, man's spirit leaps up into union with God's Spirit, the world's own power of life is released, its responsive and creative power rises up and participates in the eternal movement of love which is at the very heart of God himself. (1988: 77)*

I agree that it is that "eternal movement of love", focused in worship, which seeks the perspective of God's love. I see the aim as to participate in God's epistemology of profligate relational love. Therefore, I suggest that the common good building church can facilitate faith in God who offers unconditional cherishing. Seen this way, all can look forward "through God's eyes" with eschatological hope. They can see themselves with hope because they know themselves held within God's epistemology of love. I have been helped in this understanding by Jürgen Moltmann (1981: 117), who embeds loving relationality at the heart of God and, therefore, at the heart of the outworking of the church's mission; and also by N. T. Wright, who writes explicitly about "the epistemology of love":

> *The point of love is that it is neither appraisal nor assimilation: neither detachment nor desire, neither positivist objectivity nor subjective projection. When I love I am delightedly engaged with that which is other than myself. (2019: 103)*

This paper suggests that a "common good building" church can gradually enable such an epistemology of love to take the place, for rough sleepers, of their deeply debilitating subjugated ways of knowing themselves. Thus, churches that build common good empower others to reconstruct hope.

3.2 Empower everyone

Empowerment starts with knowing that you are needed and that you also need others; witness a rough sleeper:

> *If they need you, they're giving you dignity. But if you need them, you're giving them it. ... And you're creating and strengthening an empowering environment because you need them. (Group 3, Conference)*

An empowering church builds self-esteem. A local business partner agreed:

> *Their self-respect is diminished. And so, in addition to providing a bed and a meal, they also need to provide some opportunities for people to regain their self-esteem, their self-worth. (Group 3, Conference)*

I have chosen to reflect on empowering partnerships in company with Chris Beales, an Anglican priest who has focused on the social and spiritual impact of housing in the north-east of England. In *Humanising Work* (2014), Beales gives examples of his getting "alongside" working with co-operatives, credit unions and the challenge of mass unemployment. He affirms the insight of the Anglican theologian Timothy Gorringe (2002: 38), that "people en-story and en-soul their places" and "their settlements shape their souls". Beales comments that in some communities, particularly where there are areas of new housing, "the place feels a bit 'soulless'" (2014: 11). I reflect, personally, looking back on a diverse and busy town centre that I served as priest, that the soul, or essential spirit of life, in community needs nurturing no less than in each person. I suggest, therefore, that it is an empowering function of the church that it nurtures the spirit of life, personally and socially, in collaborative participation within the love of God.

But homeless people rarely feel thus nurtured. They live with what Michel Foucault called a "subjugated knowledge" (Foucault 1980: 71) of themselves and how they relate to the wider community. Within this kind of knowledge, vulnerable people can see themselves as unworthy of help. They exclude themselves from the dominant discourse about how resource might be allocated. Homeless people are typical of this epistemology of subjugated knowledge. This is akin to the practice of diminishing people by gaslighting. In this way, thought and self-perception become altered to only see oneself in a negative light – indeed, as achieved by turning down the gaslighting, and consistently presenting the one who is being dominated in semi-darkness. Epistemologically this must change before people who have been diminished in self-esteem can be reintegrated into society. "Common good building"

churches can focus their passion for justice on changing this damaging epistemology of subjugation into one grounded in love.

To counter subjugated knowledge, local church members can assert the priority of relationships of mutual respect. Alastair Redfern, from his perspective as a bishop, emphasized understandings that are germane to this:

> *For local churches this implies a challenge to move from beyond the network of groups which comprise a church (congregations, choir, toddlers, lunch club etc.) to serious engagement with associations. … This middle territory of groups and associations is the place where the agenda of the heart can be encountered, illuminated, challenged and changed. … Associations frame and interpret the encounters of the heart. (2009: 16)*

Redfern's emphasis upon encounters of the heart speaks to me of mutually supportive relationships respecting dignity and empowering those who have lost self-respect. My suggestion is that this performs an epistemology of love by asserting that each person is cherished by God.

Churches are well placed to offer such encounters and doing so can be a characteristic of Anglican "common good building" churches. My intuition is that "common good building" churches that are unafraid of experiencing what the Anglican theologian Terry Biddington refers to as the "untamedness" of God (2014: 151) – the wildness and "otherness" of God – might better understand what it is to be homeless. My experience is that the "common good building" church is delighted (not threatened) to see that the "untamedness" of God is such that those outside the church often have a godly capacity to surprise 'insiders' with goodness, loving-kindness and joy.

3.3 Common good building churches affirm the dignity of work

An ex-rough sleeper emphasized the significance of having no work:

> *Most of the people out there are just hanging on to their dignity and are fighting to keep a job, and a home, but they're sitting in agony at home. (Group 3, Conference)*

Many homeless people are diminished because they have lost their jobs. A homelessness worker spoke of a man who got work, but struggled to keep it, before he got accommodation:

> *I wake him up at five o'clock every morning, so he can go to work. But he still gets grief as a rough sleeper. (Group 2, Conference)*

Research transcripts tell me that property often cannot be rented without proof that one is in work and can pay the rent. The vicious circle is that it is difficult to get work if one admits to being of no fixed abode. Negotiating this vicious circle can be exhausting and dispiriting. Rough sleepers told me that "common good building" churches could offer personal mentoring as people face such discouragement, and also challenge bureaucracies to operate in more user-friendly ways.

I reflect that churches that provide mentoring can help people understand that work belongs to the rhythm of a fully human life. Such a life can hold together understandings of work, with leisure, with rest, with retirement and with worship. Unless work and worship are integrated, churches can be peripheral to "common good building", worship can appear to be mere escapism and irrelevant to people's main concerns.

I have benefitted, in understanding the implications of these reflections, from Catholic social teaching. The encyclical *Laborem Exercens* identifies four issues: What work does *for* people; what work does *to* people; how workers take part in forming the work experience; and the impact upon the poor and vulnerable (Reed 2010: 32). Further, *Laborem Exercens* affirms the dignity and worth of human beings and summarizes why that is so:

> *Work is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of creatures … Only man is capable of work, and only man works … Thus work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons. (John Paul II 1981: 1)*

Whilst this encyclical offers foundational thinking on work from a Christian perspective, I have also benefitted from the insights of some Anglican theologians. For example, Frances Ward comments:

> *It makes life worth living – when the person slows down and works in a leisurely, balanced and humane way, with proper rest and a sense of purpose … The idea of God that lies behind this approach is a God who delights in being creative. (2019: 193)*

Sadly, however, to delight in being creative is not the daily prospect for homeless people. I reflect that, for reintegration of homeless people into wider society to be lasting, "common good building" churches can promote balanced and humane ways of living, whereby one does not feel guilty about time spent delighting in creativity.

I am grateful to the late John Hughes, another Anglican theologian, who makes a useful distinction between participation in the divine work of creation and sheer drudgery, which is the "necessary toil of subsistence" (2016: 60). Hughes notes that

the Sabbath is a model for the former and that "good works" for God endure into the new creation (2016: 55). Similarly, Nicola Slee, another Anglican theologian, helps me to understand that elusive work-life balance, writing about the Sabbath as "a conversational space, which includes conversation with ourselves … but also conversation with the other" (2019: 113). I find Slee's conversational metaphor helpful in that it is relational, dynamic and focussed on mutual exchange. Seen this way, the conversational metaphor for the divine work of creation is about creating space for a mutual exploration, a "knowing" that sits within the love of God; indeed, an "epistemology of love" (Wright 2019: 103).

This emphasis on mutual exploration coheres with the Anglican ethicist Esther Reed's assertion that God himself works, and that, at the heart of the Godhead, "Both God the Father and the Son are said to be working as they bring salvation and blessing to humankind" (2010: 13). Therefore, Reed, continues, "work, like love, is a way of saying 'yes' to life" (2010: 14). The Catholic theologian William Cavanaugh similarly analysed the human condition, saying that "humans need a community of virtue in which to learn to desire rightly" (2008: 9). My reflection on what rough sleepers have said, in the light of the scholars whose thoughts I have pondered, is that "common good building" churches can be just such communities of virtue, sharing in both the hope and the struggle. Indeed, my experience is that "looking forward in hope", as a Christian, only transcends naïve optimism if it looks to the resurrection of Jesus. Esther Reed makes a strong case for Christians to avoid naïve optimism. Rather, she says,

> *Christian realists derive truth not only from the observation of the things around us but from the event of the resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:1-8) and hope of God's kingdom to come. (2010: 24)*

And Reed takes the understanding further, emphasizing that it is the working love of the Risen Jesus into which Christians are called to participate. I resonate with her conclusion that ultimate hope and also "the strength to struggle for decent, humane work" can be gained from that participation (2010: 111) which can be seen as the vocation of the "common good building" church.

3.4 Operate lateral subsidiarity, working alongside, sharing power

This homeless man illustrates the difficulty of never having been cared for, nor learned to exercise agency for his own life:

> *I didn't have a childhood. It's hard for me to have a normal life. And now I've got St Mungo's and I've got this Health Bus. I've got workers here that actually get to know me … and ask me what's best for me. They treat me like I'm a person not just a problem. (Group 2, Conference)*

The *Health Bus,* started by a local GP, is parked at a church hall and it performs the common good principle that "every person is worthy of respect, simply by virtue of being a human being" (Together for the Common Good 2017: 23). It offers health care alongside other rough sleepers, where a trusting relationship can be forged with the doctor away from the stigma that rough-sleeping brings for those who need to visit local surgeries and A&E hospital departments.

Bureaucratic processes can depersonalize and accredited church representatives can have the skill, motivation and credibility to challenge that depersonalization. For example, a faith community representative told a group about the difference made by robust advocacy:

> *I took one client into the Housing Department. They went through the whole thing, considering the vulnerable female I was talking about, who has learning disabilities and has the reading age of an eleven year old … Told: "Well, we're not sure you're vulnerable enough."*
>
> *And it was only because I said, "Well, I'm sorry. I disagree with you about the vulnerability." Then they took it up to management, then it went higher, and then they came back down and changed their decision. (Group 2, Conference)*

One participant spoke of one of the underlying difficulties inherent in helping rough sleepers to move permanently off the streets:

> *There are some entrenched rough sleepers that do want to be on the outside. And because that's their norm it's very hard to change that. One said, "Let's have a flat so that when I feel like I'm panicking, and I feel really claustrophobic, I can go and put my tent up in the garden." (Group 4, Conference)*

It became clear from the research data that sometimes a stabilizing period can be what is needed, so that, even though housed in a flat,

> *We still go out on the street, because that's a part of our lives. A transition period. (Group 4, Conference)*

My interpretive suggestion is that churches that are determined to build common good will not have an easy ride with people in authority, particularly if they can access funding; but it is essential that they have the motivation and courage to challenge any approach that questions subsidiarity and reinforces power exercised from a depersonalized distance. An approach that is "alongside" and fluid might be able to

meet traumatized people where they are. “Alongside” and fluid describes Pete Ward’s model of “*liquid ecclesiology”* (2017). Ward sees his model as expressing “the dynamic and fluid understanding of the church that comes from the complexity, ambiguity, and nuance that characterises the lived expression of the Church” (2017: 5). This “liquid” model facilitates holding alongside each other, in lively lateral subsidiarity, the distinctive and developing contributions that each local partner brings to “common good building”.

Further, liquidity in local associations will involve what Swinton and Mowat call “complexifying” (2006: 13), in that it “takes account of the multi-layered and often contradictory data that qualitative research generates” (Ward 2017: 56). Here paradoxical embodiments of the common good can collaborate with mutual respect. Ward finds paradox as suggestive of “the being of God in the world” (2017: 56), and he is clear that “Paradox is not an incidental or an unfortunate byproduct in ecclesial existence” (2017: 56). For Ward, this essential paradox requires fluidity in both ecclesial vision and operation. Fluidity in lateral collaboration with others in local associations is best served by recognizing that people learn by doing, and they build the common good through sharing participatory forms of knowledge (2017: 69). This form of epistemology necessitates a church predicated on subsidiarity, with vocation seen as given by God, in creation, to all human beings.

My suggestion is that this fluidity of approach can positively impact how church communities see themselves and the extent to which they welcome outsiders. Churches aspire to be comprised of people of all ages. Their members are human, and subject to peer group pressure. Should they be tempted to make their church an “in-group” – and such temptations exist for all groups, with churches no exception – let them take to heart the common good building principle that “everyone is included, and no one is left behind” (Together for the Common Good 2017). Indeed, any “common good building” church aspires to be comprised of people of all ages, and “all sorts and conditions” of people. Therefore, considerations about ultimate purpose are germane to churches, and they are intertwined with the extent to which one is subject to the power of others. For good or ill, this affects people of all ages. Do children feel empowered at home and at school? To what extent do young people and students find lasting purpose as learners? What about those of all ages who are ill, disabled or members of minority groups? What self-understandings need to adapt to being at boarding school, in hospital, in prison, homeless or in a care home? How is purpose found in the inevitability of aging?

All these matters impact the “common good building” church. How does each one respond to these questions?

4 Conclusion

Homelessness is the problem; there was a superabundance of empirical evidence all around me in my parish that to be homeless was traumatic. The obvious questions were, “What’s going on?” and “What can I do about it?”

You start from where you are. I was leading a church. Partnerships with others of goodwill seemed to focus energy in positive ways. So I tested it out. I discovered “common good building” as a tool for analysis and a bonding of common purpose. And this study was born. It is a study of the viability of partnerships for the common good, not about homelessness, as such; although I learned much on the research journey. The journey began with me starting from where I was, as leader of a church, and setting up friendly conditions (with normal research parameters, as described above) to see what emerged. A number of suggestions for addressing the problem emerged. Some, focused on the central question about partnerships, are described in another paper. In this paper I have scrutinized, analysed and evaluated what emerged about the church.

So it is that I have described qualitative research with rough sleepers focused on missional partnerships for “common good building”. I asked, “What might be the characteristics of a common good building church?”

What has emerged emphasizes the significance for the church of respectful listening in empowering, particularly those with subjugated knowledge of themselves. There is a suggestion that further conversations would be fruitful between understandings of mission and those of work. Equally clear as suggestions for further research are the questions of how power is used and abused and the centrality of subsidiarity to mission.

My suggestion is that the “common good building” church can be local in its decision-making and in enabling all participants to be active in deciding what is appropriate for their own well-being. Hierarchies can be subverted in their controlling uses of power; sometimes it is local bureaucratic processes that are the problem, but very often it is churches, and making the problem an opportunity for empowerment can be as simple as ensuring that people have optimal agency for their own well-being. There is much more of this road to be travelled. I have suggested a few steps forward.

About the Author

Ian Terry, FRSA, a research fellow of Winchester University (DTh 2021), worked for USPG teaching in Lesotho, after studying at Durham and York. He received his PhD

from St Mary's, Strawberry Hill, for researching values and characteristics of C of E schools, whilst Diocesan Director of Education for Hereford; he has also taught in Guernsey, Leatherhead and Canterbury. Ian studied at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey during formation for the priesthood at the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield. He was ordained in 1980 and has served in a rich variety of parishes, schools and a prison. He and his wife live in Shropshire, near the River Severn. Contact: ianterry@live.co.uk

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ARTICLE

A Missiological Approach to Migration and Mission in the Apostolic Faith Mission International Ministry in the United Kingdom: a Pneumatological Missional Imagination

Mookgo Solomon Kgatle

Abstract

The intersections of migration and mission have been studied in past, but little has been developed regarding theoretical frameworks for approaching the subject from the discipline of missiology. This calls for the development of a framework that will assist in the missiological approach to migration and mission. The current study reflects on the current missiological approaches to migration and mission to identify the existing gaps such as relevance to Pentecostalism. To fill the gaps, this article brings together three theories of pneumatological imagination, missiological spirit and missional imagination to develop a pneumatological missional imagination. The findings are that a pneumatological missional imagination is relevant for dealing with some of the challenges in migration and mission in Pentecostalism such as an inability to minister relevantly to the host countries, cultural differences, and orientation to the mission of God. These challenges are outlined by using the Apostolic Faith Mission Ministry International in the United Kingdom (AFMIMUK) as a case study. The pneumatological missional imagination is relevant for witnessing to others, speaking foreign languages, and orientation to the mission of God.

Keywords: Missiology, Migration, Mission, Pentecostalism, Pneumatological imagination, Missional imagination, Missiological spirit, Apostolic Faith Mission International Ministry in the United Kingdom (AFMIMUK)

1 Introduction

Mission refers to the assignment given to an individual or communities. However, the theology of mission is the commitment and dedication of individuals and faith communities to understand God's mission and God's intentions for the world (Kirk 1997). Migration is an important aspect of mission in the understanding of the intentions of God for people living in the diaspora. The intersection of migration and mission is one of the important subjects in the study of missions and world Christianity in the disciplines of missiology, history, anthropology, sociology, development studies and international relations. This relationship is important as believers around the world move from one country to another due to socio-economic challenges, political instability and wars. These have caused many Africans to move to the global North in search of a better life. These Africans carry their religious or Christian beliefs along with them when arriving in the host country, thus making the intersection of migration and mission very strong. But most recently, the conflicts between Ukraine and Russia, and Israel and Palestine, have also made some find a home in Africa. These are the dynamics of the intersections of migration and mission. The relationship between migration and mission is what has made the Christian mission transcend the locality where Christianity became the world religion, hence the concept of world Christianity. Robert (2009: 9) points out that "Christianity thrives at the intersection of global or universal and the local or personal". This intersection of global and local contexts in Christian mission is conceptualized as the intersection of migration and mission with implications for the intersection of Pentecost and mission (Boer 1961). This refers to the study of the Christian mission moving from one local area to the other including in the global context as argued by Robert (2009). Furthermore, the study of migration and mission is important as we explore the spread of the gospel in a religiously pluralist and culturally diverse world. In other words, what are the relevant missiological approaches to studying the intersections of migration and mission in this diverse world? What are the relevant missiological approaches in the exploration of the challenges of this relationship between migration and mission? These are some of the research questions that this article seeks to answer by developing a theoretical framework for studying the same.

Pentecostalism is one such Christian tradition where the intersections of migration and mission can be studied. Given the growth of the Pentecostal movement in world Christianity, the intersection of migration and mission becomes an important area of study as we seek to explore the rationale behind the expansion of the movement. Wariboko and Oliverio (2020: 328) relied on the *World Christian Encyclopedia* for the current statistics on the population of Pentecostals in the world which currently counts 644 million Pentecostals/Charismatics worldwide, including all the members of Pentecostalism's 19,300 denominations and fellowships as well as all

charismatic Christians whose primary affiliation is with other churches. This is 8.3 percent of the world population so one in twelve persons today is a Pentecostal or charismatic Christian. Looking at the current global distribution of Pentecostal/charismatic Christians, the Encyclopedia counts 230 million in Africa, 195 million in Latin America, 125 million in Asia, 68 million in North America, 21 million in Europe, and 4.5 million in Australia and Oceania.

The phenomenal growth of the Pentecostal movement is worth exploring in the study of missions and world Christianity. In addition, this study is worth exploring considering the factor of migration in the growth of Pentecostalism. In other words, Pentecostalism as a movement that has spread beyond the local context to the global context in what is known as global Pentecostalism is an important tradition for the exploration of the intersections of migration and mission.

While we recognize the importance of the study of the relationship between migration and mission in Christian mission in general and the Pentecostal movement in particular, there is also a need to develop theoretical frameworks to address the subject missiologically. I developed what I have framed as the pneumatological missional imagination using the theories of pneumatological imagination, missiological spirit and missional imagination. I argue that this approach is relevant in studying the various challenges that are faced by the migrant churches such as witnessing relevantly to the host country, cultural differences, and orientation to the mission of God. These are not peculiar to the Apostolic Faith Mission Ministry International in the United Kingdom but also other African Pentecostal migrant churches. I have divided this article into five main sections. First, I will look at the previous studies on the intersections of migration and mission to identify the gaps in the missiological approaches of the same. The second section is dedicated to the development of the pneumatological missional imagination. In the third section, I introduce the Apostolic Faith Mission Ministry International in the United Kingdom as a case study. In addition, I identify the current challenges faced by migrant churches in many parts of the world. In the last section, I demonstrate how the pneumatological missional imagination is relevant for studying different challenges at the intersections of migration and mission.

2 Research Methodology

A literature review in qualitative research on the intersection of migration and mission is the approach for the study. The study looked at the literature, particularly concerning the missiological approaches or the theoretical frameworks thereof. In the identified theories of pneumatological imagination and missiological spirit, I relied much on the works of Yong (2012, 2015, 2019, 2020). The theoretical frameworks

for migration and mission activity culminated in the theological approach. Therefore, a pneumatological missional imagination becomes the theological approach for a missional imagination in a Pentecostal context. However, in the theoretical framework of missional imagination other works such as Roxburgh and Boren (2009), Beard (2015), and Smith and Niemandt (2022) helped summarize the aspect of the theory. The works of Bevans (2013), Fredericks and Nagy (2016), and Haug (2018) helped explore the previous missiological approaches to the intersections of migration and mission. When identifying the challenges that are faced by migrant churches, I specifically looked at an African Pentecostal church, the Apostolic Faith Mission Ministry International in the United Kingdom (AFMIMUK) using the participation observation method where the researcher attended the services in some of the assemblies in the AFMIMUK. The examples coming from AFMIMUK were important so the challenges of migration and mission are not discussed generally. Therefore the current study does not remain superficial but is enriched by concrete examples coming from the AFMIMUK. Therefore, a case study method was used for the choice of the AFMIMUK. A case study drew on the literature of migrant churches and theoretical missional frameworks for a Pentecostal context. However, no interviews were included in the study but only reflections from the author's observations. The work of Sande (2019a, 2019b) was helpful in the historical developments of the AFMIMUK in the United Kingdom and its link with the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (AFMZ). Data was analysed by using thematic analysis as I explored important themes in the intersections of migration and mission.

3 Missiological Approaches to Migration and Mission

This current study looks at the previous missiological approaches on migration and mission to identify the research gap. One scholar who looked at the different approaches to studying the intersections of migration and mission is Storstein Haug (2018), who highlights four main missiological approaches that have been used in the intersection of migration and mission: historical, empirical, descriptive-analytical, and theological studies. The historical perspective looks at how the theme of migration and mission has developed over the years in missions and world Christianity. Haug (2018: 282) says that the historical approach is also helpful in studying the contemporary developments within the same subject of migration and mission. Therefore, the historical reflection does not only involve the past but also the present in the intersections of migration and mission in missions and world Christianity. The historical approach can navigate the changes that happened in countries that were previously recipients of the gospel and have lately become the givers of the gospels in what others describe as a reverse mission. Bevans (2013: 158) explains: "The migration of peoples within the Global South but perhaps especially from the South to the

Global North is ushering in a new missionary era, both in terms of pastoral practice and theological insights." These historical shifts are worth exploring in the context of migration and mission. Furthermore, the historical approach helps investigate how the relationship between migration and mission works in different contexts. In using this approach for example we can investigate how migration and mission have evolved in different contexts historically. However, the same historical developments would require proper reflection as migration and mission in the Pentecostal movement are informed by the role of the Holy Spirit in these developments. Therefore, the historical inquisitions in migration and mission need to be balanced for example with how the Holy Spirit has been involved in migration and mission over the years.

Storstein Haug argues that more empirical research is needed to "document and critically examine the whole range of mission practices of churches, organizations, and individuals among migrants" (2018: 288). Dorottya Nagy and Martha Frederiks add that this involves how the relationship between migration and mission affects people at a personal level but also at a communal level (Nagy and Frederiks 2016). This can be done as Nagy does (2016: 38) by bringing the idea of human experiences in the intersections of migration and mission. However, in Pentecostalism, the human experience is informed by the experiences and encounters with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in doing empirical research on the intersections of migration and mission there is a need to involve the work of the Spirit in such study. The human experiences do not only relate to the human encounters with other human beings in the context of migration but also the encounters with the divine through the Holy Spirit and how such encounters affect the intersections of migration and mission.

In the descriptive and analytical approach, Storstein Haug (2018: 290) points out that "Missiology has been concerned with describing and discussing how Christian faith takes form in different cultures and contexts and elucidating the relation between gospel and context". In other words, it is within this approach that missiologists can investigate how the intersections of migration and mission have been affecting individuals in communities. This approach is important for example in looking at the challenges of globalization, transnationalism and migration in the intersections of migration and mission in world Christianity. Frederiks (2016: 24) points out for example that theologians and missiologists are faced with the task of contextualizing the gospel amid globalization, transnationalism and migration. Fredericks continues:

> *This "task" comprises the development of a conceptual and methodological toolbox that enables meaningful reflection on the contextualization processes of the Christian faith, amidst the complex realities that globalization and migration produce, thus attempting to keep the Christian tradition relevant and germane.*

This points to the approach of descriptive and analytical approach that a missiological approach cannot just be about descriptions and analysis of the status quo on migration and mission. However, there is a need to also investigate the current challenges posed by globalisation, transnationalism, and migration as posed by Frederiks. The main question is how can this be done in response to Frederik's suggestion almost a decade ago (2016). In this current study, I try to come up with an approach that can respond to current challenges posed by the intersections of migration and mission. Even here the role of the Holy Spirit is pivotal in navigating the challenges of globalization, transnationalism and migration. Therefore, there is a link between the intersections of migration and mission and the role of the Holy Spirit in migration.

The theological approach refers to the theological dispositions on the intersections of migration and mission. In other words, it is within theologizing of migration and mission where theological reflections can be made on migration and mission. Storstein Haug (2018: 286) points out that "Some examples of these migration theologies include immigration theologies that use biblical and other theological resources to criticize ways of thinking and acting that violate human rights". In other words, it is in the theological reflection where the Bible particularly the migration biblical texts becomes useful in studying the intersections of migration and mission. Nagy (2016: 42) states that if "migration is identified as an additional locus theologicus, it needs to be brought in relationship with other loci of the theological assessment through the scriptural reading of a more complex 'reality'." Theologizing migration and mission is also helpful in demonstrating that God is the God of the migrants from Genesis to Revelation. Storstein Haug (2018: 287) continues to say that proper biblical reflections on migration can lead to a deeper understanding of what God has been involved in throughout history in using migration for the propagation of the gospel. The research gap that this current study wants to fill is the approach to migration and mission particularly concerning Pentecostalism or its theology of the Spirit, pneumatology. This current study works with three theories of pneumatological imagination, missiological Spirit, and missional imagination to construct a missiological approach to migration within the Pentecostal movement.

4 Framing a Pneumatological Missional Imagination in Migration and Mission

The pneumatological missional imagination is developed here using three theories of pneumatological imagination, missiological spirit, and missional imagination. In addition, it is developed to make important contributions to historical, empirical, descriptive and theological reflections on migration and mission.

4.1 Pneumatological Imagination

This theory, developed by Yong (2020: 152) is developed on Spirit Engagement, Sensory Engagement and Creation Engagement and can make an important contribution to the theological reflections on migration and mission. The pneumatological imagination is not only based on the encounters between God and human beings through the Holy Spirit but also on the encounters between an individual and other fellow human beings (Yong 2019: 29). This is seen in the Pentecost narrative when those who are baptized in the Holy Spirit did not just speak in other tongues (glossolalia) but also spoke in human languages (xenolalia). The pneumatological imagination does not only make the connections between the divine and the humane but also the connections between human beings. "Pneumatological imagination is a modality of engaging with and then reflecting on the world that is both interpersonal and intersubjective and can be so surely in and through dynamically embodied relations" (Yong (2012: 191). In this way, pneumatological imagination becomes a framework not only for divine encounters but also for religious and interreligious encounters. These encounters are important in the juxtaposition of migration and mission in mission and world Christianity. But most importantly and in the context of this current study, pneumatological imagination is relevant for the encounters between people of different nations in pluralist and diverse nations. This means that the pneumatological imagination is relevant to the study of how strangers can understand each other in the context of migration and mission.

4.2 The Missiological Spirit

The missiological Spirit (developed in Yong 2015) is distinguished from pneumatological imagination as a missiological approach. It is not introduced as another Spirit but as part of the triune God, the Father, the Son and the Spirit. God the Spirit is the missiological Spirit. "Theologically, then, the missiological Spirit is also the spirit of God. More expansively, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Trinitarian or triune God" (Yong 2015: 227). The contribution of the missiological Spirit in migration and mission is that it is the Spirit that empowers the believers to be able to minister to people of other nations. Acts 1.8 states "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth". Therefore the missiological Spirit is the force behind the empowerment of believers to move beyond the local area to other nations in the propagation of the gospel. This means that the role of witnessing to other nations cannot happen until the missiological Spirit empowers the believers. This is important in the context of migration and mission, particularly in the understanding of the ability of the Pentecostal movement to move the gospel to other nations.

There are three roles of the missiological Spirit in the intersections of migration and mission. First, the missiological Spirit empowers the believers to be able to engage in mission work as seen in the Pentecost narrative in Lukan-Acts where the early church was involved in missions because of the missiological Spirit. The second role is the empowerment of the missiological Spirit to communicate the gospel to others even if they are of different nations. Lastly, it is the role of the missiological Spirit in turning the believers to become real witnesses of the gospel opening up the possibility of every believer becoming a witness (priesthood of all believers) as opposed to assigning this task only to evangelists and missionaries.

4.3 The Missional Imagination

Lastly, the missional imagination is important in mission and migration in the orientation of the whole church towards the mission of God. The proponents of the missional imagination Roxburgh and Boren (2009: 20) advocate for the church being centred around the mission of God rather than its mission. Smith and Niemandt (2022: 6) explain:

> *In terms of a missional imagination, the habitus of the missional church opens participants to the reality of the missio Trinitatis. Congregants imagine that mission is now possible within the every day and not just the privilege of the elite. This missional habitus invites participants into the bodily movements and poetics of the Trinitarian God which is radically different from the habitus of a church that is caught in modes of Christendom that distorts the mission by directing it back to the church alone.*

Therefore according to Beard (2015: 191), missional imagination can be defined as

> *...the role of God as the originator and motivator of mission shifting the relationship between the church and mission from the church having a mission to the mission of God having a church. If God is indeed the originator of the mission, and if he expects his people to join him in that mission, then the missional church and missional disciples must be in tune with the Holy Spirit to determine where and how God is working.*

This is important in migration and mission to avoid the temptation of focusing on the mission of the church rather than the mission of God. Therefore, a pneumatological missional imagination is grounded on three principles. First, the role of the Holy Spirit in making it possible for believers to encounter people of other nations as it happens on the day of Pentecost. Second, the role of the missiological Spirit in empowering believers to become witnesses and communicate the gospel to others. Lastly, the orientation of the migrant church is the orientation of the mission of God as opposed to focusing on its mission.

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Pneumatological missional imagination can be defined as the orientation of the migrant church towards the mission of God through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in encountering people of other nations. This is important in the context of African Pentecostal migrant churches in the recognition of the Spirit empowerment to reach out to the people of other nations. This means that pneumatological missional imagination is a framework to preach the gospel beyond the people of one's same nation. Pneumatological missional imagination is also a framework developed on the recognition of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in the disciples's ability to become the witnesses rather than remain members of a particular church. Believers as witnesses is a necessary step towards the utilisation of local church members who are familiar with the cultural aspects in the host country.

The pneumatological missional imagination is a framework designed to orientate the African Pentecostal migrant churches towards the mission of God as Spirit empowered churches rather than the fulfilment of their own mission. Therefore, this framework makes a contribution to missional imagination on spirit empowerment in the orientation of the missional church towards the mission of God.

5 The Case of the Apostolic Faith Mission Ministry International in the United Kingdom

The AFMIMUK is an African Migrant Pentecostal church in England, Wales, and Scotland. It forms part of the Apostolic Faith Mission International (AFMI) with other sister churches in different countries in the world. Several reasons demonstrate that the AFMIMUK is a migrant Pentecostal church. In the first place, the church has its roots in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe (AFMZ). The church was planted among migrants who experienced challenges highlighted in the introduction, including socio-economic challenges and political instability in Zimbabwe (Sande 2019b: 270). However, some had left Zimbabwe to pursue better economic, educational, and even work opportunities. Most of these migrants were already part of the church in Zimbabwe and therefore gathered to form a new church away from home. Therefore, there are different links between the foundation of the AFMIMUK and migration, which is the link between migration and mission. One can point out that this kind of link is continuous since the migration trend from Zimbabwe to the UK has not stopped since it started in the last quarter of the twentieth century. With Brexit, there are even more opportunities for many Zimbabweans to come to the United Kingdom in search of greener pastures. Therefore, this church is relevant as a case to explore the relationship between migration and mission in the twenty-first century.

The roots of the AFMIMUK in the AFMZ can be traced by the members of the AFMZ who arrived in the UK and established this church in 1998 (Samushonga & Sande 2020:17; cf. Sande 2019a: 73). After five years of operation mainly in south-east London, the church was formally registered in 2003. As many migrants from Zimbabwe arrived in the United Kingdom many more branches were started. This connection between the expansion of the AFMIMUK and migration has caused the church to become more faithful to the home church in Zimbabwe. Although administratively the church received its autonomy in 2009, in practice it is still very much part of the AFMZ. The foundation of AFMIMUK, unlike other sister branches of the AFMI in Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa cannot be attributed to a specific individual but a group of individuals, thus confirming its status as a migrant church. Nonetheless, some individuals can be credited as being there in 1998 when the church started. These include Rev. Trust Ndlovu, a graduate of the Living Waters Bible College (Sande 2019b: 277). Another important figure in the foundation of the AFMIMUK is Rev. T. I. Murefu, who worked with lay leaders who had preceded him such as Patrick Sena (then National Administrator), Sebastian Nyamande, Josh Chigorimbo (then General Secretary) and several others. In addition, many more individuals contributed to the foundation of this church by hosting spiritual services in their houses as the church did not have buildings in its early inception. This speaks to the AFMIMUK as a migrant church which makes the links between migration and mission very strong.

Currently, the membership of the AFMIMUK is at about 3,500 from its different 36 branches in the four regions. The church has some governing structures that are similar to the sister churches in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Zambia and others. These structures are used for the governance and the regulations of the church in the country. In the national structure, they are led by the National Apostolic Committee, which reports to the National Workers Council and the National Board of Trustees. This structure is similar to the National Office Bearers in South Africa. The AFMIMUK is also governed through a regional structure where the branches are supposed to report on the progress of their churches and missions. The church currently has four regions, namely the Northern Region (with nine assemblies), the Midlands Region (with eleven assemblies), the Central Region (with eight assemblies) and the Southern Region (with eight assemblies). Therefore, in the short time since its inception, the church has been able to establish itself in different parts of England. This is a sign of growth in the context of migration and mission. However, various challenges can impede this growth, necessitating some reflections in the context of the intersections of migration and mission. The same challenges can be contextualized on migration and mission in Pentecostalism by using AFMIMUK as a case study as discussed below.

Some challenges faced by churches like the AFMIMUK include the inability to minister to local people in the host country because of the cultural challenge to the mission. The context of many cities in the United Kingdom is very much multicultural. Therefore, the idea of always wanting to retain the monoculture emanating from the AFMZ in the AFMIMUK does not work. The AFMIMUK is facing a challenge with those who want to maintain the cultural practices that they have brought with them when coming to the United Kingdom. Samushonga and Sande (2020: 28) explain:

> *The Shona language and culture are predominant in the Zimbabwean population in general. This ethnic segmentation explains why the Shona language has dominated and shaped the practices and expressions of the AFMIMUK. Although many Zimbabweans are proficient in the English language and spend most of their time immersed in the British systems, the study demonstrates that it is not easy to change one's language and reach the same depth (i.e., from Shona to English) when it comes to spiritual practices.*

These dynamics are caused by the church's association with the AFMZ. Some members of the AFMIMUK are refusing to let go of their own experiences of their home country. Sanushonga and Sande say that this quest to maintain the cultural practices within the church has led to the failure of the AFMIMUK to reach the local people. I must add that this is not only the failure to reach the local people but also the failure to reach out to other fellow African migrants from Zambia, Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon etc. Some Zimbabwean migrants prefer attending other migrant churches which are open to other cultures rather than their migrant, monocultural church.

There is also an inability of some of the assemblies of the AFMIMUK to reach out to local people because of the styles used in mission praxis, particularly when it comes to praise and worship (Okyerefo 2014). This can be very frustrating, particularly for young people who are very willing to adapt to new styles of praise and worship. These young people, the second generation of AFMIMUK, unlike the first generation are not so connected to the AFMZ and therefore seek newer styles of praise and worship (Nyanni 2018, 2020). Therefore, the issue of praise and worship affects not only the local people but young African migrants. In Pentecostalism, praise and worship are dedicated to singing songs, dancing, clapping hands and shouting. Praise and worship become the expression of spirituality amongst the congregants, particularly during a Sunday worship service. However, it can be reiterated that in many of the African Pentecostal churches, not just the AFMIMUK, praise and worship are expressed using the African styles more than those of the locality where these churches find themselves. This in a way becomes an impediment in reaching out to local people as some cannot assimilate to the African styles. In addition, the way

the sermon is presented by some of the preachers in churches like AFMIMUK also becomes an impediment to reaching local people. In some cases the service, particularly the preaching of the sermon, would take longer than expected by the locals. In Africa for example, a preacher can preach for two hours non-stop and this is acceptable to the congregants. One cannot do the same in other regions of the world such as the UK. These are some of the challenges of mission praxis that are important to reflect on in the intersections of mission and migration.

Lastly, migrant churches are preoccupied with assisting fellow migrants in obtaining work visas, employment and other needs (Chimbidzikai 2021). This at times makes churches such as AFMIMUK lose focus on the *missio dei* (the mission of God). The reason some of the migrants join churches like the AFMIMUK is the desire to have a sense of belonging and to receive help when in difficult situations. At times this sense of belonging impedes having new members, particularly local people, as they too feel as if they do not belong. In this way, religion is used as a unifying factor for many migrants who are away from home. When a new person comes into churches like the AFMIMUK, it is not easy to become part of the unified group that is formed based on common culture, language and ethnicity, or even formed on the basis of meeting each others' needs as migrants. This takes us back to the reasons why churches like AFMIMUK were formed. Some of the reasons as highlighted by scholars such as Sande (2019a) were to create a support structure for the migrants. Other reasons include maintaining their religious practices as practised from back home. It is for these reasons that some of the migrants are very resistant when it comes to adjusting worship styles to accommodate the local people. Many would rather maintain the status quo for fear of losing their own religious identity and sense of belonging. While it is good for the migrants to have a sense of belonging, this is not necessarily the mission of the church. As discussed above, the mission of the church should be aligned with the mission of God in reaching out to the people in their diversity. This calls for churches such as AFMIMUK to rethink their mission praxis to reach out to the local people in fulfilment of the mission of God.

6 Pneumatological Missional Imagination: a Contribution to Mission and Migration

The framework in this current study is relevant for challenging the current missiological approaches to the study of migration and mission. In addition, it is relevant in dealing with some of the challenges to migration and mission in the Pentecostal tradition. A pneumatological missional imagination is a framework for the empowerment of the Spirit in witnessing to others. Through the empowerment of the Spirit, there is a possibility of being able to minister to people of different ethnicities. This

means that the empowerment of the Spirit is necessary for the packaging of the gospel so that it is relevant to people in their diversity. This means that through the empowerment of the Spirit, as happened in the Pentecost narrative, the failure to reach local people is overcome through Spirit-filled gospel, Spirit-filled songs and Spirit-filled sermons. This means that in the pneumatological missional imagination, the goal is not to push for one's language or even culture but the empowerment of the Spirit. It is through this Spirit empowerment that leads to a possibility for the church in any place in the world to be relevant to the believers. Therefore, this calls for African Pentecostal migrant churches such as AFMIMUK to pursue the empowerment of the Spirit as opposed to affinity or loyalty to the home church in Zimbabwe. The gospel should be allowed to find resonance where it is located, this is only possible through the empowerment of the Spirit.

A pneumatological missional imagination is a framework relevant to the spreading of the gospel to other nations. The popular phrase is "to the ends of the world". This means that the gospel is not limited to reaching out to African migrants or fellow Zimbabweans in the United Kingdom but to the ends of the world. The same Spirit which Amos Yong calls the missiological Spirit empowers the believers to become witnesses. This means that the preaching of the gospel is not only the task of elite evangelists and missionaries but also the task of every believer who is filled by the Spirit. The Spirit-filled believer has the potential to reach out to the people of other nations as it happened on the day of the Pentecost. The spirit-filled believer does not only witness to fellow migrants but to others as well as is inspired by the Spirit to speak other languages. The Spirit goes wherever it wills and therefore cannot be limited to the African migrants as is the case in most assemblies in the AFMIMUK. The role of the Spirit in migration and mission is to spread the gospel beyond locality. This is the reason the Pentecostal movement has become a recognisable force in world Christianity because of its ability to move from one city to the other or even from one country to the other. Similarly, the AFMIMUK through a missional imagination can expand their reach beyond just African migrants as inspired by the missiological Spirit.

Lastly, a pneumatological missional imagination is relevant for the orientation of African Pentecostal migrant churches like the AFMIMUK toward the mission of God. The pneumatological missional imagination is not only based on the Spirit empowerment but is also aligned with the mission of God. This calls for the orientation of the AFMIMUK towards the mission of God as being inspired by the same Holy Spirit. The church does not have its mission but its mission is based on the primary mission of God in the world. Therefore, any migrant church in any part of the world does not fulfill its mission but should align with the mission of God. The pneumatological

missional imagination contributes to the orientation of the church to the mission of God. Therefore we should reimagine churches AFMIMUK as churches beyond the sense of belonging or even helping one another in obtaining work visas or even maintaining the religious practices from the home country. The church should rather be preoccupied with the need to fulfil the mission of God here on earth which is the redemption of the world. God desires that all human beings be reconciled with him, anything else that the church does should align with this main mission in the context of migration and mission. Therefore, while it is not wrong to help people with visas and jobs, these should be done without compromising the mission of God in the world. Therefore, the pneumatological missional imagination is important for the fulfilment of God's vision which as argued here is important for reaching out to believers beyond the African migrants. In essence, a pneumatological missional imagination is not only a theological approach but is also relevant to be integrated into the life and praxis of the faith communities such as the AFMIMUK. It encourages the believers to take up action to reaching out to the people of God in the UK in fulfilment of the mission of God. This framework is relevant not only for the AFMIMUK but also for other migrant churches across the globe.

7 Conclusion

This article was based on the conceptual framework of the intersections of migration and mission. The context is Pentecostal-oriented migrant churches finding their place in the mission of God and the selection of the AFMIMUK. This subject is important to locate within the Pentecostal movement given the current challenges faced by many migrant churches across the world such as the inability to minister relevantly to the host countries, cultural differences, and the orientation towards the mission of God. However, before delving much into the Pentecostal nuances, the article also analysed previous missiological approaches to the study of the intersections of migration and mission with some identified gaps in their relevance to Pentecostalism. The contribution of this article is the development of the Pneumatological missional imagination as a relevant framework to the study of migration and mission. The article brought the theories of pneumatological imagination, missiological spirit, and missional imagination to develop this framework. This framework is important in studying the challenges concerning witnessing to people of other nations, dealing with cultural differences, and orientation to the mission of God as identified in the AFMIMUK. Therefore, a pneumatological missional imagination is relevant as a missiological approach to the intersections of migration and mission in Pentecostalism. Future studies on migration and mission can use the same framework to engage further on the subject.

About the Author

Mookgo Solomon Kgatle holds a PhD in Theology and is a Professor of Missiology at the College of Human Sciences, UNISA. He is interested in the history, mission, and theology of African Pentecostalism. He has published several peer-reviewed articles and books in the field. He is the founder and president of the Southern African Society of Pentecostal Studies. He is an NRF-rated scholar and appeared in the 2024 Scopus list of the Top 2% of Scientists worldwide. He received visiting scholarships to the University of Birmingham and Oxford University (2020–23). He won several other awards including the Unisa Principal Award for excellence in research (2024). Contact: kgatls@unisa.ac.za

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ARTICLE

Examining Filipino Popular Piety in the light of Vatican II's *Directory of Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines*

Kevin Maicom

Abstract

Celebrating popular piety in different regions reflects the vibrant, diverse, and festive culture of the Philippines. The innumerable religious practices through rites and ceremonies show the intensity and vibrance of Filipino Catholic spirituality. It is part of the heritage and unique identity of the Filipino Catholic Church to the extent that it also impacts the local liturgical calendar. Given this distinctive characteristic of popular piety, finding its harmony with the liturgy is challenging. The focus on the ritual aspect of popular piety diverges from orthodoxy, raising conflict between its praxis and Church teachings, which allows for misinterpretation and syncretism. This paper will employ a descriptive research design to assess the reception of Vatican II's *Directory of Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines* (DPPL), using the method of critical reflection. It comprehensively analyzes the reception of DPPL and its profound impact on Catholicism in the Philippines. This study aims to establish an understanding of popular piety as a valid form of worship through analysis and evaluation of the process of inculturation to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of these practices. It enriches theological discourse on the realm of inculturation, which leads to the preservation of cultural heritage and the understanding that popular piety is an encounter of evangelization and culture that should be treated with profound respect and mutual understanding.

Keywords: popular piety, liturgy, inculturation, popular religiosity, devotion

1 Introduction

The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) *aggiornamento* aimed to renew the Church in response to the contemporary world. One of the council's documents, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, called for a reform of the liturgy and necessitated the recognition of popular piety. In response, Vatican II issued the

DPPL in 2001. This document offered guidance on integrating popular piety, the religious practices of people from local culture, with the liturgy. In order to enhance comprehension of the study of popular piety in the Philippine setting, it is important to establish clear definitions of relevant terms. Within various regions of the country, there is a tendency to conflate the concepts of popular piety, popular religiosity, and devotion, resulting in frequent interchangeability.

The document with the authority to define these terms is the 2001 DPPL. It defines popular piety as "diverse cultic expressions of a private or community nature … in the context of the Christian faith" (DPPL, 9). while popular religiosity is a "universal experience … of people, nations, and their collective expressions but does not always necessarily refer to Christian revelation" (DPPL, 10). On the other hand, devotion refers to "various external practices (e.g. prayers, hymns, observances attached to particular times or places, insignia, medals, habits or customs) animated by the attitude of faith" (DPPL, 8). The prevalence of misconceptions regarding these terms can be attributed to a deficiency in catechesis. In this regard, the author will employ the phrase "popular piety" in this study following the official title of the magisterial document.

2 Research Methodology

The study examines the theological foundation of popular piety as an expression of faith that finds its harmony with the liturgy, focusing on how these practices coexist and influence each other. It uses the method of critical reflection on the DPPL to frame the analysis, providing principles and guidelines for evaluating the validity of popular piety. The method also integrates historical, cultural and anthropological aspects of popular piety, providing a comprehensive view of the lived experiences of the faithful and the cultural context in which these religious practices occur. The study also evaluates the process of inculturation, balancing the need for cultural expressions in worship while maintaining fidelity to Catholic doctrine. It also discusses potential challenges, such as syncretism, which may arise when popular piety diverges from liturgical norms. The goal is to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of popular piety as a valid form of worship, emphasizing respect and mutual understanding between popular piety and the liturgy. This multifaceted approach provides insights to guide future practices and pastoral strategies within the Filipino Catholic context.

3 Significance of the Study

Catholicism in the Philippines is amplified by popular piety as a profound reservoir of sustaining faith among the Filipinos. The interactions between the two separate domains challenge the complicated correlation between Filipino popular piety and the liturgy. The task, therefore, involves the ability to discern how to handle this relationship and ensure that these expressions do not overshadow the fundamental principles and tenets of Catholicism. This research aims to understand the reception of the DPPL that encompasses not just academic growth but also personal enrichment of how faith is assimilated in the Philippines. The study can also shed light on the tensions between formal liturgy and cultural expressions of faith in the Catholic practices in the country, in the light of Vatican II's liturgical reforms that intended to strike unity amid diversity among the local churches around the globe.

4 Popular Piety and the Liturgy

The liturgy is "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed and the fount from which all her power flows" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium,* 10; henceforth SC). It requires acknowledging and valuing various expressions of popular religiosity within the Christian community. It possesses an inherent predisposition to establish a connection with the divine, leading to the emergence of popular piety aimed at fulfilling the desire for active participation.

Popular piety is an expression of Christian faith in the culture of the people. It is critical not to dismiss these types of piety and to recognize their relevance in building a sense of communion with God and within the ecclesial community. Hence, the theological foundation of inculturation is the incarnation of Jesus in time and space. Anscar Chupungco (cited by Mark Francis 2014b) asserts that the embodiment of Christ, continued by the Church as the physical representation of Christ in many human cultures, forms the foundation for both the identity and the variety of the liturgy as the Church's way of expressing itself. Nevertheless, due to challenges with inculturation, popular piety can lead to an inevitable distortion of Christian doctrine, resulting in a negative impact on liturgical practices. It can lead to the primacy of the people's devotion, and liturgy becomes secondary. The celebration does not centre on the Paschal mystery of Christ as its focal point. The prayers lack reflection of the trinitarian formula due to their spontaneous nature. Additionally, the absence of scriptural text diminishes its significance, and the pneumatological dimension is disregarded. These challenges arise from disregarding the process of inculturation to address the questions faced by the encounter of evangelization and colonization.

Mark Francis (2014a) asserts that Vatican II emphasizes the role of culture as the heart of the liturgical renewal. However, it seems that the formalization of the liturgy is seen as a hindrance to the cultural and ritual expression of the faithful. The publication of *Liturgiam Authenticam* promulgated by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in 2001 has the main objective of offering instructions for translating liturgical texts into vernacular languages. Translations must adhere to precise phrasing and remain unaffected by ideological bias. The original Latin text should be accurately translated into the local language. This document ended the discussions on liturgical inculturation, mandating a literal translation of the text from Latin to vernacular without any omissions, additions, or paraphrases. It loses the soul of the text that touches the heart of the locals. The culture expressed in the language of the prayers hinders the intelligent participation of the faithful. Popular piety, on the other hand, allows authentic and spontaneous expression of faith to be received in the culture of the people. It involves the body, heart, and mind, whereas, in comparison, the liturgy is perceived as formal, repetitive, rubric- and formula-driven. This distinguishing feature of popular piety provides a divergence from the liturgy.

However, popular piety serves as a channel for the people of God to engage in spiritual expression, foster a profound relationship with God and facilitate the enrichment of faith experiences and understanding, for "no one who loves God's holy people will view these actions as the expression of a purely human search for the divine" (*Evangelii Gaudium,* 125, henceforth EG).

5 Popular Piety in the Philippines

Filipinos are known for being religious and pious and are even described as spirit-oriented, which denotes their active search for the divine and relating themselves to the supreme being (Catechism for the Filipino Catholics, 469; henceforth CFC). This identity is expressed in popular piety, which includes a wide range of cultic practices within the Christian faith that are driven by the assimilation of the beliefs and culture of the people and can be done alone or with a group. In the interplay between evangelization and culture, Jose De Mesa, cited by Josefina Tondo (2010), discusses whether Filipinos have actually been Christianized or if Christianity has just been adapted to fit the Filipino culture. Perhaps history will provide an insightful answer to this assertion. Christianity touched the Philippines' soil in the year 1521 with the arrival of Ferdinand Magellan. The arrival of Spanish colonizers in the Philippines imported the Western canons and introduced the Catholic faith, which has since become an integral component of the Filipino identity. Chupungco (2014) asserts that the missionaries introduced Western spirituality to Filipino culture, incorporating the

Baroque style in the liturgy. Hence, the pre-colonial practices in the archipelago bear a resemblance to the celebratory characteristics of the Baroque period, which are characterized by opulent displays in festivals, extravagant visual elements, elaborate sacred artwork and images, expressive dances, theatrical presentations and musical performances. Macaranas (2021) argues that because of the length of time that the Philippines has been under Spanish colonization, the native pre-colonial culture and Indigenous worship have assimilated Christian doctrines and teachings. In this regard, Foley (2024) asserts the importance of inculturation, citing that gaining control over language, ritual, and music will direct liturgical movement as a form of decolonization.

Furthermore, human beings have an innate desire to relate with the supreme being. Filipinos inherently gravitate towards tangible and practical manifestations of their faith and religious encounters (CFC, 1534). This faith is expressed in popular piety as the treasure of the Church and a form of spirituality that reflects the experiences of the Filipino people. The image of the crucified Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary as intercessor, and the paschal mystery of Christ achieved in the lives of the Saints is a tangible reality that we have a God who can sympathize with our everyday problems and who is with us to celebrate our joy. This may explain why people find this form of worship fulfilling in pursuing a spiritual connection with God. Tondo (2010) affirms that in decision-making, Filipino cultural values and notions such as *bahala na* (Whatever events occur are within the realm of God's permission) are closely connected to faith. It is not an act of surrender but a manifestation of hope that God is in control of everything. In this, we can see that faith does not only interplay with culture, but their devotion also amplifies trust in the grace and mercy of God.

Faith exerts a substantial impact on society through the assimilation of Christian doctrines into the culture, having an impact on both personal and socio-political realities. The expression of religious devotion in the Philippines is commonly observed through various forms of "popular devotions, processions, altar and shrines, religious drama … and dance … these expressions of faith are festive, felt, spontaneous … expressive, immediate, communitarian, collective, joyful, symbolic, traditional, alive" (Chupungco 2014: 329). It is demonstrated by the act of visiting well-known churches that are associated with specific devotions, embarking on a pilgrimage to express gratitude to God or seek blessings, touching sacred images of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and saints, participating in religious processions, engaging in extended periods of prayer known as novenas, and undertaking long journeys to see various religious celebrations. The prevalent acceptance of religious beliefs among the general populace can be comprehended as the extensive transmission and embodiment of the religion inherited and assimilated into the cultural fabric of the Philippines.

The profound prevalence of the spirituality of popular piety within the Philippine setting significantly influences the local liturgical calendar. The commemoration of the Nativity of Jesus Christ takes place on December 25. It will be presided over by a major procession in commemoration of the *Traslacion ng Poong Itim na Nazareno* (Feast of the Transfer of Image of the Black Nazarene from its original Shrine in Intramuros to the Quiapo Church, now declared as The National Shrine of the Black Nazarene) on January 9, followed by the commemoration of the feast of the child Jesus, Santo Niño, in the subsequent week since this feast falls in the third week of January. These three Christocentric festivities are observed and enormously celebrated by a large number of people in the Philippine archipelago. The celebration of Christmas reflects the culture of festivity, even in the difficulty of life brought about by various forms of economic oppression. The resilience of Filipinos is shown in their attendance during the *Traslacion*, which they relate to the image of the suffering Christ, and lastly, the love for children is evident during the feast of the Santo Niño as the epicentre of the Catholic faith. Utilizing the "baby-adult-child" pattern of celebration, while possessing a comical quality, enhances the religious conviction of the people, fortifies their sense of belief, and expresses their unwavering devotion, which moulds the hearts of Filipinos. Chupungco (2014) affirmed that this phenomenon under consideration exhibits a profound connection to societal issues and human emotions while embodying a celebratory, heartfelt, spontaneous and expressive nature.

6 Gestures and Language of Popular Piety in the Philippines

Philippine culture is embedded in the celebration of different forms of popular piety across the country. It is evident in the gestures and language of the ritual acts that engage a Filipino Christian.

6.1 Gestures

The gestural characteristic of popular piety in the Philippines is distinguished by the presence of extravagant and exaggerated bodily motions, which extend beyond the mere acts of kissing or caressing religious images and objects, serving as symbolic actions as reflected in DPPL, 15:

> *Popular piety is characterized by a great variety and richness of bodily, gestural, and symbolic expressions: kissing or touching images, places, relics, and sacred objects; pilgrimages, processions; going bare-footed or on one's knees; kneeling and prostrating; wearing medals and badges … These and similar expressions, handed down from father to son, are direct and simple ways of giving external expression to the heart and to one's commitment to live the Christian life. Without this interior aspect, symbolic gesture runs the risk of degenerating into empty customs or mere superstitions, in the worst cases.*

The rich cultural diversity of the Philippines has contributed to the emergence of various symbolic gestures within the context of Christian liturgy. The gestural acts performed during the Lenten season in the country, like the actual crucifixion in Cutud, Pampanga, walking pilgrimages going to Antipolo Cathedral (*Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage*), and flagellation as a form of penance are identities of Filipino religiosity. It is crucial to recognize the beauty and charism of popular piety while appreciating its anthropological and cultural aspects. However, it is important to use moderation in these displays of Filipino devotion to ensure they align with sound theological principles and can feasibly harmonize with the liturgical celebration.

Furthermore, gestures are not only limited to actions but are evident in dance. The music of the people "is instinctively linked with hand-clapping, rhythmic corporeal movements, and even dance. Such are external forms of interior sentiment and are part of popular traditions, especially on occasions such as patronal feasts" (DPPL, 17). The surrounding environment undeniably influences the manifestation of an individual's emotions through dance. In the country, a known dance ritual for fertility is celebrated in Obando, Bulacan, under the Patronage of St Paschal of Baylon, St Claire and Our Lady of Salambao. In addition, street dances are performed in different parts of the country during the celebration of *Santo Niño,* particularly in Cebu and Tondo. From this, we can understand that the language of the body is the language of piety.

However, can we consider dancing a meaningful form and expression of Christian faith because the liturgy, in its strict sense, does not have provision for dancing during liturgical celebrations? In biblical times, we can see dancing as a form of worship: "Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the *Lord* with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the *Lord* with shouts and the sound of trumpets" (2 Sam. 6.14-22).

In this biblical text, we can see the encounter of faith and local culture. The convergence of beautiful, pleasing bodily movements, coupled with the supplications and devotions of individuals, presents an intriguing manifestation of faith that fosters a profound connection with the divine. Dancing processions are a distinctive embodiment of the convergence between evangelization and cultural expressions.

Historical and cultural factors naturally mark popular piety. For this reason, it needs to be considered in assimilating the Christian faith in language and gestures. It is vital to acknowledge that the process of inculturation places significance on preserving fundamental aspects of a particular cultural viewpoint, especially how Filipinos understand Christianity as influenced by "personal and national historical experiences of pain and struggle, of victory and celebration" (CFC, 31).

6.2 Language

It is imperative for the Church to embody the essence of Christ in all linguistic contexts because the theological principles of the Christian faith are conveyed through language that is influenced by cultural perspectives. The prayer used in popular piety incorporates the notions of *"pamilya"* (pertaining to family), *"kahirapan"* (referring to poverty), *"pagsamo"* (signifying supplication), *"pangako"* (representing promise) and *"pagmamahal"* (indicating love) (all translations by the author).

The perfect example is the novena prayer to Our Lady of Perpetual Help enshrined in Baclaran Church:

> *We, too, have our crosses and trials.*
> *Sometimes they almost crush us to the ground.*
> *Dearest Mother,*
> *share with us your abundant faith and confidence in God.*
> *Make us aware that God never ceases to love us;*
> *that he answers all our prayers*
> *in the way that is best for us.*
> *Strengthen our hearts to carry the cross*
> *in the footsteps of your divine Son.*
> *Help us to realize*
> *that he who shares the cross of Christ*
> *will certainly share his resurrection.*
> *(Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer*
> *Baclaran, Metro Manila, Philippines, May 1994)*

The prayers associated with popular piety have a socio-political dimension and are connected to societal problems: poverty, health, education and food in the Philippines are indicative of several concepts that hold significance in the daily lives of its populace. In this context, "we have a fact of fundamental theological and pastoral significance: it is the poor, the object of God's special love, who understand best" (Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation, 22).

However, because the prayers are from the cultural perspective of a particular community, they may lose their inspiration from "Sacred Scripture, the Liturgy, the Fathers of the Church and the Magisterium, and concord with the Church's faith" (DPPL, 16).

The theological aspect of popular piety is made apparent by including scriptural readings. Paul VI emphasizes the significance of incorporating biblical elements into

popular piety, stating, "today it is recognized as a general need of Christian piety that every form of worship should have a biblical imprint" (Marialis Cultus, 30). The celebration of popular piety must be accompanied by scriptural text because "sacred theology rests on the written word of God, together with sacred tradition, as its primary and perpetual foundation" (Dei Verbum, 24). It is noteworthy to observe that the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy includes a provision for conducting a Bible service prior to the commencement of the liturgical celebration given that the solemnities and festivities are widely observed in the archipelago:

> *Bible services should be encouraged, especially on the vigils of the more solemn feasts, on some weekdays in Advent and Lent, and on Sundays and feast days. They are particularly to be commended in places where no priest is available; when this is so, a deacon or some other person authorized by the bishop should preside over the celebration. (SC, 35)*

The conscience of the people "is gradually formed through Scripture and the Church's living Tradition" (CFC, 99). Given that the Word of God is the bedrock of our Catholic faith, "it encourages popular piety to discover the harmony between the Old and New Testaments and to interpret one in the light of the other ... in choosing biblical texts, it is always desirable to take short texts that are easily memorized, incisive, and easily understood, even if difficult to actualize" (DPPL, 89). Through this, the Church commemorates the manifestation of redemption in the present day through the proclamation of the Word of God and the observance of ritual practices. Hence, popular piety supplements the thirst for biblical text.

Moreover, the aesthetic appeal of language extends beyond its usage in religious prayers, encompassing the lyrical compositions found within sacred music as well. The music of the Philippine Catholic Church has a distinct characteristic: it is festive and romantic. In fact, it has been explicitly explained that "Filipinos are kundiman-oriented. The *kundiman* is a sad Filipino song about wounded love. Filipinos are naturally attracted to heroes sacrificing everything for love. They are patient and forgiving to a fault" (CFC, 39). The devotional, religious and even liturgical songs in the country acquire a *kundiman* dimension. For example, here is an excerpt of the Marian song "*Stella Maris*" by Bukas Palad Music Ministry in 1997:

> *Maria sa puso ninuman (Mary in the heart of all)*
> *Ika'y tala ng kalangitan. (You shine brighter like a star in the sky.)*
> *Ningning mo ay walang pagmamaliw (There are no words to describe your light)*
> *Inang sinta inang ginigiliw (My dear beloved Mother)*
> *(translation by the author)*

The Filipino terms “*Sinta*” (Dear) and “*Ginigiliw”* (Beloved) could serve as expressions that capture the deep-seated Marian devotion observed among the Filipino populace. It is not surprising that Marian devotions hold significant popularity within the archipelago. Kroeger (2015) states that the role of Filipino popular religiosity, particularly its devotion to the Virgin Mary, has been acknowledged for its substantial impact on the preservation and advancement of the spiritual lives of local Christians. Pope John Paul II’s remarks on Filipino devotion to Mary as a *pueblo amante de Maria*, a people with a special love and devotion to Mary, indeed reinforced this assertion.

The integration of music in popular piety is an inherent and essential aspect since it facilitates “the conservation of the received corpus of traditional songs … linked with a biblical and ecclesial spirit which is open to the possibility, where necessary, of their revision or to the composition of new songs” (DPPL, 17). This experience can be perceived as a preliminary encounter with liturgical practices. The ethos of the Vatican II emphasizes the necessity of active participation and an understanding of the musical content. The purpose of sacred music is to evoke a profound sense of connection and communion with the divine. During singing, the faithful connect profoundly with the Trinitarian God, Mary, and the Saints. Kroeger (2015) concurred that these are the circumstances in which popular piety is suitable due to its assurance of veracity and authenticity. Popular piety serves to deepen the faith and strengthen the bond of the People of God. However, it does not escape from misuse, abuse and misinterpretation.

The issue of syncretism has been subject of discussion for the longest time, although some theologians seem to view this terminology in a very positive manner and an inevitable stage of inculturation. Hence, since any evangelization will be incarnated in a specific culture, Pope Paul VI emphasizes that popular piety ‘is subject to penetration by many distortions of religion and superstition and might endanger the ecclesial community’ (Evangelii Nuntiandii, 48). Syncretism is the process of amalgamating one or more religious systems to form a novel system by incorporating beliefs and unconnected traditions. Religious syncretism is prominently observed, as seen by the presence of many religious symbols, such as the image of *Santo Niño*, Buddha, and lucky charms, which are commonly displayed in commercial establishments. Furthermore, the practices of baptism, weddings, and funerals are often accompanied by the incorporation of superstitious beliefs. In this context, numerous misunderstandings regarding Christian concepts may emerge, distorting the teachings and principles that are upheld. In light of the proselytizing nature of prevalent religious practices, it is imperative to delineate the boundaries that separate the incorporation of faith, culture, and individual inclinations inside our spiritual beliefs so that “it may never incorporate rites permeated by magic, superstition, animism, vendettas or sexual connotations” (Varietates Legitimae, 48)

7 Reflection

Popular piety enriches the liturgical celebration. It must maintain a discernible identity while aligning harmoniously with the liturgy because "the spiritual life, however, is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy" (SC, 12). However, popular piety must find its culmination in the liturgical celebration. Given its significance in the lives of the faithful, it is imperative that it remains intact and not be eliminated. It is the very mind of the Constitution when it states:

> *Popular devotions of the Christian people are to be highly commended, provided they accord with the laws and norms of the Church, above all when they are ordered by the Apostolic See. But these devotions should be so drawn up that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some fashion derived from it, and lead the people to it, since, in fact, the liturgy by its very nature far surpasses any of them. (SC, 13)*

What is said of the "Christian liturgy is also true of popular piety" (DPPL, 12). Hence, it is suggestive that the prayers of popular piety exhibit a trinitarian dimension in the sense that "faithful require instruction on the character of Christian prayer, which is directed to the Father, through the mediation of the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit" (DPPL, 80). Its celebration assumes a centrality on the Paschal mystery of Christ while duly recognizing the integral role played by the Holy Spirit in guiding the faithful throughout worship, and the observance must foster an ecclesial dimension. In the pursuit of achieving harmony, "it is important that the question of the relationship between popular piety and the liturgy not be posed in terms of contradiction, equality, or, indeed, of substitution" (DPPL, 50). Since popular piety arises from the faith of the people, it must be taken care of with profound respect and mutual understanding. The harmonization must radiate the principle of sound tradition and legitimate progress.

The DPPL provided a framework for assessing and revitalizing popular piety that can be adopted in the Philippine setting. It serves as a foundation for developing pastoral suggestions and local principles and guidelines for the renewal of popular piety in the country. The harmonization of popular piety is governed by several key principles, namely the "biblical, liturgical, ecumenical, and anthropological spirit" (DPPL, 12).

However, it is interesting to note that the principle for renewal of popular piety is only enshrined in DPPL 12, with a vague description and subject for interpretation. There is no specific mention of whether the four criteria must be met or how they should be applied in a specific context. In this regard, there are aspects that need

consultation and discussion of local theologians. For example, several manifestations of popular piety have no biblical basis. One instance is the widely known Easter procession, *Encuentro* or *Salubong*, which occurs at dawn after the Easter Vigil Mass. *Salubong* is a procession that portrays the encounter between Jesus and Mary, his mother following his resurrection. Curiously, there is no biblical evidence to support this practice, but the Filipino people firmly believe that Jesus initially appeared to his mother. This obstacle hinders the process of renewing and aligning different expressions of popular piety with the liturgy. It will present a dilemma since one of the principles presented by the DPPL is for popular piety to be guided by a biblical spirit. It is now the task of theologians and liturgists to establish the biblical foundation of the respected popular piety in their place.

Perhaps the *Salubong* is the world in front of the text for the faithful. This faith is grounded in the resurrection account amplified by the matristic culture of Filipinos.

In this sense, perhaps it is best to look at the case of the *Sabuaga* festival. Cunanan (2021) examines the relationship between liturgy and popular piety in the context of the *Sabuaga* Festival, an Easter Sunday celebration in Sto Tomas, Pampanga, Philippines. The article discusses how harmony between liturgy and popular piety is achieved in the *Sabuaga* festival.

The author examined how the festival integrates the personal experiences and cultural traditions of the locals with the Paschal mystery of Christ through the ceremonies of *Santa Misa* and *Misa Concelebranda*. In the Philippines, the Holy Week celebration culminates on Easter Sunday and is regarded as a weeklong vacation. This is the period when Catholic individuals studying and working in the capital return to their provinces to reunite with their families and celebrate the Holy Eucharist collectively. The anthropological aspect of Filipino culture, characterized by its familial orientation, is exemplified in the liturgical celebration. Since culture has a vital role in the faith of the people, it is essential to discern its connection with the religious dimension of these practices while giving importance to their anthropological aspects. Bevans (2018) affirms this assertion, citing that it is crucial for the church to communicate the gospel and educate effectively and in an attractive manner, and failing to include the cultural and contextual aspects of faith would be a betrayal of the Church's purpose.

Interestingly, the celebration also became a centre for tourism because of its numerous activities:

As the Thomasians pray and worship the Risen Christ in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, they unite their lives and history as a people to the mystery of Christ's resurrection. This is evident in the cultural events, which encourage participants to creatively portray the Paschal Mysteries. For example, in the free-interpretation dances, some participants portray the Stabat Mater, wherein the Blessed Mother stood at the foot of the cross in sorrow over her beloved Son's suffering and death. Moreover, the street dancing festivities reenact the believer's courageous anticipation of Christ's resurrection, which they believe is the source of their own future resurrection. (Cunanan 2021: 75)

As these activities are orchestrated by the parish church and the local government unit, they attract tourists, including Catholics and non-Catholics, providing an excellent opportunity for a dialogue and evangelization that is ecumenical by nature. Since a multitude of devout people gather in these religious events, united within purpose and prayers while manifesting their beliefs, such practices serve as a "*locus theologicus* which demands our attention, especially at a time when we are looking to the new evangelization" (Directory of Catechesis, 338; henceforth DC). The church is an inclusive place because "her nature is a dialogical reality" (DC, 334). It endeavours to facilitate popular piety as a valid form of Christian worship for the contemporary human person, particularly those who have limited religious education and catechetical formation.

Finally, the custom of *Sagalas* involves the scattering of flower petals and the performance of *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, which is derived from the scriptural verse in Luke 2.35. This practice suggests that the scriptural basis of *Salubong* is not centred on the encounter between Jesus and Mary, but rather on the Resurrection of Christ and an appreciation on the role of the Blessed Mother in the economy of redemption. It lies within the genius of local theologians and liturgists to establish the biblical foundation in renewing popular piety in accordance to the principle of biblical spirit. The author also establishes the biblical roots of the procession by giving evidence from biblical occurrences, such as the Crossing of the Red Sea and the Procession of Death at Golgotha. This contains a concise yet impactful depiction of biblical verse and stories that is easily memorized by the faithful.

The *Sabuaga* festival exemplifies the real integration of Catholic faith into indigenous customs. The incorporation of indigenous symbolism, music and dance displays profound reverence for heritage while preserving a distinct Catholic doctrine. It demonstrates a model that satisfies the four key principles of DPPL and also emphasizes its role in directing believers toward the appropriate practice of popular piety, resulting in a more profound sense of liturgical worship. It is an expression

of Christian faith in the culture, and Christians may explore its profound spiritual aspects in its expression as a "joyous encounter of the work of evangelization and culture" (Pope John Paul II 1979).

The liturgy serves as a formal and institutionalized framework for worship, but popular piety enriches the experience with fervent manifestations of faith that arise from the sincere devotion of faithful. The connection between popular piety and the liturgy can establish a dynamic and harmonious relationship that enhances the lived experiences of the People of God. The participation of the faithful in these forms of popular piety enriches their spirituality and finds its culmination in the liturgical celebration.

8 Conclusion

This study has examined the complex connection between popular piety and the liturgy, highlighting the significance of adapting these practices to the local culture to promote a more profound comprehension and active participation. It demonstrates that popular piety not only enhances the spiritual lives of Filipino Catholics but also acts as a crucial manifestation of their cultural identity and communal history. Through a careful examination of the reception of Vatican II's DPPL, it is clear that popular piety represents genuine worship and a direct encounter with the divine, effectively connecting personal experiences of faith with the communal aspect of the liturgical celebration.

Although popular piety has a significant role in the lives of the faithful, the possible risks of misinterpretations, syncretism and departures from orthodoxy provide barriers to the smooth integration of popular piety into the liturgical. Hence, any endeavour towards harmonization should exhibit reverence towards the authentic manifestations of popular piety while firmly rooted in the theological tenets of the Catholic Church. The results of this research affirm the idea that popular piety should not be seen only as a departure or hindrance to liturgical norms but rather as a productive means for evangelization and a catalyst for more profound involvement in the faith.

The renewed interest in popular piety necessitates thoughtful contemplation, assessment and rejuvenation in alignment with the directives established by the DPPL, guaranteeing that these practices consistently guide the faithful toward the core of Catholic worship – the commemoration of the Paschal mystery. The presence of popular piety in Filipino culture offers the Church a distinct chance to embrace diversity and foster unity in religion.

In the future, it is essential that pastoral initiatives give priority to theological education that clarify misunderstandings about popular piety and emphasizes their proper role within the liturgy. This study supports the idea that popular piety should be recognized as a legitimate form of worship. This would lead to a lively and inclusive Church that respects the cultural practices of its members while staying dedicated to the fundamental Catholic teachings.

About the Author

Kevin Maicom is a faculty member of De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines. Over the years he has nurtured the faith and understanding of students in different academic institutions. His passion for Christian Living Education extends beyond the classroom. He actively contributes to the field as a Developmental Editor and Content and Language Editor for Christian Living and Values Education Books at Rex Bookstore. This experience allows him to ensure the quality and accessibility of religious education materials. Driven by a deep curiosity in the intersection of faith and culture, his research interest lies in Liturgy, Inculturation, and Theological Anthropology. This focus on the lived experience of faith informs both his teaching and his editorial work. Contact: kevin.maicom@dlsu.edu.ph

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ARTICLE

An Assessment of Contemporary British New Monasticism Framed by the Missional Spirituality of the Celtic *Peregrini*

Peter Ruxton

Abstract

From the sixth century, Celtic *peregrini* (wandering scholars) emerged from Britain and Ireland to establish monastic centres for mission and evangelism. British New Monastic expression would no doubt benefit from increased adoption of their distinctive monastic practices.

These practices include the Celtic understanding of the sacramental universe – all creation steeped in the presence of God – all pointing towards the ultimate glory of his kingdom. In risky living they undertook both physical and inner spiritual journeys. They emerged from monastic schools and long periods of seasonal formation. They embraced rhythms of ebb and flow, searching for silence and solitude, to first breathe in the Holy Spirit, before enthusiastically embarking on evangelism. They drew boundaries – encircling the sacred core, whilst keeping out distractions. They developed frameworks of daily prayer and Scripture reading, based on the Psalmody, intentionally building scaffolding – *Rules of Life* and vows, constantly refocussing themselves on their ultimate goal of prayer without ceasing.

Keywords: Celtic, Spirituality, *Peregrini,* Monasticism, Mission

1 Introduction

Ray Simpson, in a short but significant book, defined five modern waves of New Monastic innovation and experiment: an initial wave in the 1930s and 1940s following the horror of the World Wars; a second wave, in response to "the moral permissiveness and material prosperity" of the swinging 1960s and 1970s; the third and fourth waves in the 1990s; and a fresh wave in the 2000s (Simpson 2009a: 11–40). Within these episodes, four New Monastic expressions were formed in Britain which claim at least partial missional roots in the spirituality of the Celtic saints and *peregrini,*

namely: the *Iona Community*, the *Community of Aidan and Hilda,* the *Northumbria Community* and the *24-7 Prayer* movement. Yet what was the spirituality of the original Celtic saints and *peregrini* and how authentic are these modern missional claims to be Celtic?

2 Spirituality of the Celtic *Peregrini*

The 1980–90s resurgence and euphoria around Celtic spirituality has led to a number of authors questioning the authenticity of Celtic Christianity (see Hughes 1981, Simms-Williams 1998). Yet this research and the work of others (see Bradley 2018) has identified a distinctive grouping of spiritual attributes which typify the early Celtic Christians. Their spirituality was essentially monastic, rooted in the experiments in solitude and silence of the Desert Fathers and Mothers. They focused on the contemplative – grounded in the Gospel of St John and the Beatitudes; they prioritised the "heart" over the intellect; to the Celt the universe was sacramental – creation infused with the presence of God; and they emphasized the faith of the individual rather than institutionalized corporate worship – all aspects which appear to be resonating with an increasing audience today. These changes of emphasis, although not defining a distinct religious grouping, were the product of two hundred years of geographic isolation on the fringe of the former Roman Empire.

As the Roman cohorts retreated from Britain and warring pagan tribes filled the vacuum in the early fifth century, some Latin scholars and teachers fled to northern fringes of the empire, taking with them precious manuscripts of St Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible (the *Vulgate*), John Cassian's *Conferences* and *Institutes,* Athanasius's *Life of St Antony* and Sulpicius Severus's *Life of St Martin of Tours*. These monastic teachings struck a chord with the rural Celtic societies with their *túaths* and clan-based structures, much more so than the town-focused, authoritarian diocesan "bishop-priest" system of the Roman Church (Finney 1996: 28). In geographic isolation from Rome between the early sixth and eighth centuries, large Celtic monastic schools developed, from which the Celtic *peregrini* emerged, leaving their homes and native lands, seeking their "places of resurrection", setting up new monastic centres in the heart of essentially pagan lands, from which to conduct mission and evangelism. Most prominent were St Columba, of Irish aristocracy, who founded a Celtic monastic centre on Iona in 563, and St Columbanus who undertook his *peregrinatio* journey across Europe from *c*.590, establishing Celtic monastic schools at Luxeuil in France, and later Bobbio in northern Italy. In Great Britain it was largely the monks of Iona – and from 635, those of St Aidan from Lindisfarne – who initiated the evangelism of most of northern and central Britain, even as St Augustine of the Roman Church arrived in Kent in 597 (Finney 1996: 21–33).

But what was the spirituality of the Celtic *peregrini,* and what can we learn from them about mission and evangelism for today? Before it's possible to address this question, it's important to acknowledge that the study of Celtic Christianity is problematic – there are a number of issues to consider. First, the spirituality of the Celtic Christians was diverse, linked to strong inspirational leaders, rather than a centralized co-ordinated tradition. Secondly, few original manuscripts have survived – not only was there a scarcity of original material, but many documents were destroyed during the Viking raids, and no doubt by the Roman Church following their "victory" at the Synod of Whitby in 664. Thirdly, many of the manuscripts written about the Celtic saints were in the form of *Vitae* or *Lives of the Saints* – a genre that was not necessarily historically accurate (Gougaud 1992: 52–6). This hagiographic literature was largely written in the high medieval period, between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, more than four to six hundred years after the individual saints lived (Sellner 2006: 23). Most of these documents were compiled by eager clerics with the agenda of promoting their chosen patron saints to give authority to their diocese, to justify prominence and to attract lucrative pilgrims. Fourthly, in a more recent phenomenon, the spirituality of the Celtic saints has often been romanticized and even high-jacked by contemporary agendas: those of the New Age movement, by elements promoting mindfulness and well-being, and the eco-bandwagon (Bradley 2018: 3–26).

In order to uncover authentic aspects of Celtic spirituality it is necessary to "look through" these distortions, by focusing on the original texts (see Bradley 2018: 25–39) and attempting to minimize the medieval hagiographic and later embellishments. Thus, this study has focused on three Celtic saints: St Columbanus for whom there are a number of documents written in his own hand, as well as a *Life* penned by the Bobbio monk Jonas, one or two years after his death (Munro 1993); St Columba whose poems and a *Rule* survived, but most of what we know about him comes from the *Life of St Columba* by Adomnán, the ninth abbot of Iona (Sharpe 1995), using material compiled shortly after Columba's death; St Aidan whose only source is the Venerable Bede in his classic *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, published in 731 (McClure and Collins 1994).

This study also seeks to see beyond the counter-cultural aspects of the Celtic Christianity itself: the over-emphasis on martyrdom, their sometimes harsh asceticism and their penchant for penance. Although these aspects undoubtedly helped shape Celtic spirituality, they were largely a product of their times.

The more helpful spiritual attributes of the Celtic *peregrini* fall into two broad groups: those which were more distinctively Celtic, and practices held in common with other monastic movements.

2.1 Spiritual Attributes of the Celtic *Peregrini*

2.1.1 Sacramental Universe and the Presence of God

Distinctive to the Celtic *peregrini* was an intense sense of God's omnipresence. For the Celts, humankind lives in a sacramental universe. According to Arthur Allchin, the Celts believed, "The world is the place of God's presence … without Him there is no world" (Allchin 1997: 11). The Celtic *peregrini* saw God as incarnate in the world: God ever-present amongst them: God sustaining and caring for his creation (Bradley 2018: 90–4). As Bishop Tírechán put it, in his *Collectanea,* in *c*.690:

> *God is above the heavens; and He is in the heavens; and He is beneath the heavens … He inspires all things, He gives life to all things, He stands above all things, and He stands beneath all things. (Bieler 1979: 122–67)*

The Celts saw creation as a sacrament, "a mechanism of imparting the divine grace of God" (O'Loughlin 2000: 46–7). The beauty and order of creation to the Celt was an invitation to "a pilgrimage of discovering the love that God has implanted in creation, and which beckons us beyond it", each flower and each creature being "the music of many tiny whispering instruments woven into the harmony of a divine orchestra", each element with its part to play, all treasured and all valued (O'Loughlin 2000: 152–3).

Although we are sometimes aware of the presence of God in our contemporary world, the main difference was the intensity of belief shown by the Celtic *peregrini*. Perhaps in recapturing some of this intensity today, a renewed sense of the presence of God will bring increased accountability towards our neighbour, and a greater sense of ownership of our fragile planet?

2.1.2 Risky Living – Peregrinatio

The Celtic *peregrini* took this invitation of pilgrimage to discover God's love, very seriously. More than pilgrimage, they left their homes, totally abandoning their kith and kin, with no intention of returning, seeking their "places of resurrection" – their eternal resting places (Lehane 2005: 111). Following God's call, they pushed off in their coracles into the unknown. On the eve of his epic – perhaps allegorical – voyage from Ireland into the Atlantic Ocean as a Celtic *peregrinus,* St Brendan the Navigator questioned:

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Shall I abandon, O King of Mysteries, the soft comforts of home?
Shall I turn my back on my native land, and my face towards the sea?
Shall I put myself wholly at the mercy of God, without silver, without a horse, without fame and honour?
Shall I throw myself wholly on the King of Kings, without sword and shield, without food and drink, without bed to lie on?
Shall I say farewell to my beautiful land, placing myself under Christ's yoke?
Shall I pour out my heart to Him, confessing my manifold sins and begging forgiveness, tears streaming down my cheeks?
Shall I leave the prints of my knees on the sandy beach, a record of my final prayer in my native land?
Shall I then suffer every kind of wound that the sea can inflict?
Shall I take my tiny coracle across the wide, sparkling ocean?
O King of the Glorious Heaven, shall I go of my own choice upon the sea?
O Christ, will you help me on the wild waves?
(Navigatio Sancti Brendani, trans. van de Weyer 1990: 57–8)

The Celts believed that this call to risky living entailed both a physical and an internal journey. The inner spiritual path also requiring us to leave the familiar and comfortable behind as they followed God's call:

The path I walk, Christ walks it. May the land in which I am be without sorrow. May the Trinity protect me wherever I stay, Father, Son and Holy Spirit ... May every path before me be smooth, man, woman and child welcome me. A truly good journey! Well does the fair Lord show us a course, a path. (Attributed to St Columba, translation in Davies and Bowie 1995: 37–8)

2.1.3 Seasonal Formation

One of the most remarkable features of Celtic Christianity, often understated, was the seismic cultural shift in the early sixth century, from the entirely oral Celtic tradition to a culture that embraced the written word and classical learning (Graham 2020: 15–29). Focusing on Ireland, "Not only was Latin brought to a land that had never been occupied by the Romans, but also Greek and Classic scholarship" (Meyer, 1913, p1). According to John Healy:

The monastic schools of Ireland had their roots in the life and works of John Cassian who set-up the first monastic schools in Europe [at Lérins and Marseille] between the years 415 and 420. (Healy 1912: 190)

Perhaps the most successful Celtic monastic school of the period was located at Clonard on the banks of the Boyne, on the busy boundary road between Leinster and Meath. It was here that St Finnian of Clonard, nicknamed the "tutor of the saints of Erin", trained the "twelve apostles of Ireland" including St Columba and St Brendan: "Before three thousand scholars he, their humble master, meekly stood; his mind a mighty stream that poured for all, its fertilising flood" (Healy 1912: 204). It was at these great monastic schools that the Celtic *peregrini* undertook their spiritual seasonal formation before dispersing on their missional journeys of evangelism (Hale 1976: 177).

2.1.4 Ebb and Flow

Following the example of Jesus (Mk. 1.12-13; Mk. 6.46), the Celtic *peregrini* retreated regularly during their ministry, mirroring the metronomic rhythm of the seasons, and the ebb and flow of the tides – to find silence and solitude – a quiet place to pray. As St Columba taught, they linked "sacrament with service, altar with hearth, and worship with work" (Simpson 2004: 82). St Columbanus frequently retired to a secluded cave in the densely forested Vosges Mountains (Munro 1993: 30; Lack 2000: 64–7). St Aidan, and later St Cuthbert, retreated to the remote Farne Islands, south of Lindisfarne (McClure and Collins 1994: 135), seeking solitude to be alone and refreshed by God, "before launching back to preach, or to organise". Escape for silence and solitude were regular parts of the Celtic *peregrini*'s spiritual diet, to enable them to repeatedly breathe in God's Holy Spirit of power through prayer and contemplation, before breathing out God's love in evangelism, hospitality and service (Freeman and Greig 2007: 97–8).

2.1.5 Boundaries – *Vallum*

Celtic monastic centres were traditionally surrounded by a ditch or *vallum*, designed practically, to keep wild animals out and domestic animals in, but spiritually, to delineate the boundaries of a sacred space (Dunn 2003: 177). The Columban tradition saw the *vallum* as enclosing "places of spiritual experience – glimpses of paradise on earth" (Walker 1957: 144–7). Places where the values of the Kingdom of Heaven were daily reinforced; places of sanctuary for those fleeing from violence and aggression; places of earthly community but with "radically other-worldly values" (Bradley 2000: 18–19). As Philip Sheldrake put it, the *vallum* surrounded the Celtic monastery where "the privileges of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, received from God but lost in the Fall, were reclaimed" (Sheldrake 1995: 39).

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2.2 Common Monastic Spiritual Practices

2.2.1 Frameworks – Daily Rhythms of Prayer and Scripture

To constantly remind themselves of their heavenly orientation and of the ways of God, maintaining a daily framework of regular prayer and Scriptural reading was vitally important (Stokes 2007 (1877): 123). A life of simplicity and self-control (McClure and Collins 1994: 116–18), with balance and rhythm in life and worship, were central – "leaving room for both awe and intimacy, silence and celebration, relevance and transcendence, order and spontaneity" (Bradley 2000: 152). Mirroring the Desert tradition before them, the majority of monastics, including the Celts, used Psalmody as the bedrock of their daily devotion (Bradley 2000: 138). Alongside daily worship, the Celtic *peregrini* learnt the Psalms as well as the Gospels by heart (McClure and Collins 1994: 117), with constant recital of the "three fifties" (Bradley 2021: 74), as they journeyed in their persistent endeavour to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5.17). Worship and prayer were balanced with the discipline of hard manual labour and sacred reading. Long before the printing press, the Celts developed *scriptoria*, becoming renowned for their knowledge of Latin and the creation of the great illuminated manuscripts such as the *Book of Kells* and priceless renditions of the Vulgate Bible (James 1996: 70; Herbert 1996).

2.2.2 Scaffolding – Shared Values, Vows and Rules of Life

The Celtic *peregrini* were bound by shared values, life-long vows and *Rules of Life* – important scaffolding of monastic cohesion and unity (Bradley 2000: 54). For the first ten to twenty years of their lives, the Celtic saints lived in static cenobitic settings, studying under obedience in a balanced rhythm of sustainable prayer, observing their *Rule* and obeying their abbot. But some, following their call to *peregrinatio*, ventured forth into the unknown, seeking to maintain this same rhythm and scaffolding of vow and *Rule*, as they sought to walk more deeply with God. Despite their journeying, they were continually drawn back to their interior space of prayer and sanctuary.

3 New Monastic Expressions

In Great Britain today, ordinary people are seeking more holistic expressions of culture and spirituality outside established Church structures, is well documented (Heelas and Woodhead 2005). The prevailing "Institutional Church" has largely been side-lined – viewed as "a bureaucratic, outdated culture" (Simpson 2004: 37–41). In the typical pithy summary of Dr George MacLeod, "the trouble with the Church these days is that no one any longer thinks it's worth persecuting" (Shanks 1999: 31). Yet interest in spirituality is on the increase, with contemporary spiritual searchers

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looking for anchors outside today's Church and moving towards new expressions of spirituality. The great Lutheran Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer predicted such interest in a letter to his brother Karl-Friedrich Bonhoeffer in 1935:

> *The restoration of the Church will surely come from a sort of new monasticism which has in common with the old only the uncompromising attitude of a life lived according to the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5–7) in the following of Christ. I believe it is now time to call people to this. (Kelly and Burton-Nelson 1995: 424)*

As Scottish, Celtic academic Ian Bradley comments:

> *How do we begin to keep in time with the deep pulsations of Eternity and establish "Colonies of Heaven" in a society that is profoundly earthborn, materialistic and secular? One way is by establishing communities which embrace many of the disciplines of monasticism…a spirituality found in the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon monasteries. (Bradley 2000: 44–5)*

A number of these new monastic-oriented experiments claiming to be Celtic have emerged, but how true are they to the spirituality of the early Celts?

3.1 The Iona Community

The small rocky island of Iona in the Scottish Hebrides – described by George MacLeod as a "thin place" – is the spiritual home of the Iona Community (Ferguson 1998). From the first Christian community established on Iona by the Irish *peregrinus* St Columba in 563, the island has been a spiritual magnet (Marshall 2014: 27). Yet according to Norman Shanks, the Iona Community was not explicitly initiated to reflect "the patterns and priorities of the Celtic Church" (Shanks 1999: 150). The Iona Cathedral Trust, set up by George Campbell, Eighth Duke of Argyll, in 1899, had a choice to make in 1935. Against a fully-funded offer to restore the Iona Abbey ruins and establish a Celtic College – from a group of Highland emigrants of the American Iona Society – the Trust chose the initially unfunded, local option proposed by Glasgow Church of Scotland Presbyterian Minister Dr George MacLeod (Marshall 2014: 135–43). MacLeod's vision was to restore the Abbey ruins as "a retreat centre for worship, meditation, study, and instruction", by conducting a social experiment of combining equal numbers of unemployed working-class tradesmen with young largely middle-class Church of Scotland ministers and ordinands (Marshall 2014: 140). MacLeod's proposal won the day because of his distinguished Scottish military and aristocratic lineage, and because the experiment was essentially a repeat of what MacLeod had already achieved a few years earlier in a similar social endeavour at Fingleton Mill, near Glasgow (Ferguson 1998: 50–2). Thus, the Iona Community,

founded by MacLeod, commenced rebuilding activities in 1938 and largely completed the Abbey restoration by 1967 (Shanks 1999: 44; Morton 1977; Muir 2011). MacLeod, an ex-World War I war-hero turned pacifist, ran an autocratic, quasi-military all male group on Iona, but had remarkable success in returning more experienced and empathetic Church of Scotland ministers to rejuvenate the slums of Glasgow and the Church in Scotland more broadly. With the Abbey restored and his elevation to the peerage in 1967, the Very Revd Lord MacLeod of Fuinary stepped down from his leadership role of the Community (Ferguson 1998: 100). Some saw MacLeod as a latter-day reincarnation of St Columba; each was am aristocratic individual with connections to royalty; each had commanding charisma and was hugely autocratic; both personalities combined stubborn pride with deep humility and an almost child-like simplicity and enthusiasm; and both were hugely successful in their undertakings (Bradley 2000: 45–6). Unlike the Celtic *peregrinus* in St Columba, MacLeod's motives were almost entirely aimed at social justice and the advancement of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland (Shanks 1999: 154–77). Some critics, perhaps rather unfairly, referred to MacLeod's achievement as "I own a community", instead of as founder of the Community (Ferguson 1998: 63).

Under the new leadership of Ian Reid, the Iona Community rapidly became ecumenical and more diverse (Marshall 2014: 162). The first female Community member, Dr Nancy Brash, was accepted in 1969, and the first Roman Catholic in 1976 (Ferguson 1998: 112, 117). With the Community's main centre in Glasgow and a further youth camp at Camas on the Isle of Mull, the key spiritual focus remains Iona Abbey, with a small transient core of devotees, committing to a true Celtic-style rhythm of daily scriptural reading and prayer (Shanks 1999: 66–70). As the Community expanded and the majority of adherents dispersed, the need for statements of common values and shared beliefs became acute (Galloway 2010: 19–21). Rather than follow the format of their Celtic forebears, a new five-principled Community Rule of Life was developed. To the vows of a regular practice of devotion and meetings, were added accountability for time and money, and later, social and political advocacy, environmental justice and peace (Galloway 2010: 18–19; Marshall 2014: 162–3).

The Community's focus on the incarnation and the presence of God in the world is captured in MacLeod's view of the birth of Jesus Christ as "an inherent explosion [of God] into matter, setting up a chain reaction of igniting love". The importance of the incarnation to the Community is reflected in the dramatic statue positioned at the centre of the Iona Abbey cloister, the *Descent of the Spirit* by Jacob Lipchitz, compatible with Celtic belief – Christ born with energy and mystery (Shanks 1999: 2–3).

Rather than fully embodying Celtic Christianity, the present-day Iona Community, with its distinctly inclusive and liberal theology (Bradley 2000: 51), is regarded more as a social justice movement, in keeping with its slogan: "spirituality is where prayer and politics meet" (Shanks 1999: 154; Ferguson 1998: 183). The typical Iona Community member has a strong sense of advocacy and justice, with "a placard in every corner" in readiness to join demonstrations for world peace, social justice, and to demand action on climate change (Shanks 1999: 156).

3.2 The Community of Aidan and Hilda

The Community of Aidan and Hilda began as an attempt at a holistic renewal of the religious life of the Church, combining God-given strands of Christianity to heal the land and renew the earth. As New Monastics they aimed "to stay close to the divine inner compass while navigating the flux of modern life" based on the monastic principles of simplicity, purity and obedience, elaborated in the Beatitudes (Mt. 5). The movement is charismatic, with its emphasis on spirituality and mission, focusing on how the characteristically Celtic themes of monastic discipline and Soul Friendship can be applied to enrich the life and mission of the contemporary Church (Bradley 2000: 51–2). The focus is ecumenical, and like the Celtic *peregrini*, they espouse a regular rhythm of prayer and study: a simple lifestyle, concern for creation-care, mission and justice, and seeking "to weave together the separate strands of Christianity to bring healing to fragmented people, communities and lands". The Community seeks to "research the first Celtic mission", combining the depth of the ancient monastic traditions of the Desert Fathers and Mothers and the Celts with today's culture (Simpson 2009a: 25). The aim is to restore the memory and experience of this past, with a view to resourcing its members and churches with new "Celtic" worship materials, and to conduct study programmes and retreats. The target of their worship is "to bridge the gap between formal church liturgies and creationist practices inspired by nature … to rediscover our Christian roots" in a worship-style that reflects the "rhythm of creation" and the "flow of human life" (Simpson 2004: 30–3). From its launch by six individuals, including Ray Simpson, Russ Parker and Michael Mitton in 1994, a small Community group has followed a regular rhythm of morning and evening prayer at retreat centres on Lindisfarne (Simpson 2014: 45-8). The Community's Rule – the "Way of Life" – contains "Three Life-giving Principles" and "Ten Elements of the Way" – the Waymarks – all broadly compatible with the spiritual principles of the Celtic *peregrini* (Simpson 2014: 19–27; Simpson 2009b). The ten Waymarks are based on the broad monastic principles of poverty, chastity and obedience, to which they add lifelong learning, particularly focused on the Celtic traditions; following a spiritual journey with a Soul Friend; a rhythm of prayer, work and rest; spiritual protection; simplicity of lifestyle; creation care; healing ministry; openness to God's spirit; unity and community; and mission (Bradley 2000: 51). The

importance of a Soul Friend to the Community has a strong biblical endorsement (Ecclesiasticus 6.14-17; Prov. 18.24), inherited from the Desert tradition (Ramfos 2000: 215–17), is a prominent Celtic theme (McClure and Collins 1994: 211; Duke 1932: 130) and is one of the more popular practices in the current revival of enthusiasm for Celtic Christianity (Bradley 2000: 108–10; Simpson 1999; Sellner 2002).

3.3 The Northumbria Community

The Northumbria Community's spirituality is predominantly contemplative, focusing on the inner life, silently listening for God's call to action – and is therefore the closest modern expression of authentic Celtic Christianity. The Community emerged from an exploration of a new inner monasticism of the heart, drawing on ancient monastic forms. Its roots lie in the history and heritage of Celtic Northumbria, the saints and scholars of Ireland and the wisdom tradition of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, all played out in the context of daily life. The Community does not call itself "Celtic", mainly because, in their view, the word "Celtic" has become "so misunderstood, misrepresented and misused by popularism", as Trevor Miller, a former leader of the Northumbria Community put it – the Community is not a "trendy fad", nor does it sign up to the "Disneyland Celtic spirituality" that "romanticises the Saints with ridiculous nostalgia" (Miller, n.d.). Following the Celtic *peregrini* as they wandered and wondered for the love of Christ, the Community originated with a call to "risky living" (Miller 2004: 15), a commitment "to be willing to walk in the paradox of life's uncertainties," not knowing where this journey may lead. The specific call was to live three questions: "How then shall we live?" (Ezek. 33.10b), "Who is it that we seek?" (Jn 18.7), and "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (Ps. 137.4; Miller 2003: 3–4). Praying through these three questions led to the development of the Northumbria Community's Rule of Life, focusing on *availability* and *vulnerability,* providing "an external spiritual scaffolding for an interior journey, both as 'sign posts' and as 'banister railings,' both marker and guideline on our way to God" (Miller 2004: 6–7). The Rule emphasizes being *available* to God, to each other and to mission, whilst remaining *vulnerable* to being taught; accountable; to asking the hard questions; making relationships the priority; and living in "a church without walls" (Lings 2006: 21). The concepts of *availability*, being available to follow God's call, and *vulnerability* to risky exposure, were very much components of the Celtic *peregrini's* call in their search for God. Following the natural rhythm of the ebb and flood tides on the island of Lindisfarne, the Community are happy both "when the tide is in and when the tide is out" (Miller, n.d.), either "at home in the cell" on the inner journey of seeking God in the heart, or "abroad in the coracle" in their availability to others by serving God through mission and evangelism. The Community is best known for its prayer book, now a double tome of daily devotion and worship liturgy, based mainly on the Celtic tradition (Northumbria Community 2015a&b).

3.4 24-7 Prayer and Boiler Rooms

Regarding the more recent "24-7 Prayer", "Boiler Room" and Order of the Mustard Seed movements, although claiming to be "inspired by the ancient Celtic Christian communities that combined prayer and mission" and in "looking to the Celtic Saints for ideas and a framework for doing mission and ministry in our time" (Freeman and Greig 2007: 16–18; Greig and Roberts 2015; Greig 2004; Anderson 2020), they are essentially monastic and not overtly Celtic. They certainly include the monastic principles of a framework of daily prayer and scriptural reading and have developed their own scaffolding of shared values and vows. They also embrace the ebb and flow of ministry, ensuring focused times of prayer interspersed with the upward and outward practices of creativity, hospitality, learning, mission and justice.

4 Conclusions

The enormous challenge for the dispersed expressions of the modern New Monastics is how to maintain and enhance spiritual discipline amongst the many distractions of today's world. Over history, most forms of monasticism have evolved from solitary eremitic and semi-eremitic forms, towards communities of enclosed cenobitic monks and nuns – for good reason. If the dispersed New Monastic experiments are to be sustainable, they would do well not only to embrace the more usual monastic practices, but also to adopt some of the distinctive spiritual tools of the Celtic *peregrini*.

Set against the defined spiritual attributes of the Celtic *peregrini*, the four most "Celtic-like" movements – the Iona Community, the Community of Aidan and Hilda, the Northumbria Community and 24-7 Prayer – show variable take-up. All four have sensibly minimized the "dated" attributes of Celtic spirituality (martyrdom, asceticism and penance) and emphasized the more positive aspects.

Although all four communities recognize the importance of the presence of God in their devotion and worship, it is the contemplative Northumbria Community which is more closely aligned to the Celtic monastic way. The concern for creation-care in both the Community of Aidan and Hilda and the Iona Community has its roots in the Celtic view of creation as a forebear of the glory of God to come. However, all New Monastic forms would benefit from the increased intensity of the Celtic expression, their emphasis on God's daily blessings in ordinary life, as well as their strong belief in the sacramental universe. The recognition of God within all aspects of creation today will no doubt bring much needed enhanced accountability for the global environment.

The risky living of the Celtic *peregrini* is best captured by the Northumbria Community's Rule of Availability and Vulnerability, implying a readiness to spring forth into travel and action in response to God's call. The move to mission and lifelong adventure and discovery in God has been adopted by the Iona Community, as evidenced by their commitment to go overseas to address the poverty gap in the developing world; for example, the inequality of wealth and lifestyle between Africa and the West, with their concern and mission in Malawi (then Nyasaland) in the 1950s and 1960s (Ferguson 1998: 83–6). As followers of the Son of Man we, like the Celtic saints, should hold a strengthening compassion for our neighbour, as we journey as "strangers" through this world (Lk. 9.58).

The seasonal formation of regular, extended periods of spiritual formation and learning are implied by most New Monastic forms, often expressed in the need for continual lifelong learning and openness to listen for God's call.

The need for ebb and flow, balancing silence and solitude with activity, is promoted particularly by the Northumbria Community and the 24-7 Prayer movement. Yet, finding time for silence and solitude is becoming increasingly difficult in our impatient, digital world. We should follow the example of Jesus in His constant search for quiet places to be with his Father (Mt. 6.6), to recharge our spiritual batteries. The tendency in New Monasticism towards minimizing boundaries provides a challenge for maintaining regular spiritual discipline in an increasingly contrarian world.

Following more general monastic practices, the importance of regular, personal and corporate frameworks of daily prayer and scriptural reading are enthusiastically emphasized by all, with most publishing extensive liturgies both in the use of words and (particularly from the Iona Community) in song, poetry and creativity.

Although the scaffolding of shared beliefs, vows and Rules of Life are still considered important today, for the dispersed New Monastic expressions, the trend is towards loosening these formalities, with less demanding Rules and a drift away from lifelong commitments, towards annual reassurances and accountability. And yet, God sees our motives and blesses our intentions, suggesting that deep inner commitment is necessary. The importance of Soul Friendship – the Celtic practice of *Aram Cara* (O'Donohue 1997: 35) – as emphasized by the Community of Aidan and Hilda, is closely aligned with the increasing popular practice of Spiritual Direction, or Spiritual Accompaniment – another effective way of encouraging spiritual discipline.

For the contemporary expressions of New Monasticism to regain the genuine intensity of the Celtic saints and *peregrini*, perhaps increased focus is needed on the original spiritual attributes of our forebears, the Celtic Christians.

About the Author

The author presents these findings from a dissertation submitted to complete an MA in *Christian Spirituality* at Sarum College, Salisbury – accredited by the University of Winchester. The thesis was entitled: "Critically Assess the Impact of the Spirituality of the Celtic *Peregrini* on Expressions of Contemporary Christian Practice" and was submitted in December 2022, by Peter Ruxton. Contact: peter.ruxton@gmail.com

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ARTICLE

Healing the Wounded to Lead in the Postcolonial Church

Pieter H. J. Labuschagne

Abstract

Amidst continuous calls for decolonization and Africanization in theological reflection on the African continent, this paper looks at the effects of colonialism, its power and the inequalities and vulnerabilities it created, and how, long after the demise of the structures of colonialism, the coloniality[1] of the heart and mind still lingers. As a white South African, of French Huguenot descent, I come from the minority group which dominated non-white citizens during apartheid. I still benefit from this past privilege but the opposite is true for those who suffered under apartheid, who lives with a legacy of inferiority. For decolonialization to succeed, the historically wounded should be supported to find their true identity. This article makes use of Exegesis by Story as methodology to describe the journey of the Old Testament judge Gideon, as an example of healing and restoration of the hearts and minds of the oppressed. The research furnishes the church with transformational principles that can be used to come alongside the oppressed, and to facilitating the healing of the wounded to become leaders.

Keywords: Church as agent of change, Coloniality, Wounded, Healers, Leaders, Restoration, Transformation

1 Colonialism is a political system where one nation forcefully rules over another. Coloniality is the inclination of the heart and mind, where colonial sentiments live on – even when the system is abolished. The term coloniality is therefore used in this paper to refer to an inclination of the heart and mind, manifesting as attitudes, ways of knowing, and patterns of living that exist because of colonialism, which is in turn an external system that is forcefully imposed on people by others. Seroto (2018: 3) defines coloniality as a result of how colonizers "undervalued and dehumanised the imagination and mind of indigenous people". "Coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained in books, in the criteria of academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day" (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 243).

1 Introduction

Colonialism dominated large parts of the African continent and its people, with the Western way of life being forced down on different African nations. Eventually this political stranglehold of colonialism started to crumble. In South Africa, the first democratic elections were held in 1994, shortly after the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990. This was a watershed moment for South African politics, leaving behind Apartheid and ushering in freedom and democracy. However, the dreams that people had of this new era started to wane and three decades later the call continues for decolonization and Africanization, and to break the stranglehold that the historically privileged still have on the economy. Though colonialism is dead, the lingering coloniality of people's hearts and minds continue. This article calls on the church to intentionally implement godly principles that will heal hurting people and build their self-worth in a wounded world.

In the 2024 national elections in South Africa the African National Congress (ANC) lost their majority rule for the first time in three decades, securing 40.18% of the votes. This comes after a decade of political turmoil, state capture, and corruption. A Government of National Unity (GNU) is now in place consisting of the ANC, their main opposition the Democratic Alliance, and eight other, smaller parties. Though it falls outside the scope of this article, an interesting topic for future research would be how the local political shift in power will affect the coloniality of people's hearts and minds.

2 Materials and Methods

This article makes use of Baird's "Exegesis by Story" as research methodology. It is an integrated, wholistic approach, which includes all three traditional foci of interpretation: the author, the text, and the reader. The method starts with the text, as the primary focus, and then reconstructs and examines the life-story behind the text. Note that the reader's imaging of this world of Scripture is not the work of imagination – the dangers of that kind of exegesis are obvious and well documented. Imaging the world of Scripture requires discipline: a thorough historical-grammatical analysis of the text must be conducted, with the text itself as the anchor point for imaging and understanding. However, exegesis must go one step further and reconstruct the life-story from the surface structure of the text. This back-story is the foreground, the focus of the search for meaning. How did the author and community struggle with circumstances or issues as revealed by the passage, and what was going on when the text was read for the first time by the original audience?

The key to understanding is to live in the story. Imaging the world of the ancient community of faith allows the reader to interact with the author and their context in such a way that it becomes possible to live in it today. This method corresponds with the early church's own exegetical method, which takes seriously the context of author, recipients, text, and readers. Baird's approach should not be confused with narrative theology, which can descend into theological relativism and a denial of objective truth. He simply calls for a deeper understanding of the text; to move beyond the surface structure to the deep structure of the text; to understand the text better. Getting a glimpse of the people behind the text and the challenges that they faced makes the text more personal and easier to connect to modern readers and the challenges that they face.

The world of Scripture is like a city in which not only the ancient community dwelt but in which the community of faith continues to live today. This approach provides a holistic context for exegesis – understanding the process that lies behind the authors' words. This leads to a measure of synchroneity with the author, the recipients, and the text. The more that modern readers become immersed in the story, the better their understanding of the text. The exegeted text and the constructed back-story show how the ancient audience applied the text, or were expected to apply it.

Exegesis by Story makes application part of the process of exegesis as the modern reader understands and experiences the text, dwelling in their world provided by the ancient community of faith with the proper perspective to receive and to use the text. For the community of faith today, to dwell in the world of Scripture and read the text in that context provides several advantages. The first advantage of Exegesis by Story is the holistic context of understanding that it provides: it helps us to understand what lies behind the authors' statements. The second advantage is contemporaneity, to read and understand the text in the spirit of the times, leading to a significant measure of synchroneity with the author, recipients and text. The third advantage is that the exegeted text and the reconstructed life-story show how the ancient audience applied the text, or was expected to apply it, and therefore what effect the message was expected to have on its readers.

3 The Effect of Oppression

This article looks at Gideon, the Old Testament Judge, as a type of the oppressed, and how his circumstances and bad experiences with Israel's oppressors shaped his way of thinking and acting. Gideon's story helps us to consider the effect of the coloniality of one's heart and mind on our capacity and self-belief. Before we turn to Gideon, let us sketch the historical back-story in broad strokes.

Israel entered Canaan under Joshua's leadership after being set free from Egypt and wandering in the desert for 40 years. Joshua's death led to a leadership void and everyone did what was right in their own eyes (Judg. 17.6, 21.25).[2] This was a repetitive cycle. The Israelites sinned against the Lord and turned away from the Lord; the Lord's anger burnt against them and they fell into the hands of their enemies; they called on the Lord and the Lord raised up a Judge to deliver them; this led to a period or peace; until the people became disobedient again. The cycle repeated.

Hence, the Lord appointed and equipped Judges to rescue the Israelites from their enemies. These Judges resonate with folk tales about national heroes that we heard as children. Some desperate situation presented itself and then, as if from nowhere, someone stepped up and saved the day. I always enjoyed these stories because it is part of a boy's DNA to seek adventure and be the hero. Many of the heroes were young people and children, which had an even greater impact on me. The images that I conjured up of these heroes became part of my frame of reference. It formed part of my white, Western perspective on leadership. I assumed that all heroes were powerful and capable.

However, God has a different view of people. The Lord does not measure people by the same standards as we do. In fact, the Bible is saturated with examples of leaders whom God selected, whose selection ran contrary to these "powerful-hero-of-God" expectations. Moses protested when God called him to lead his people from Egypt because he did not consider himself qualified (Exod. 3–4). Nehemiah claimed that he was too young and could not speak (Neh. 1.6). David was not even considered by his father as a candidate to become king – calling him to appear before the prophet as an afterthought. When Jesse's sons were presented to Samuel, he marvelled at their physique. Yet, God did not select any of them, but elected the teenage-shepherd as the next king (1 Sam. 16.11-12). Solomon saw himself as a little child who was incapable of ruling God's people (1 Kgs 3.6-9). Jesus' disciples were ordinary men and women, who did not have the same credentials as the Jewish leaders, and had no special training in the Scriptures (Acts 4.13). It is clear that the Lord does not make selections in the same way that humans do. God does not consider outward appearance but looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16.7).

The same is true of Gideon's call. His selection to serve as Judge seems odd, not just to us but even to himself. The fact that he turned out to be a prominent Judge is not evident in the account of his call. When we encounter him for the first time, he was

2 All Scripture references are from the New Living Translation (NLT).

weak and fearful. In Judges 6, we read that the Midianites had been ruling over Israel for seven years. They were cruel and the Israelites had to hide from them in mountain caves. Neither crops nor animals were safe from their plundering. The people cried out to God for help and the angel that was sent to Gideon found him threshing wheat in a winepress, out of sight of the enemy. The following table summarizes the conversations that ensued between God, the angel and Gideon. Pay close attention to the words of each character.

Character	Gideon's call to be a Judge	God's enabling	Reference
Angel	Mighty hero	The Lord is with you	Judg. 6.12
Gideon		If the Lord is with us, why has all of this happened to us? Where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? The Lord has abandoned us and handed us over to the Midianites.	Judg. 6.13
The Lord	Go with the strength you have, and rescue Israel from the Midianites	I am sending you!	Judg. 6.14
Gideon	How can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family!		Judg. 6.15
The Lord	You will destroy the Midianites as if you were fighting against one man.	I will be with you.	Judg. 6.16

In the table several themes stand out. First, Gideon is addressed as "mighty hero" and is instructed to go in the strength that he has, and to rescue Israel from their enemies. God adds that Gideon will destroy the Midianites and that it would be as easy as fighting against one man. In addition to this, the Lord is sending Gideon on this mission. Twice it is stated that the Lord is with Gideon. As with the biblical leaders mentioned already, God is not looking at the immediate circumstances. God is looking to the future role that Gideon will play.

Second, Gideon's response is quite negative. He does not see himself as a hero or believe that he can rescue his people. He points out that his clan is the weakest in his whole tribe, and that he is the least in his family. He doubts the Lord's presence; and

asks how all these bad things could have happened to them if the Lord was indeed present with them. Gideon did not see any of the miracles that the ancestors talked about. In fact, he believes that it is the Lord who handed them over to the Midianites. Gideon is blinded by despair. All he can see is how dire his circumstances are. The surrounding enemy and the fear that they instilled made their home in Gideon's heart and mind.

Third, in modern terms, we could say that the Israelites were the colonial subjects of Midian. They were demoralized, stripped of all dignity and their land was plundered. People hid in caves and Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress; he was hiding so that his enemies would not confiscate his grain. For seven years they had been subjects of another nation and had been struggling for survival. These circumstances led to tunnel-vision, where survival and the *here-and-now* was all that mattered. The miracles of the past sounded like fables. The protection and presence of God seemed like lies. If the Lord was with them, then why were they in this unbearable position? Gideon heard the angel and the Lord speak but he did not believe their words. In fact, because of Gideon's insecurity and vulnerability it was impossible for him to believe their words. It was not only the Midianite oppression that kept Gideon captive but also the coloniality of his heart and mind. Paying attention to this deep story that lies behind the words of the text, aids modern readers to place themselves in Gideon's shoes. By pausing to ask how such circumstances would have affected us helps to live in Gideons story and to understand his hesitance and resistance to God's call.

4 Decolonialization and Decoloniality

What we observe in Gideon's life is also true today. Though colonialism, as a political system, ended in most countries, the coloniality of people's hearts and minds still control them. On 14 July 1957 Dr Martin Luther King Jr delivered a sermon entitled *Overcoming an Inferiority Complex.* He pointed out that "segregation generates a feeling of inferiority, that it gives the individuals under the system an inferiority complex … it's so easy for us to feel that we don't count, that we are not significant, that we are less than. We stand every day before a system which says that to us" (see also Fanon 2021). On South African shores, Steve Biko (1987: 55) challenged blacks to see themselves as more than "appendages to white society". Colonization was not only established by physical force and violence but also by colonizing people's hearts and minds (Ngũgĩ wa Thiongʾo 1981; Mamdani 1996: 16–18), culture, language and education (Androas 2012: 5; Dladla 2011: 3; Ngũgĩ wa Thiongʾo 1981; Mbembe 2016: 36; Nkoane 2006: 62–3).

Ngũgĩ wa Thiongʾo (1981: 11–12) shares his experience as a child in a colonial school, where English was the language of the colony, and pupils were not allowed to speak Gīkūyū near the school. The punishment for speaking Gīkūyū was corporal punishment, a monetary fine, or wearing a metal plate around your neck with inscriptions like I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY. The opposite was true when one did well in English. You were rewarded with prizes, prestige and applause.

With the above in mind, it is not enough to put an end to oppressive political structures, to hand over control to the oppressed, and to expect them to be able to manage things in the new *status quo*. One also has to deal with the inward coloniality of the heart and mind, the lingering belief by people that they are inferior and not significant and the impression that they are incapable of success. It is here where the church should play an intentional role to heal the wounded to become leaders. It can only happen when people's hearts are set free from the imprisonment of the past (Cross & Naidoo 2012: 228). Jansen (2009: 5) rightfully refers to this as "bitter knowledge … how people remember and enact the past". It is imperative that the church should minister to hearts and minds that were affected by social evils.

5 Empowerment

Gideon challenged the Lord, if it was truly the Lord speaking, to prove it. When Gideon returned with food that he prepared, the angel touched the food and it was consumed in fire and the angel disappeared. Realizing that it was indeed an angel of the Lord, Gideon cried out that he was doomed, because he had seen the Lord's messenger face-to-face. When the Lord assured him that he would not die, Gideon built an altar for the Lord (Judg. 6.17-23).

This was the first turning point in his life and resulted in him destroying the Baal altar and Asherah pole, as instructed by the Lord. Gideon, the oppressed, initially rejected the claim that the Lord was with him, was empowering him, and wanted to use him (Judg. 6.12, 14, 16). Yet, a personal encounter with the Lord led to bold obedience and performing a dangerous and confrontational act of bravery (Judg. 6.27). What made the difference? Dr King (1957) answered this question in the sermon referred to earlier. "You should go out with the assurance that you belong and that you count and that you are somebody because God loves you." This is the same truth that transformed Gideon from doubting the Lord's favour, blessing and power, and how he, Gideon, the least in his family, and from the smallest clan in his tribe, rescued Israel (Judg. 6.13, 15).

Eventually, Gideon went to war with 300 men against the 135,000-strong coalition forces of the enemy. Not only did he and his men challenge them but pursued the survivors and captured them (Judg. 7–8). What a transformation! What made the difference? What should we see in the unwritten story behind the text? What made the difference was Gideon's newfound identity in, and his dependence on, the Lord. When he prepared for war, filled with the Holy Spirit, he consulted the Lord to make sure that he acted in accordance to the Lord's will. The Lord was with Gideon and encouraged him by agreeing to give him the well-known sign of the fleece on the threshing floor (Judg. 6.36-40).

The Lord transformed a man with no self-belief into a bold leader, and a people with no hope into a willing army that marched towards the enemies. The circumstances were still the same. The enemy was still there, but God was changing Gideon's heart and mind. The deep story behind the text is one of despair that is slowly turning into hope and trust. Gradually Gideon started to realize that his real prison was not built by the Midianites but by his own mind and heart.

6 Developing Confidence

In reply to Gideon's request for a sign, he is assured that the Lord would rescue the Israelites and give them victory over their enemy (Judg. 7.7, 9). As an added confirmation, the Lord encouraged Gideon to go down into the enemy's camp during the night. There, Gideon heard a man talk about a dream that he had about Gideon defeating them in battle. Encouraged, he returned and marshalled his troops and the Lord caused confusion in the enemy's camp so that they started to kill one another. Apart from the 120,000 that died in the chaos of that night, another 15,000 fled, were pursued, and captured by Gideon and his men (Judg. 8.10-12).

The Lord's enabling and empowering helped Gideon to escape his own inferiority complex and to discover the capacity that God had given him. Prolonged indoctrination and domination by those in power debilitates people. According to Biko (1987: 86, 152–3, 166), fear led to a paralysis of the African spirit. From a position of white privilege, I was brought up with the belief that the sky is the limit. I can do anything that I set my mind to and this was mostly true because I had access to education, resources, experiences of success, and a life-long validation of my abilities.

For those who suffered under apartheid, the opposite was true. When you are forcefully removed from your home and relocated to live in segregation under horrific conditions, it is hard to have self-belief. When you are subjected to inferior education, healthcare, career opportunities, citizen's rights, and you are told that you are

nothing more than an animal, you start to believe it. It becomes impossible to stand up and take your rightful place in society (Mashau 2018: 1, Naidoo 2019: 171). Apartheid was driven and characterized by fear and Africans had every reason to fear the security forces, which detained and intimidated them (Du Toit 2008: 36).

When change took place in South Africa with the first democratic elections in 1994, many from the white community willingly ceded power to the very people that they previously oppressed. However, the message that accompanied their surrender of power was clear: we hand the country over to you – now govern and make a success of it. Almost three decades later, whites and blacks are equally disillusioned by many failures. “In the emerging ‘rainbow nation’, the need to embrace another view of nature has been disorienting for many” (Johnson 2008: 624).

The white community blames blacks for not trying hard enough, while the blacks blame apartheid. For both sides their argument makes logical sense.

Whites blame blacks for a lack of drive and zeal. They say blacks must “man-up”, stop blaming apartheid, and do something about their situation. From a white vantage point, this is the way one gets things done. Yet, not having experienced oppression themselves, but rather benefitting from white privilege, whites are incapable of imagining how debilitating and destructive a life of oppression can be. They continue to “think white … believing that whiteness ought to be the norm” (Green, Sonn & Matsebula 2007: 398). It is imperative that the church takes up the challenge to help people to address their whiteness and its power. Mashau (2018: 5) rightly states that “whiteness needs to work through its Christian heritage that is associated with imperialism, conquest and colonialism that fed racism”.

There is also logic in black people blaming apartheid. The system of apartheid dehumanized and indoctrinated people to believe that they were inferior and incapable; something that has a stronghold on people’s minds and hearts. When you are thrown into the deep end and have never been taught to swim, are your oppressors not to blame when you sink and drown? Mason says “we harbour inside ourselves the pain and the memories, the fears and the confusions, the negative self-images and the low expectations, turning them into weapons with which to re-injure ourselves, every day of our lives” (1990: 69). “The psychological effects which were caused by the Apartheid system had a terrible impact upon black people. They resulted in black people doubting their humanness and doubting whether the God that was presented to them by missionaries and ministers of religion was their God” (Lephakga 2012: 70).

The polarity of referring to “us” and “them” when we talk about other people does not support the move towards a more inclusive society. Elsewhere I have written:

> *The schism between Africa and the West feeds on the reciprocal prejudice, propaganda and historical injustices, which is not a fertile ground for dialogue and collaboration … Imperialists want to maintain the status quo – what can be more right than your own epistemology? That is also why the oppressed resist colonialism – what can be more wrong than another’s epistemology being forced upon you? (Labuschagne 2022: 248–9)*

Gideon’s story ends with approximately 40 years of peace (Judg. 8.28). His journey has come full-circle, from seeing himself as worthless when the Lord called him, to leading his people to victory over the enemy, and experiencing a time of peace. This means change is possible. The Lord, and the church as God’s agents, can make a difference in people’s self-belief and help them to see themselves for whom they really are. Victims of social abuse can become restorers of social justice and the wounded can become the healer. Joel 3.10 looked forward to the day of the Lord, where even the weakling would become a warrior. Gideon, the hero of our story, was a mighty hero all along. He just had to discover it and believe it for himself. The angel of the Lord called him a hero when they met, because the Lord sees beyond our limitations. God sees our potential and we should do the same.

At the beginning of this article I pointed out my disillusionment at God’s selection of “unqualified” biblical leaders and how they even doubted themselves. Yet, when we follow their stories, they all succeeded in their leadership roles, all the way from Moses, Nehemiah, David, Solomon, to Jesus’ disciples. It is valuable, therefore, to ask what the church should learn from the example of Gideon, and how the church could make a meaningful contribution in helping people to find their true identity in Christ.

7 Results: From Victim to Victor

Several principles from Gideon’s life should be consideration by the church, in healing victims of colonial oppression.

The deep story behind the text is that Gideon and his fellow Jews suffered under the Midianites, who were so cruel that the people had to hide in caves. The enemy constantly attacked them and stayed in the land until all the crops were destroyed and no animals were left. The enemy was so overpowering that they were like waves of locusts, too many to count. Nobody can deny the devastation of the situation, given the Israelites were starving (Judg. 6.2-6). Normalcy did not exist. People were scattered and hiding in mountain crevices. All economic activities ceased. Families

were separated, life-savings destroyed, properties demolished, cultural habits and practices violated.

Gideon and his people were hopeless and lacked confidence. In Judg. 6.13 Gideon conversed with the angel and asked why the Israelites were suffering if the Lord was with them. Gideon heard about the miracles of the past, but in his dire circumstances it was hard to believe any of that. Yes, the Lord might have brought them out of Egypt but now God had abandoned them and handed them over to the Midianites. In Judg. 6.15 Gideon expanded on his lament by stating that he was a nobody, from the weakest clan in the tribe of Manasseh, and that he was the least in his family. Was this true? Or was it the kind of exaggeration that often accompanies depression and despair?

The angel and the Lord did not rebuke Gideon for his outbursts. They allowed him to speak and even to challenge the Lord's goodness and faithfulness to Israel. Yet, despite this outburst, the Lord did not compromise on the mission. Gideon was chosen to set the people free from their enemies. Nowhere in the account of Gideon did the Lord ever verbally challenge Gideon's outburst. God simply encouraged him through a series of signs and faith experiences.

These are important principles to consider. Gideon was blinded by his circumstances but the Lord saw future peace for Israel. God announced a plan and took Gideon along on the journey. From being nobody (in his own eyes) Gideon soon became *Jerub-Baal*, which means "Let Baal defend himself" (NLT). The scared fugitive that we met a few verses earlier, now became a Baal-slayer (Judg. 6.27-32). Subsequently, when Israel's enemies assembled and camped in the valley of Jezreel, a new Gideon emerged. Where he was hiding in a winepress 30 verses earlier, he now acted bravely, "the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon with power. He blew a ram's horn as a call to arms" (Judg. 6.34). Gideon's previous, cynical attitude made way for a bold display of power. The Lord did not persuade Gideon with words, but allowed him to experience the Lord and to see the Lord at work with his own eyes. That made all the difference.

The Church must learn from Gideon's encounter with the Lord that our efforts to bring restoration and healing must not be limited to talking and writing about it. We need to remember that "the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God's power" (1 Cor. 4.20). The church should contribute what the world does not have, empowered by the enabling of the Lord. The Church consists of those called by God into God's Kingdom. The Church is where people are healed and grow and minister as part for the body of Christ. In Rom. 12.2 Paul urges us not to "copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by

changing the way you think". Talking is not enough – the church should bring lasting change and reconciliation through lived experiences with God. The backstory must change. People must experience God's ways. This has five concluding implications.

First, we met Gideon threshing wheat in a winepress – far from the prying eyes of his enemy. He was negative and scoffed at God's call to rescue his people. His circumstances and his oppressors did not allow any space for a positive self-image. They wanted the Israelites to know who was in charge, and robbed them of their identity, self-belief and courage. The threat of the enemy was as much an external reality as it was an internal one. The Israelites were not only hiding from their enemies; they forgot who they were. Shifting our focus to the oppression by the West, Ngũgĩ points out that language has a dual character – it is a means of communication and a carrier of culture (1981: 13). Forcing Africans to speak English, separated them from themselves, their words and their world. Ngũgĩ adds that language "is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history" (15). Language carries culture and is therefore inseparable from people and the community they belong to (16). By forcing them to use the colonial language learning, "for a colonial child, became a cerebral activity and not an emotionally felt experience" (17). In embracing his own culture, Ngũgĩ eventually abandoned English, and only wrote in Gīkūyū. It is important for the church to contribute to the change that is needed in the world. Social injustice is something that should be dealt with in the church, especially in churches were the previous colonial influences are evident in the liturgy, polity, and language. Space should be created for church members to feel safe enough to exit the winepress, like Gideon, and to experience faith in ways that resonate with their own culture and background. It took Gideon a long time to get from the winepress to the battlefield but the rewriting of his narrative by the Lord and the angel messenger is what led Gideon on his way.

Second, neither the angel nor the Lord rebuked Gideon for his attitude; they simply continued to share their plan with Gideon. The Lord knew that Gideon needed time and encouragement to believe about himself what the Lord already knew. Sometimes Gideon asked for a sign, and sometimes God took the initiative in providing a sign. Initially Gideon had a negative attitude and he did not have any self-belief, as a consequence of his circumstances. The Lord, however, had a plan and saw in Gideon a person who could fulfil that plan. To succeed, Gideon had to get up, stand firm, and live up to what God was asking from him. The church should help believers to associate with such truths, because God is always at work in transforming people into God's likeness and into useful vessels. Instead of talking to people about their desperate context, or judging them for the debilitating effect it has on them, the church should model faith, speak the truth, and encourage belief. Fixing people's eyes on the Lord and on his purposes, sets people free from the prison of their past.

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Third, what the Lord said about the biblical leaders mentioned in this paper was the opposite of what they believed about themselves. Yet, this is what made them dependent on the Lord. These leaders could not succeed without God. The church should help people to look beyond their lack of faith or belief in what we can do for God. Further, the church should help people to experience God's call and to be challenged like never before. Those who are reduced to the lower rungs of society, those who have no self-belief, those who are oppressed and mistreated can be healed and become successful leaders.

Fourth, Gideon, the one hiding in a winepress, became Gideon, the leader of an army. From hiding, to calling people publicly to war, was a complete transformation. Note what this transformation in Gideon's life accomplished. It gave courage to his people and they came out of hiding to follow him. The Lord is Lord of the underdog. The Lord uses those we do not consider worthy so that God's power can shine through and that all can see what God is capable of.

Fifth, Gideon saw no way out of his situation. He had not seen the great exploits of the Lord that his ancestors referred to. He believed that they were in this difficult situation because of God and he did not see how a nobody, like himself, could be of any use to his people. He had obstacles that kept him from obedience. These included the fact the enemy was strong and outnumbered them, he was from a small clan, had no physical strength and his own father was worshipping Baal. While these physical barriers incapacitated Gideon, what was rooted much deeper in his heart and mind, was his own coloniality, the belief that he was useless. It was only when the Lord started to rewrite his narrative, that Gideon gained confidence and obeyed the call of God. If God had not reached out to Gideon, he would have remained in the winepress, imprisoned by his own heart and mind. The church should stand against the physical and psychological barriers which remain after decades of colonial oppression. It the church does not reach out to those incapacitated by their own coloniality, and paint a godly picture of life for them, they will remain imprisoned. The church should echo the Lord's words to Gideon: "Mighty hero, the Lord is with you!" (Judg. 6.12).

About the Author

Pieter H. J. Labuschagne serves as the Head of Course Development at the South African Theological Seminary and is the pastor of Northway Baptist Church in Pretoria, South Africa. With over 20 years of experience as a missionary, his research interests encompass missiology, contextual studies, hermeneutics, and ecclesiology.
Contact: Pieter@sats.ac.za

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BOOK REVIEW

Antonio-del Castillo, Fides, and Raymund B. Habaradas. 2024. *Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Philippines: Histories and Stories of a Pilgrim Church*

Manila: Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines
ISBN: 978-971-8915-71-4

Reviewed by Lemuel A. Asuncion

This is the first locally published compendium of historical narratives of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) at a national scale and is a fruit of the 2021 Local History Writing Workshop for Lay Volunteers in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao to Prepare Diocesan Accounts for BECs. It is the outcome of several years of collaborative research undertaken by De La Salle University (DLSU) and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) Committee on Basic Ecclesial Communities, through the support of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and the Lumina Foundation for Integral and Human Development. This landmark work compiles stories of the beginnings and ongoing journeys of 32 dioceses across the archipelago as told by local BEC leaders and representatives in English and different Philippine languages (Cebuano, Ilocano and Tagalog). It is significant not only as the first publication of its kind after 50 years of BEC existence in the Philippines, but also for engendering a culture of scholarship in this particular ecclesiology which is very much needed at present.

Aimed at "provid[ing] the communities with a better understanding of the unique experiences of BECs", the book begins with an introductory chapter by Monsignor Manuel G. Gabriel, the Executive Secretary of the CBP Commission on Basic Ecclesial Communities. To set the tone of the entire book, he recognizes the local BEC leaders as "Storytellers" and points out how each narrative "unveils the message of the *Kerygma*". He then proceeds to give an extensive history of BEC from the biblical period until the Fourth CBCP-BEC National Pastoral Assembly in 2019, the same year when five decades of BEC presence in the Philippines were celebrated. The subsections that follow highlight the challenges that BEC faced, a listing of the theological

reflections, write-ups, research, studies, and theological inputs by prominent clergy and lay scholars, and the four thrusts of the ecclesial communities toward the future.

Following the introduction is a summary at national level provided by Jonathan James O. Cañete. This section reiterates what Fr Amado Picardal identified as the origins of BEC, placing emphasis on how it started at the grassroots as a response to the call of the Second Vatican Council for the renewal of the Church rather than developing from liberation theology itself. It also lays, as a foundation for the succeeding sections, the Seven Pillars of BEC Culture (Awareness as Renewed Christians, Communion or *Koinonia*, Word of God or *Kerygma* and Catechesis, Prayer and the Eucharist or *Leitourgia*, Social Action or *Diakonia*, Option for the Poor, and Participative Membership and Servant Leadership) as a guiding framework for assessing the implementation of these ecclesial communities. The section further introduces the regional summaries wherein readers will be able to grasp the identities of the BECs in the local language; *Munting Sambayanang Kristiyano (*MSK*)* for Luzon, *Gagmayang Kristohanong Katilingban (*GKK*)* for Visayas, and *Kristohanong Kasilingan* (KRISKA) for Mindanao.

The book is then divided into three sections representing Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, the main island groups of the country which are loosely referred to as "regions". Regional summaries serve as introductions for each of these sections. These were written by Jonathan James O. Cañete, Samantha Julia V. Ubiadas and Leonardo O. Quimson, Jr. There is more extensive coverage of the regional history not only of the BECs but also of the Catholic Church itself, followed by a summary of the narratives according to the seven pillars. Although the three regional summaries are similar, their conclusions were written differently.

The narratives, titled according to the name of the diocese, succeed the regional summaries. There are fourteen narratives from Luzon, ten from Visayas and eight from Mindanao. The presentation of each narrative varies from one diocese to another. Most begin with the history of the diocese and its geographic description, followed by a list (and/or sometimes a directory) of its vicariates and parishes. Several dioceses would further present the organizational structure of their BEC through a list of its ministries under the diocesan, parish and chapel community levels. This is usually followed by the enumeration of the religious formation, human formation, and socio-economic or social development activities which are implemented, with some narratives even reporting the rate of participation. Several dioceses also detailed their recruitment processes. Some narratives include a brief background of pertinent social issues or historical events such as martial law, which had a major impact on the BECs. One narrative includes frequency tables of survey data, while

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another describes its system for recognizing outstanding BECs, parishes, chapels and clusters. Many of the dioceses dedicate a section of their narrative to the issues and challenges that they encountered or continue to face as well as the responses, solutions and interventions they implemented in the past or plan to undertake in the future. While only a few narratives include a concluding section, these also vary in content. Some present a synthesis of their narrative while others share their realizations and future directions, not only of the BEC but also of the diocese itself. One diocese ended with a list of its parishes, detailing its year of establishment, titular and feast day. Considering all these, each narrative is therefore a witnessing of the continuous renewal of the Church at the grassroots.

Although not meant as a reference text, the book substantially presents the concept of BEC from a historical point of view while providing numerous examples of how it is today. The strength of the book lies in the culturally rich storytelling of the BEC founders and local organizers. The diverse narratives offer a glimpse into the landscapes in which the ecclesial communities sprang to life and provide the readers with firsthand accounts of how the lay communities, with the guidance and support of the local clergy, responded to the calls and subsequent challenges of the Church, highlighting the interplay between tradition and innovation, and flavoured by each diocese's ecclesial and political culture. To a certain extent, there are also some challenges with regard to not having a uniform approach in storytelling. A number of narratives, for example, are written in Philippine languages that may not be comprehensible to some readers, especially when translations are not provided. Furthermore, the lack of a basic content outline across the narratives makes it difficult to compare information depending on one's need. Considering that the local BECs trace their beginnings in Mindanao, it would be good to have more narratives from this region to provide more historical and sociocultural depth.

As a Lasallian educator myself, I believe in the intrinsic value of community as a privileged space to encounter God in and through others. BECs are described as "primary classrooms" where children learn socialization, emotional regulation and other necessary life skills. Hence, these ecclesial communities provide a natural context for children to learn these essential human skills in preparation for participation in school and their other relevant environments. BECs, are able to gather not only individuals but also families, which is a strength of Philippine dioceses that must be continued, nurtured and supported. Furthermore, BECs are regarded as "homes of synodality" because these promote the participation of the people through dialogue and collaboration. Synodality basically entails the People of God gathering and journeying together. This also applies to how religious education is carried out in classrooms. If a class is reimagined as an ecclesial community, then religious education

becomes more than just a subject; it is now a gathering in the name of God and an opportunity to build Church.

The existence and continuous propagation of BECs in the country is an embodiment of the flourishing collective faith of Filipinos. This book, which is a testimony to the vitality of BECs in the past 50 years, is a very timely resource that recognizes and immortalizes these stories of beginnings, struggles, successes and visions. As a religious educator, I highly recommend this book to teachers, catechists, clergy and religious women and men, and the lay faithful in the local church communities; it is an indispensable reference for BEC, helping us to learn from the past, be grounded in the present and plan for the future of this "new way of being Church".

About the Reviewer

Br. Lemuel A. Asuncion FSC is a member of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, also known as the De La Salle Brothers. He teaches at the De La Salle University Senior High School in Manila and has a background in occupational therapy and health professions education. Contact: lemuel.asuncion@dlsu.edu.ph

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BOOK REVIEW

Bargár, Pavol. 2023. *Embodied Existence: Our Common Life in God*

Eugene OR: Cascade, Wipf and Stock
ISBN: 978-1-6667-4408-8

Reviewed by Nigel Rooms

Theological anthropology is foundational for a sound understanding of Christian mission in, from and with the local church. Who are those in whom God is at work both inside and outside of the Christian community? How does a theological understanding of the human person contribute to the crossing of boundaries in Christian mission which encompasses all of creation? It is no surprise that missiologists Bevans and Schroeder (2004) make anthropology one of their six 'constants' that have to be negotiated in contextual mission in every age and context. However, the theological relationship of the Judaeo-Christian tradition with the body is not a happy one as Adrian Thatcher has shown in his recent review of the field, with the aptly named book *Vile Bodies* (2023). We need a much more positive approach to body theology, especially in mission, which I believe is provided by the work under consideration here.

Pavol Bargár, the author of this book, is well-qualified to write on the subject since he works at the Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University in Prague as well as being a member of and significant contributor to the International Association of Mission Studies – especially from his base in Eastern Europe. The book arises from a wider ecumenically-based research project conducted by Bargár and other colleagues at Charles University (xvii). This ecumenical perspective is clear in how Bargár interacts with documents from the World Council of Churches and its Faith and Order Commission throughout the book. It is also true to say that Bargár is widely read and draws together an amazing number of sources and interlocutors in the work as a whole.

Many other theological anthropologies have been written, such as David Kelsey's (2009) massive two-volume *magnum opus*. What is unique about this work is the

direct theological engagement with missiology and its dialogical approach to the subject from popular (mainly, but not wholly) western cultural artefacts (or *poiesis*) – especially cinema in the form of film. In fact, the book begins with a description of a film by the director Wim Wenders (1) and each chapter has a film or two to illustrate the argument – both positively and negatively. Largely this works: even though I was not that familiar with many of the particular films Bargár utilises, he gives a full description and carefully explains the connections to the subject matter. Perhaps therefore it is cinema itself which has influenced Bargár to write as he does about theological anthropology from six perspectives in each of the six chapters – story, body, imagination, transformation, relationality and feast. This approach, the author claims, "enables us to seek and pursue a common life for the whole creation in the force field of God's radical and transformational reign – our common life in God" (129).

What I appreciated here was the bringing together of several themes, which while not original in themselves are helpfully explicated together in one place. Thus, narrative theology, particularly the storied human being, is a good place to start and embodiment has recently seen a resurgence of interest especially in practical theology. I have long thought that the gift of human imagination is much underused in the Christian Church and its mission and no serious commentary on humanity these days could ignore themes of transformation and relationality in community. I really enjoyed the final chapter on 'feast' as, while I know receiving and offering hospitality is key to the life of mission, I hadn't quite seen it related to the breadth and depth of the celebratory feasts in Scripture.

Inevitably I have a few quibbles. Bargár wishes to reframe the kingdom of God to the 'kin-dom of God' (56) which I am not against, but in the exchange of one metaphor for another I would have expected a greater critique of the newer image, but it is rather taken for granted. Siblings might be more equal than the citizens of a kingdom, but that doesn't stop deep fissures and rivalries emerging between them. Then I'd like to have seen a bit more on the relationship between the two hemispheres of our brains, spirituality, sexuality, prayer, *theosis* and transfiguration (rather than only transformation), particularly in the light of the work of Iain McGilchrist, Maggie Ross, Sarah Coakley and others. Finally, I'd also like to have read a concluding chapter which brought all the others together and maybe some examples from the field of how the proposals made can be embodied in practice, but perhaps these are available elsewhere in the wider research project.

Overall, I would thoroughly recommend this affordable book, it will make you think again about the human person and Christian mission, give many avenues for deeper

reflection and offer wider reading on the subject. It may even change your mind and how you inhabit your relational body in God's good creation.

About the Reviewer

Rev Canon Dr Nigel Rooms, Co-Editor *Ecclesial Futures.* Honorary Research Fellow; the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education, Birmingham, UK; Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History & Missiology, University of South Africa (UNISA). Contact: nigel@praxisworks.uk

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BOOK REVIEW

Bevans, Stephen B. 2024. *Community of Missionary Disciples: The Continuing Creation of the Church*

Maryknoll, NY: Orbis
ISBN: 978-1-62698-555-1

Reviewed by James Butler

I've been excited to read this book since I first heard that Stephen Bevans was writing it, and then even more so when I heard him present the main ideas from the book at a research seminar at the University of Roehampton. His book seeks to develop an ecclesiology based on the insight that it is not that the church has a mission, but the mission has a church. He argues that the church is continually coming into being on its pilgrim journey. For those familiar with Bevans' writing the book has a familiar feel. It has his detailed, insightful and generous approach, showing his deep engagement with his own Catholic tradition, as well as an informed and appreciative engagement with theologians and sources from across the ecumenical spectrum. Some of the discussion draws heavily from his previous work, bringing ideas from a number of his books and articles into one, longer treatment of mission ecclesiology. One thing I particularly appreciated was Chapter 2, which is a complete revision of the first chapter of *Constants in Context*, telling the story of Acts. This story is narrated in a much more pneumatological way, picking up much more clearly the Church coming into being through the mission of God and the work of the Spirit.

The book is split into three parts which focus on three different words from the title *Community of Missionary Disciples.* Part 1 focuses on "missionary" exploring of the *missio Dei* and the essence of church as missionary. There is plenty of biblical work in Chapters 1 and 2, followed by engagement with church teaching in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 explores mission as a "single, complex reality" with depth and breadth before giving an account of prophetic dialogue in Chapter 5. Part 2 focuses on "community", developing an account of church through the biblical metaphors of the "people of God" (Chapter 6), "Body of Christ" (Chapter 7) and "Creation of the Holy Spirit" (Chapter 8). Chapters 9 and 10 explore the credal marks of the church,

which Bevans prefers to see as dimensions. Part 3 focuses on the word “disciples” with the comment that the structure of the church serves mission. He discusses the identity of disciples in their baptism (Chapter 11) before turning to discussion of leadership (Chapter 12), ministry (Chapter 13) and ordination (Chapter 14 and 15). Those aware of Pope Francis’ writings, and particularly *Evangelii Gaudium*, will immediately notice that the phrase he has picked up for talking about church – the community of missionary disciples – is straight out of Francis’ work. Pope Francis is a key conversation partner for Bevans throughout the book, and he highlights the ways in which Francis’ work has drawn out these key themes from the Catholic tradition, particularly the writings of the Second Vatican Council.

This book is more clearly Catholic than many of Bevans’ writings, spending a lot of time engaging with papal documents and the Catholic tradition. This, I think, is a real strength, drawing out insights which come from Catholic theology about ecclesiology in the light of the *missio Dei*. The book also acts as a helpful commentary on Pope Francis’ missiological and ecclesiological emphasis, combining his writings with his biography and history. This book still demonstrates Bevans commitment to ecumenical work as he engages with a wealth of missiology across the traditions. The comprehensiveness and detail which he goes to does, however, mean that the book has more of a textbook feel for much of the time. We are taken in detail over many arguments and discussion which will be of great service to those approaching these ideas for the first time, but in developing an argument for the church as a community of missionary disciples I wondered if perhaps some of the details could have been referenced and footnoted rather than included within the main text.

The skill of Bevans is of being able to bring together a huge wealth of writings, knowledge, wisdom and theology, in a coherent and engaging way. This is one reason among many that he will have an impact on the field of missiology for many years to come. Perhaps, though, this breadth and depth means that at times Bevans’ own voice becomes slightly lost. For someone who has had such a significant impact on the field, I think he could feel a little freer to speak in his own voice and make clearer his own constructive contributions. Perhaps this is in part down to his humility and generosity, where he sees the good in everything, and values the diversity of missiology. Which brings me to the second point, that at times I would like to have heard a more critical voice. While it is great to have the diversity of voices, I couldn’t help thinking that voices which he engaged with together, might have quite robust critiques of each other, and perhaps this kind of conversation would have benefitted the book. For example, Christopher Wright’s framing of the *missio Dei* is distinct from, say, Pope Francis or the conversation in the missional church literature and these differences could have been explored.

This book will be a significant textbook for mission ecclesiology, and will be used by many students to great effect. Personally, the thing which I most value about the book is the way Bevans offers a commentary on Pope Francis' thought about mission and ecclesiology, placing his *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Fratelli Tutti* in the wider context of Catholic missiology and in Pope Francis' own history as an Argentinian priest. I would highly recommend the book as a thorough and detailed engagement with a breadth and depth of writing and reflection around mission and ecclesiology. At the same time, I would like to see Stephen Bevans write a shorter book, perhaps 80 pages or so, which take this book as a foundation and allow him the freedom to articulate his own account of mission ecclesiology more clearly. I'm thinking of something like Herbert McCabe's *God Matters*, offering pithy insights and theological depth, freed from the need to heavily evidence, reference or footnote.

About the Reviewer

James Butler, University of Roehampton, London; Church Mission Society, Oxford. Contact: James.butler@roehampton.ac.uk

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BOOK REVIEW

Bradbury, Paul. 2024. *In the Fullness of Time: A Story from the Past and Future of the Church*

Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press
ISBN: 978-1-78622-607-5. £14.99

Reviewed by Nigel Rooms

Some books arrive on one's desk because one knew the author a little, appreciated their approach and was curious about what they had to say (and they were clearly interested in the future of the church). And then on reading the book one realizes that here is a book that truly needed to be written and offers a unique insight into very many questions about ecclesial futures. Such is the case as I ordered and then read Paul Bradbury's new book, *In the Fullness of Time*. It is a short book of only 138 pages which does not wear its obvious scholarship too heavily and is therefore a delight to read; in fact in places it is beautifully written.

Bradbury opens by connecting his purpose in writing to being inspired by James Rebanks' *English Pastoral* (xi), which is a lament for what has been lost through industrial farming, amongst other things, in English rural life while making proposals for its future restoration without retreating into a utopia. So, what we have in Bradbury's book, set out in three sections of "Lamentation, Waiting and Resurrection" (one soon realizes these are not neat sequential categories, but rather they flow in and out of one another) is a reprise of the demise of the place of the (mainly) English rural church in its community and some gently researched "case study" responses to that demise from largely the South and East of England. There are eight of these cases in total, either Bradbury has personal experience of them and/or he explores their contexts and talks to their leaders. And this is not all, because Bradbury also weaves his own autobiographical reflections into the book as we learn how he grew up in a tiny rural community, came to faith, was called to ordination and then discovered the "pioneer" in him that took him to new and experimental places. There is also creative writing and subtle metaphor, parable and poetry alongside evocative line drawings from an artist friend. Bradbury therefore, is a truly creative pioneer

practitioner-scholar, based as he is within Poole Missional Communities on the south coast of England.

There is much wisdom to be gleaned in the book especially about the "fullness of time", in a church system that is anxious and searching for ever faster, easier solutions to its predicament on the proverbial "burning platform". God's time subverts most of that kind of thinking and Bradbury offers evidence for his position from the case studies and his own experience. The book however is also extremely realistic: there are no magic solutions, there is hard work, serious cost and the "wins" are often small, if joyful – I think of the description of an adult baptism – yes just one (40). Bradbury the realist also takes on nostalgia which is a driver of so much of what happens in late-modern Britain and always brings to mind for me Zygmunt Bauman's concept of *Retrotopia* – the backward-looking opposite of utopia. Thus, without referring directly to movements in the English church which seemingly desire to recreate what was (and there are more than one of these), Bradbury shows us what is possible both from within traditional parish churches and in pioneering experimentation that can and do live alongside each other. In these places, and this is a theme of the book; history and tradition are taken absolutely seriously without becoming absolutes in themselves. The case study priests and pioneers here are "finding a useful future in their past" as I sometimes put it. The examples of how this works throughout the book are particularly instructive.

One question that might be raised is whether the book could travel beyond the shores of England and Britain, since it is a deeply particular and contextual study. I would say a categorical yes to this since the principles that Bradbury elucidates throughout the book are distilled Christian wisdom that could easily travel; all good contextual theology can teach us many things. I suggest that one really useful way this book could be used would be to give it to the sceptical, unconvinced even cynical church member or leader who is open to wondering about what, if anything, is possible for the future of the Christian communities. Bradbury offers realistic and evidenced hope in the God of mission who has not given up on the Church.

About the Reviewer

Rev Canon Dr Nigel Rooms, Co-Editor *Ecclesial Futures*. Honorary Research Fellow; the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education, Birmingham, UK; Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History & Missiology, University of South Africa (UNISA). Contact: nigel@praxisworks.uk

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RADBOUD UNIVERSITY PRESS

BOOK REVIEW

Cray, Graham. 2024. *On Mission with Jesus: Changing the Default Setting of the Church*

Norwich: Canterbury Press
ISBN: 978-1-78622-541-2

Reviewed by Michael Herbst

What is the context of this book? Twenty years ago, the Church of England published a report entitled *Mission-shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004). Unlike many other church reports, this document received significant response. By 2024 some 21,000 copies had been sold, and the reception of the missional theological theses continues to this day – not only in England, but also in mainland Europe. In essence, the report was about understanding and appropriating the missional mandate of the church anew in the face of major social changes (and thus the decline in church life), admittedly not primarily in order to stabilize the church. No "church-shaped mission" was propagated, in which one would immediately sense the church's own interests. Rather, the church is depicted as an instrument of divine mission, sent to the people so that as many people as possible can share in the gospel.

The report's central suggestion as to how this should be achieved seems almost counter-intuitive: Even in the decline of church life, we do not need *fewer* churches, but *more* churches, above all *new* churches, admittedly not copies of the existing local churches, but missionally vital churches that are deeply contextualized in the diverse social environments. Not one specific type, but many different types of church: for young people, in cafés, in socially deprived areas, at schools, in companies, for target groups that have been difficult to reach, not least for families who want to explore the Christian faith together. These "fresh expressions of church" should not only be tolerated, but encouraged and supported.

The working group responsible for the report was chaired by Graham Cray, then Bishop of Maidstone, and later the "Archbishop's Missioner and Team Leader of Fresh Expressions" (2009 to 2014), i.e. the holder of a high-ranking staff position

that accompanied and promoted these new forms of Christian church formation in England. Now, 20 years after *Mission-shaped Church*, the retired Anglican theologian has published a theological foundation for the report. This book is not a practical-theological study of old and new forms of church, but a very fundamental attempt to gain a basis for a missional self-understanding of the Christian church from the Bible.

His starting point is sober: he begins by attesting to a kind of ecclesial arthritis in his church, a lack of flexibility in the face of the missional challenges it has been facing for some time (12). Its "operating system" is geared towards self-preservation and not mission. In contrast, Cray wants to remind the Church of its fundamental purpose of being an instrument of the *missio Dei*. He recalls the fundamental convictions of *missio Dei* – which has now become the mainstream of mission theology – albeit in such a way that he attests that the Church has at best understood in theory that God is a missional God who involves the Church in his work for the healing and renewal of the world and humanity (35).

This critical analysis is followed by one of the core theses of the book: At the centre of the missional challenge is the task of calling people to follow Christ and to encourage them to live as disciples in lifelong fellowship with Christ or to practise it with them. Discipleship is always lived in community with others and leads the individual directly into participation in mission. This explains the title that Graham Cray gave his book: *On Mission with Jesus*. So far, however, the topic of "discipleship" (53, with a bonmot from Dallas Willard) has been the great "omission" with regard to Jesus' "commission". This is fatal, because mission can be summed up as follows: "Mission is replicated discipleship" (56).

The following chapters are biblical reflections on mission: using the Acts of the Apostles, for example, Cray shows how Christ drives his mission forward through the Holy Spirit, and how he repeatedly surprises, challenges and sends the emerging Christian community beyond previously existing boundaries. It is particularly impressive how he retells the story of the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10) and portrays the Holy Spirit as the driving force behind this crossing of the boundaries of the gospel, which was surprising for all sides. It is important to him that for the first Christians, the Christologically interpreted Scriptures contextualized by the Holy Spirit (79) play a central role. This thought is stressed in the entire book: if the church wants to follow the Spirit of God and recognize and discern his actions and guidance (i.e. practise "discernment"), then it needs to engage intensively with the Bible again and again.

This is how the church takes shape: "mission-shaped". Here, the author uses 1 Corinthians 9 (among others) to demonstrate what this means for the church to establish

itself in changing contexts and becoming accessible. For this place, the church must then follow Jesus anew and "incarnate" itself. Such incarnation is not simply adaptation, it also includes the call to repentance. And Jesus is "the given"; the church cannot let go of this. In everything else, however, it must die like the grain of wheat in John 12 in order to bear fruit. This also means renouncing one's own traditions and preferences in order to help people in this given place to grasp and embrace the gospel. This fifth chapter in particular breathes the spirit of the Anglican movement of "fresh expressions of church". Such "incarnated" churches could be a foretaste – no more and no less – of the Kingdom of God.

Graham Cray then takes up another biblical track by illuminating the minority status of the Christian community biblically – similar to Stefan Paas in *Pilgrims and Priests* (2019) – primarily through references to the Epistle to the Hebrews and 1 Peter. Perhaps Christians today hear this with a deeper understanding: Although the church of Jesus is a foretaste of the Kingdom of God, it is often a minority and suffers opposition. Christians are pilgrims, "resident aliens" in a world alienated from God. A nice punchline is Cray's reference to Christians being *paroikoi*, resident aliens, in 1 Peter. This is quite far removed from our understanding of *parochia* (153). However, being foreign and resistant should not lead to withdrawal from the world. With the terms "subversive engagement" and "involved distinctiveness", Cray shows the tension under which congregations stand as minorities, as the pilgrim people of God: committed to the common good, but characterized by strikingly different values and attitudes.

Towards the end, Cray asks how the church can succeed in making Jesus "visible" in its environment and not making him "disappear" (166–7). To this end, Christians must embark on a journey towards more "Christlikeness". According to Romans 8.29, this is our direction in life: to be transformed into the image of Christ. In this way, the bishop can once again get to the heart of his intention. He has repeatedly emphasized worship and mission as the two fixed points for the congregation formed from disciples who are "on mission" with Jesus. Now, towards the end, he makes it clear once again: "My purpose is not to demean worship compared to mission, but to relocate our primary instincts about the church from meetings (for whatever purpose) to a movement in mission" (173). And this movement will produce diverse church forms that are highly contextualized and yet share one goal: that people become disciples (179–83). Each of these churches combines a high degree of resilience (with deep roots in Christ) with an equally high degree of flexibility or agility when contexts change and the mode of how the church is on a missional journey with Jesus has to change again.

Thus Cray's reflections culminate in a practical-theological conclusion, which also explains the specific, biblical retelling style of this book: "So if the missionary Spirit is both the illuminator of Scripture and the leader of the local mission, then the attentive reading of Scripture, as a corporate discipline, is vital for the local church's participation in that mission" (191). This is then essentially part of listening, with which the specific missional approach of the "fresh expressions of church" always begins (and which is its inner centre throughout): Listening (to God and the context), serving, building community, inviting people to follow Jesus, developing a form of church appropriate for that place – and starting again from the beginning (195–6). Certain "habits" will then characterize the disciples on mission with Jesus: they will be good news bearers, boundary breakers, grateful guests and generous hosts, cross bearers, disciple makers and Jesus dwellers (199–204). The church that will emerge will be defined by its centre and not by its boundaries (210, following Paul Hiebert: a "centered set" and not a "bounded set"), because the movement of the disciples towards the centre, towards Christ, is its essential characteristic – and the church "on mission with Jesus" invites everyone to this movement.

In the long series of books on mission and the church, Graham Cray's well readable volume does not stand out for its original new insights into church development. Nor does it offer readers an academic debate with many pros and cons (and lots of footnotes). Instead, the Anglican bishop once again presents a plea worth reading for a self-critical examination of the church's and congregations' own operating system and a missional readjustment. And reading the chapters slowly and being exposed to the biblical narratives about the cross-border mission of Jesus, this rereading can transfer the dynamics of the *missio Dei* anew into the reader's own operating system.

About the Reviewer

Michael Herbst, Professor for Practical Theology (University of Greifswald), Writer, Researcher on Evangelism and Church Development.
Contact: herbst@uni-greifswald.de

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RADBOUD UNIVERSITY PRESS

BOOK REVIEW

Foulger, Will. 2023. *Present in Every Place?: The Church of England's New Churches, and the Future of the Parish*

London: SCM Press
ISBN: 978-0-334-06203-5

Reviewed by James Butler

Will Folger is an ordained priest in the Church of England and a theologian. He has been involved in church planting, has led the Centre for Church Planting Theology and Research at Cranmer Hall, Durham and is currently vicar of a Church of England church. This book engages with the often polarized debates around church in the Church of England and of the significance of place. Folger proposes that if you can get past the polarization in the discussion of parish and Fresh Expressions what you actually find is a common commitment to place, although often expressed in quite different ways. Locating himself much more in the church planting and pioneering camp, he recounts his surprise at how much he agreed with the questions and critiques of the likes of Alison Milbank, Andrew Davidson, Marcus Walker and the Save the Parish movement. However, he found their proposals somewhat baffling. By exploring the debate, the common commitments and the way place is understood more broadly, he tries to distinguish between the commitment to parish and place, and the structures of parish. To do this he turns to language of vocation. He argues that if instead of defending parish in terms of the current structures and rather seeing it as a commitment to a vocation to be present in the particular place, then there actually quite a lot of common ground between those who want to "save the parish" and those committed to church planting and Fresh Expressions. I have heard Foulger described as an apologist and interpreter for church planting and Fresh Expressions, and he is clearly someone who wants to locate himself in the middle of a polarized debate, encouraging reconciliation and a renewed vocation to be present in place.

The book itself is made up of an introduction and four chapters. It begins by looking at the understanding of place, particularly the way it was disrupted and brought to the

centre of discussion by the *Mission Shaped Church* report. Foulger unpacks the way in which it was welcomed by some and rejected and criticized by others arguing that at the heart of the discussion is a concern about place. Chapter 2 seeks to develop ways to disagree better, asking what it means to be faithful tradition drawing on the work of Alisdair MacIntyre, specifically that it is not about appropriation or rejection but rather about the negotiation and debate, one might say discernment. In this way faithfulness to the parish might well be critique of the parish as it currently is, not simply needing to be more confident in it. Chapter 3 dives more clearly into the account of place, exploring place from a variety of other academic disciplines before focusing on the story of the Good Samaritan as a theological bridge into a renewed vision of vocation to place. Chapter 4 argues that proximity is not enough, and what is needed is intentionality – both from parishes and from church planting and Fresh Expressions. It is this intentional move to be present in a particular place that Foulger identifies as the difference between those who successful engage in a place, and those who end up living in proximity to place.

The book is based on Foulger's doctoral research, although those wanting a careful account of his qualitative research, thick descriptions and thematic reflections on data will be disappointed. This appears to take that earlier work, which it refers to at various places through the book, and build on its themes and conclusions rather than engage in its nitty-gritty detail of actual churches. Given that his argument is about the particularity of place, I would have liked to have heard more of the nuances of how this plays out in particular contexts. The book, however, appears to take the broad findings and focus them in such a way to critique, develop and extend the discussions around Fresh Expressions, church planting and parish. This is a welcome development, and it is excellent to have fresh, theologically engaged reflection and critique into a somewhat entrenched subject. I agree with Foulger that the overly simplistic framing offered by some around the parish being about place, and Fresh Expressions and church planting being about networks and particular subcultures is a misleading binary, which has little reality in practice. He makes a strong case that place is actually at the heart of the commitment both to parish and to church planting and fresh expressions, and his language of vocation and the Church of England's call to be present in place is one which deserves attention. It would be great to see it seriously taken up by both sides of an, in my view unnecessarily, polarized debate, as a way of finding common ground.

Where I would like to offer a critique of Foulger is around his language of intentionality. This is a buzzword in the Church of England, the Anglican Communion and beyond at the moment, and needs some more detailed unpacking. His use of Nicholas Healy's work to justify his turn to intentionality does not do justice to Healy's

argument. While Healy wants to make the work of the Triune God central to the turn to practice, and give a clearer account of the Spirit as the one who gives Christians their intent, Foulger's use of intentionality draws him into a focus on human will and action. This move inadvertently sidelines, at least in the way it is written, the work of the Spirit. While I struggle to share Foulger's suggestion of a way forward around intention – I think a much more complex account of human participation in the work of the Spirit in mission is required – I do very much value Foulger's careful exploration of place, his distinction between presence and proximity, and his surfacing of and turn to the language of calling and vocation (which of course gives plenty of scope for an account of the triune God who is doing that calling). I therefore recommend the book, as one which is offering theological tools to move past an unhelpfully and unnecessarily polarized debate in the Church of England.

About the Reviewer

James Butler, University of Roehampton, London; Church Mission Society, Oxford. Contact: James.butler@roehampton.ac.uk

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BOOK REVIEW

Root, Andrew, and Blair D. Bertrand. 2023. *When Church Stops Working: A Future for Your Congregation beyond More Money, Programs, and Innovation*

Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press
ISBN: 978-1-58743-578-2

Reviewed by Felix Eiffler

Andrew Root and Blair Bertrand wrote a book about the crisis of the Church in the West (especially in the USA). But their identification of the crisis differs from the way the ecclesial crisis in the West is mostly described: it's not primarily about shrinking Church attendance, reduced financial resources or a lack of innovative potential. To highlight those issues (attendance, money, innovation) shows a deeper problem of the Church in the West: it is deeply shaped by the secular age (Chapter 1). To think that a smart ecclesial innovation could help deal with the challenges the Church faces, reveals a secular approach to questions of Church development. The two theologians state that the call for effective ecclesial innovation is already over 50 years old but hasn't changed the Church much for the better. They "do not believe that the cure for the secular age is some kind of new sacred age. That ship has sailed" (13). The cure is also not to fight against secularism, because the danger lies in fighting secularism with secularism. Instead: "If you want a healthy church, you are going to need to imagine a cure that doesn't depend on the secular age" (13). A secular imagination that affects most areas of societal and personal life (and that also affects many churches) is acceleration, and with it comes efficiency. Root and Bertrand identify resonance as the opposite of acceleration (Chapter 2).

The authors suggest "Stop All the Having and Just Be" (Chapter 3). Part of being Church means waiting and this is the even deeper and older crisis of the Church: waiting for God: "A waiting church is waiting for God, waiting for the Spirit to move, and waiting to connect with God. Our crisis becomes the crisis of God's action. As we wait for God's action, we open ourselves to God's arriving by ministering to one another. In humility, we attend to our connections" (50). The church waits for God in

worship and prayer as means for resonance. The Church does this as a community and not as individuals: “This waiting is all about this moment with these people” (55). Root and Bertrand point to the book of Acts, where Jesus calls the Church to wait for God to act (Chapter 4). So, waiting and praying together is basically the essence of being church: “The apostles wait; God acts. … The apostles act only because God moves them out of their waiting. Yes, they go and do things, and they lead others in doing things, but they always return to waiting” (70). And thus “The stars of this story are God and the world” (74). This removes the church from the center of attention and the position of initial action.

This waiting for God is described by Root and Bertrand as the real crisis of the Church (Chapter 5). Why? Because the Church waits for a living God, she cannot control but is completely depending on God. This is the central idea of the book and thus it is worth a longer quote:

> *The real crisis is encountering a living God who is God. God is real. God is God, and we are not. To encounter this real God as humans constitutes a crisis. We’ve become so focused on the crisis of decline that we deny or push aside the crisis that we are broken and sinful people, a weak church, who are called to wait for the God who is God to act in our midst. We come to think that waiting for a God who is God to act in the world is not a crisis worth our attention. We come to believe that the crisis of encounter with this living God is not something worth capturing our attention. This misguided assumption is the real cancer! (88)*

According to the real crisis of the Church the important questions should be:

> *How do we discern God’s action? How do we help our people experience, know, and follow this living God who acts? … How can we help our people encounter the living God in a secular age that blinds them to anything beyond the here and now? (88–9)*

Instead of writing a mission statement the authors suggest finding a watchword (Chapter 6), as a mutual task of a group of believers. A watchword is a “shorthand story of how these people in this moment have witnessed and encountered the living God in the world” (p. 108). A watchword is not static, but dynamic in the sense that it tells a story and helps to remember when and how God acted in a specific time and in this very place. Thus, it is not only about finding a watchword but also clinging to it (chapter 7). At the same time watchwords usually are limited to a certain time, space and group of people, because God and life move on, and a new word is needed. To find it, an ongoing listening is required (chapter 8).

The book makes a bold claim and offers a variety of reasons for it. Some are more profound and convincing than others: the theological reminder that the Church is a spiritual entity and not only a civic endeavor seems reasonable – especially in Western contexts. But a general statement may miss the specific circumstances and challenges of a certain ecclesial context. Although the book contributes a lot of helpful thoughts and insights for the Churches across the globe, it cannot deny its North American origin. This does not reduce the importance of its claims, but it is something the reader should be aware of, because the sketched out minor crises might be different in different contexts. Thus, the observation that the church is deeply shaped by secularism might be true for the Church in the West. Also is ecclesial decline first and foremost a Western phenomenon? Other contexts have other challenges, which the book is not referring to, such as limited civil rights for the Christian minority, discrimination or even persecution or corruption as well as inappropriate political entanglements etc.

In summary: the book offers its readers a critical perspective on the deeper layers of the current ecclesial challenges in particular (secularism) as well as in general (waiting for God to act). Consequently, the book is not only relevant for Western readers.

About the Reviewer

Felix Eiffler, Head of Research Unit Missional Church Development at the Center for Empowerment Studies, Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg.
Contact: felix.eiffler@theologie.uni-halle.de

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BOOK REVIEW

Shaw, Richard. 2024. *The Unsettled: Small Stories of Colonisation*

Auckland: Massey University Press
ISBN 978-1-99-101668-3

Reviewed by Steve Taylor

A few years ago, I booked myself in for a spiritual retreat. The five-day experience offered a focus on land and place and the opportunity to hike parts of Rakiura National Park, a nature reserve park located on Rakiura/Stewart Island at the bottom of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

A few hours into a day walk, I encountered a sign "Māori Land. Access courtesy of landowners." A Google search once the retreat ended revealed that this particular part of Rakiura National Park was owned by indigenous people, who had generously agreed to allow walking across their land.

The words of the sign have left me pondering my hermeneutical location. The walk I had made was a privilege. The beauty, birdsong and access were a gift courtesy of another.

The single sign is part of a larger story. I read, write and work as a New Zealand Pākeha. I am part of a history that has been unavoidably and powerfully shaped by my ancestors' actions as they migrated from Great Britain to Aotearoa New Zealand during the nineteenth century. How do I respond to what is privilege? Can the systems that support local Christian communities today be disentangled from the actions of my ancestors, who profoundly reshaped Aotearoa New Zealand? What does it mean for me to write and think about the development and transformation of local Christian communities "courtesy" of another?

The Unsettled, by Richard Shaw, provides an excellent resource for exploring these questions. The book opens with a photograph of Shaw's great-grandfather surrounded by his rugby team, the Armed Constabulary Coastal Rugby team. The

date is 1881, and the photograph was taken a few kilometres from the Parihaka Pā, which the Armed Constabulary invaded in 1881. Around 1,600 men were imprisoned without trial. Women were raped. Houses were torn down and crops were destroyed. Then, in the years that followed, Shaw's great-grandfather became the owner of three farms in the area.

Richard Shaw describes growing up with stories of milking and rugby, but never of his great-grandfather's involvement in the invasion of Parihaka and his acquiring confiscated land. The farms of the family were part of the 1,275,000 acres that the Crown confiscated during the mid-1860s (Waitangi Tribunal, 1996).[1] *The Unsettled* explores why some stories fall out of collective memory and what it might mean to ask the right questions about our ancestors' histories.

Asking questions about the past involves encounters with pioneer stories. How did migrants acquire the land they did? Richard Shaw's questions about what it means to remember rightly and live justly are significant for those writing about the development and transformation of local Christian communities on lands with long settler histories.

Shaw works with small stories as a research methodology. Shaw interviews people wrestling with their origin stories, which Shaw calls "secular creation stories". These stories are woven through *The Unsettled*'s nine chapters.

Shaw also researches his own small story and the lives of his Irish ancestors. He ponders how those oppressed by patterns of colonization in Ireland became implementers of these patterns in Aotearoa New Zealand. He tracks the way that law, transport, communication and the forming of local constabularies were used to generate wealth. He asks why indigenous voices are silenced – "whited out" – by the processes of colonizations.

Shaw makes no explicit claims to be doing theology. He writes as a Professor of Politics at Massey University. However, theological themes are present in *The Unsettled*. There is the language of bearing witness, defined as the courage to take "a public position … a decidedly active thing to do" (171). There is a discussion of religious murals that hung in Taranaki churches, including cross-cultural motifs in works painted by

1 For a summary, see Tom Bennion. "Review. The Taranaki Report: Kaupapaptuatahi Muru me te raupatu. The Muru and Raupatu of the Taranaki land and people by the Waitangi Tribunal." Waikato Law Review 23 4 (2), 180-189. http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/WkoLawRw/1996/23.pdf.

Michael Smithers (126–7). There are several uses of the phrase "touch the hem of the unknown garment" (178, 192) a phrase with origins in a Gospel story in Matt. 9.20-22 and Luke 8.43-48. Shaw uses the phrase to advocate for new forms of community in which future ways of being emerge "from and in concert with memories of past ways of doing" (178). Shaw concludes with a concluding experience of sitting with two nuns and realizing that their story of service to God could be applied fruitfully to the future facing Pākeha in Aotearoa New Zealand. These motifs – of witness, crossing cultures and new ways of being – are instructive starting points for those pondering doing faith on "Māori Land" by courtesy of prior landowners.

There is a growing body of theologians writing about settler colonial theology. Writing about Aotearoa New Zealand from English shores, Richard Davis argues that settler colonial theology is a more just framing than decolonial or post-colonial theology. Davis points out how "de-" and "post-", when attached to "colonial", imply a moving beyond colonialism. The reality is that colonizers are always walking on land with history, among traditional owners with stories of dispossession and injustice. For Davis (2022), the phrase "settler colonial" allows the settler to "face their own complicity in narratives of ongoing colonisation and aim at their undoing". For South African theologian Steven Theo Savides (2022: 1) we are all "implicated as witness to, participant in, and beneficiary of settler colonial systems". This requires identity work that respects the significance of the past, even in the present, and constructs new structures of relationship. Writing from the United States, Enns and Myers (2021: 10) call for settler "response-ability". They challenge settlers to respond to their small stories by investigating how settler colonialism structures our current relationships.

These voices are raising themes that those of us writing and thinking about the development and transformation of local Christian communities need to heed. While making no explicit theological claims, *The Unsettled* offers important resources for those willing to name their privilege and justly name the legacies of colonization. The focus on small stories provides ways for individuals to examine their genealogies. The motifs – of witness, crossing cultures and new ways of being – are stepping stones for a public theology that takes "response-ability".

About the Reviewer

Steve Taylor, Director AngelWings Ltd, Ōtepot, Dunedin, Aotearoa New Zealand. Contact: kiwidrsteve@gmail.com

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We understand local Christian communities broadly to include traditional "parish" churches and independent local churches, religious communities and congregations, new church plants, so-called "fresh expressions" of church, "emergent" churches, and "new monastic" communities.

We are an international and ecumenical journal with an interdisciplinary understanding of our approach to theological research and reflection; the core disciplines being theology, missiology, and ecclesiology. Other social science and theological disciplines may be helpful in supporting the holistic nature of any research, e.g., anthropology and ethnography, sociology, statistical research, biblical studies, leadership studies, and adult learning.

The journal fills an important reflective space between the academy and on-the-ground practice within the field of mission studies, ecclesiology, and the so-called "missional church." This opportunity for engagement has emerged in the last twenty or so years from a turn to the local (and the local church) and, in the Western world at least, from the demise of Christendom and a rapidly changing world – which also affects the church globally.

The audience for the journal is truly global wherever the local church and the systems that support them exist. We expect to generate interest from readers in church judicatory bodies, theological seminaries, university theology departments, and in local churches from all God's people and the leaders amongst them.

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