

Re-Weaving the Mat: Mission Theologies in Global Contexts





Fafola e Fla ka tau talanga

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Let's get started

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Why re-weaving the mat?

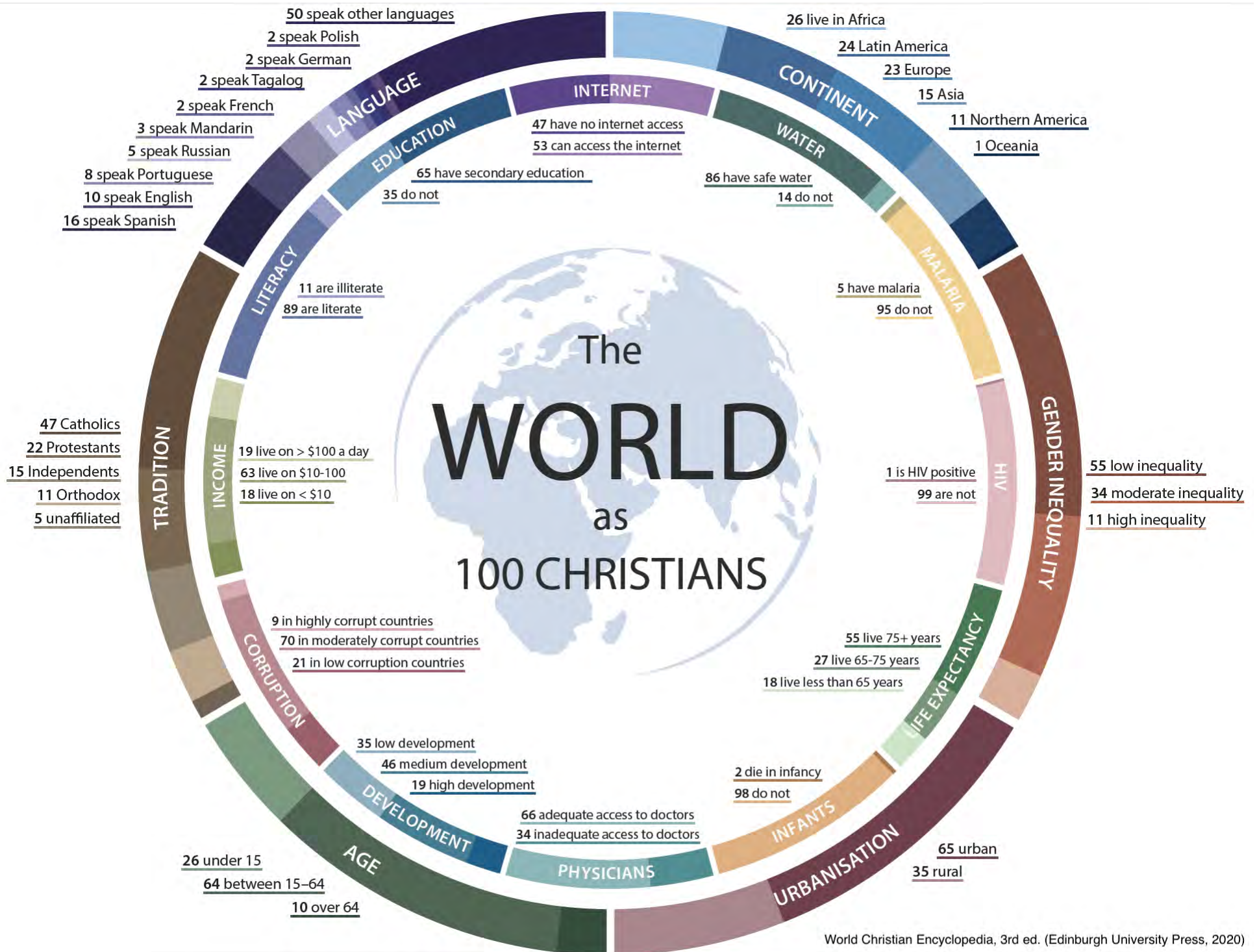
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THE CHANGING FACE OF CHRISTIANITY

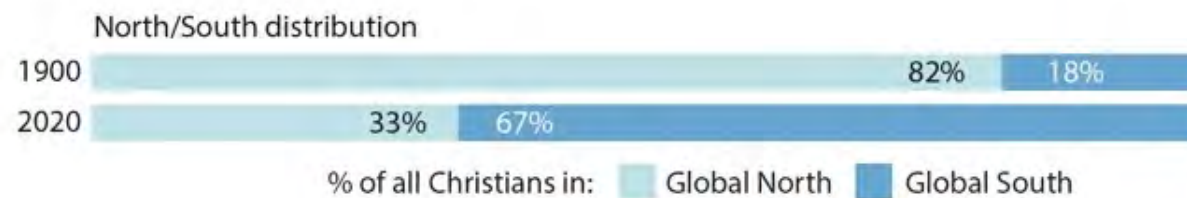


“The centres of the Church’s universality are no longer in Geneva, Rome, Athens, Paris, London, New York, but Kinshasa, Buenos Aires, Addis Ababa, and Manila”.

John S. Mbiti



Christians by continent, 2020

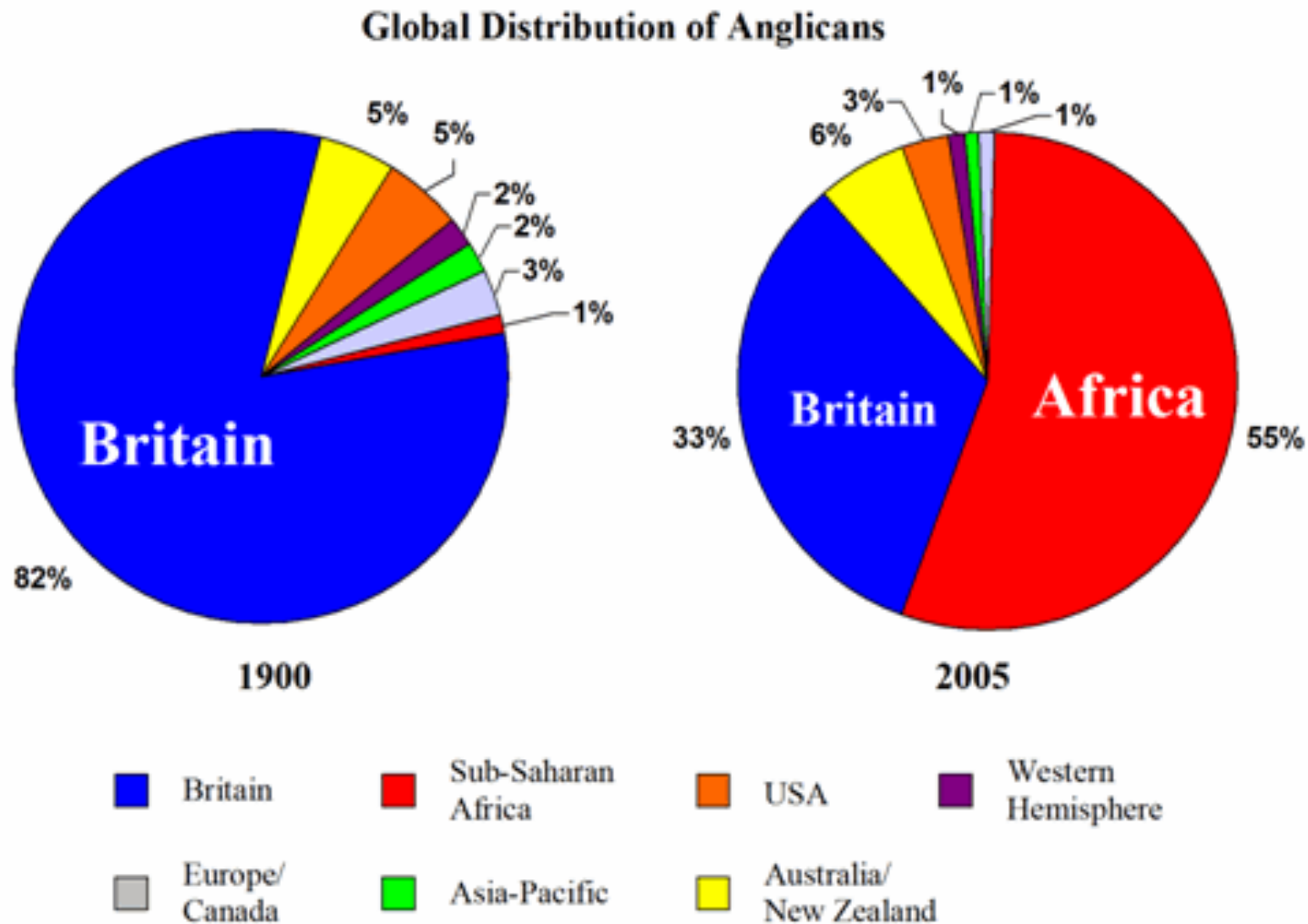


Source: World Christian Database

“GLOBALISATION FROM BELOW”



THE SAME IS TRUE OF ANGLICANISM



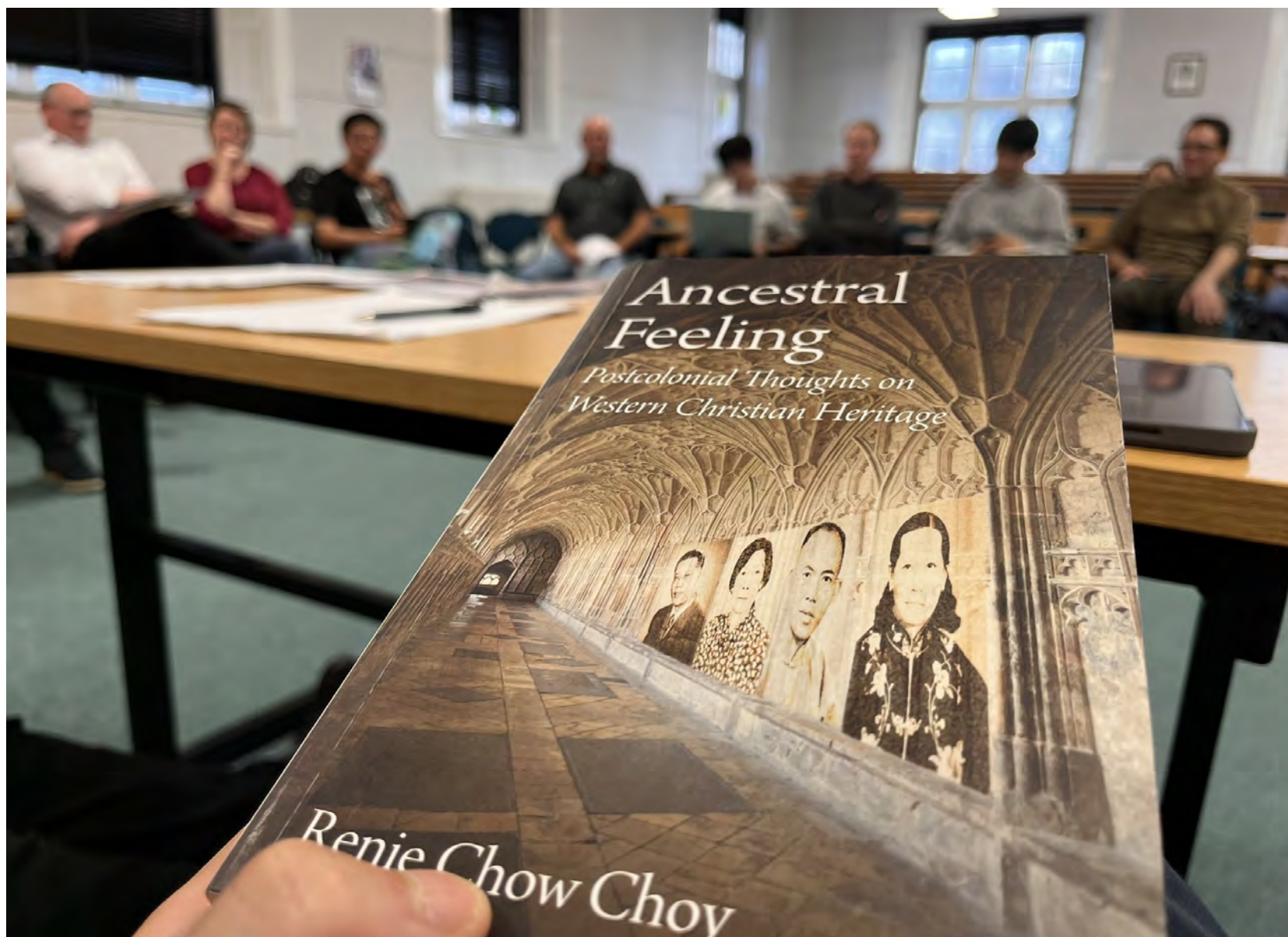
Source: World Christian Database, research version, May 2008.

World Christianity is

NOT

OUT

THERE



RISE IN NUMBERS: STATISTICS: 2001-2011

Other White Christians: 1.3 to 2 Million

African/Caribbean: 471,000 (58%)

Mixed-Race Christians: 145,000 (64%)

Asian (Bangladeshi/Indian/Pakistani and
Chinese) 353,000 (390%)

(Office for National Statistics, 2011)

TIME TO REVISIT MBITI'S QUESTION?

Theologians from the new (or younger) churches [of the South] have made their pilgrimages to the theological learning of the older churches (of the North). We had no alternative. We have eaten theology with you; we have drunk theology with you; we have dreamed theology with you... We know you theologically. The question is: Do you know us theologically? Would you like to know us theologically?

REWEAVING THE MAT

Pulling together diverse strands of theologising from across the globe, thereby co-creating a space which can draw us together for renewed dialogue on the scope and shape of Christian theology in contemporary contexts.



Rethinking Mission

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So, how is rethinking mission theologies
happening in the context of **World**
Christianity(ies)?

“World Christianity is Not One thing, but a variety of indigenous responses through more or less local idioms, but in any case without necessarily the European Enlightenment frame.”

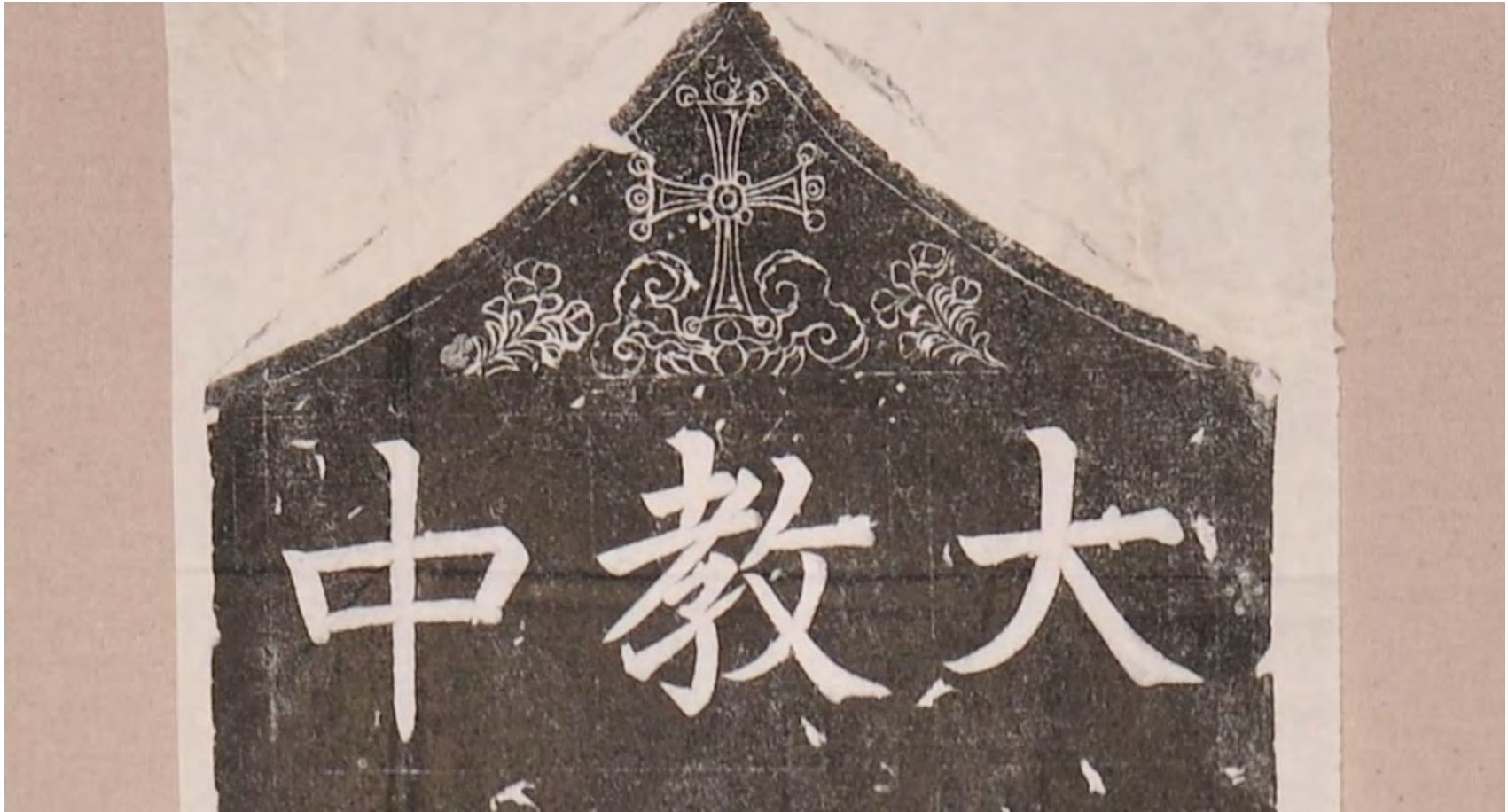
Lamin Saneh

Mission Theologies in Global Contexts: Themes

- Respect for Religions
- Rootedness in Culture and Context
- Rediscovery of Identity and Liberation in Christ
- Resisting Empires Past and Present
- Renewing, Repairing and Reconciling God's World

RESPECT FOR RELIGIONS

LET'S START WITH ASIA:





Theologies of ‘Double Baptism’

2 CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIANITY

Mostly Colonial

Mostly Minority



Engagement With Many Religions



*Dialogue has been highlighted as ‘the way of **being Church**’, ‘the method for **doing theology**’, and ‘the mode of the **Church’s mission**’.*

THE FOUR-FOLD MODEL OF DIALOGUE

- *the dialogue of life*
- *the dialogue of collaborative action*
- *the dialogue of theological reflection*
- *the dialogue of spiritual encounter*

THE IDEA OF TRIPLE DIALOGUE



Asia's Religions

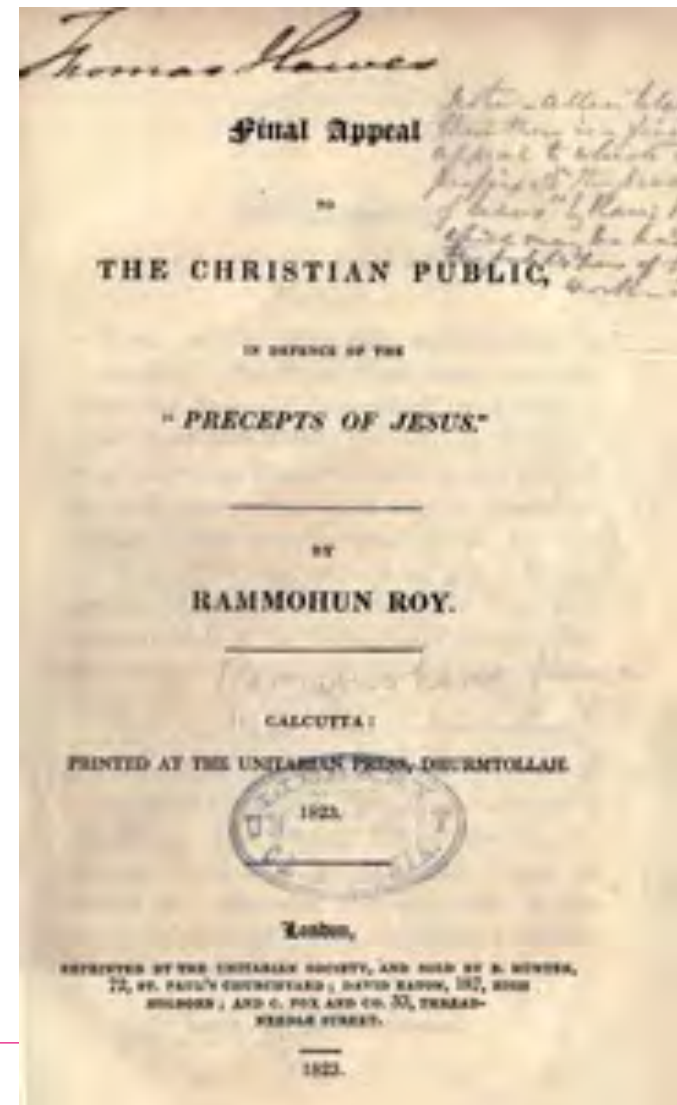
Asia's Cultures

Asia's Poor

“In the context of Asia, inculturation is brought about, first of all through the dialogue with Asia's poor, in view of facilitating their integral liberation. Second, because the other religions have their own views of what liberation and salvation mean and because the majority of Asia's poor owe their allegiance to these other religions, the process of inculturation, which entails the church's dialogue with the poor, must also include dialogue with the religions. In short, inculturation, interreligious dialogue, and the process of integral liberation are mutually involving ministries, all of which are integral to the evangelizing mission of the church in Asia.”

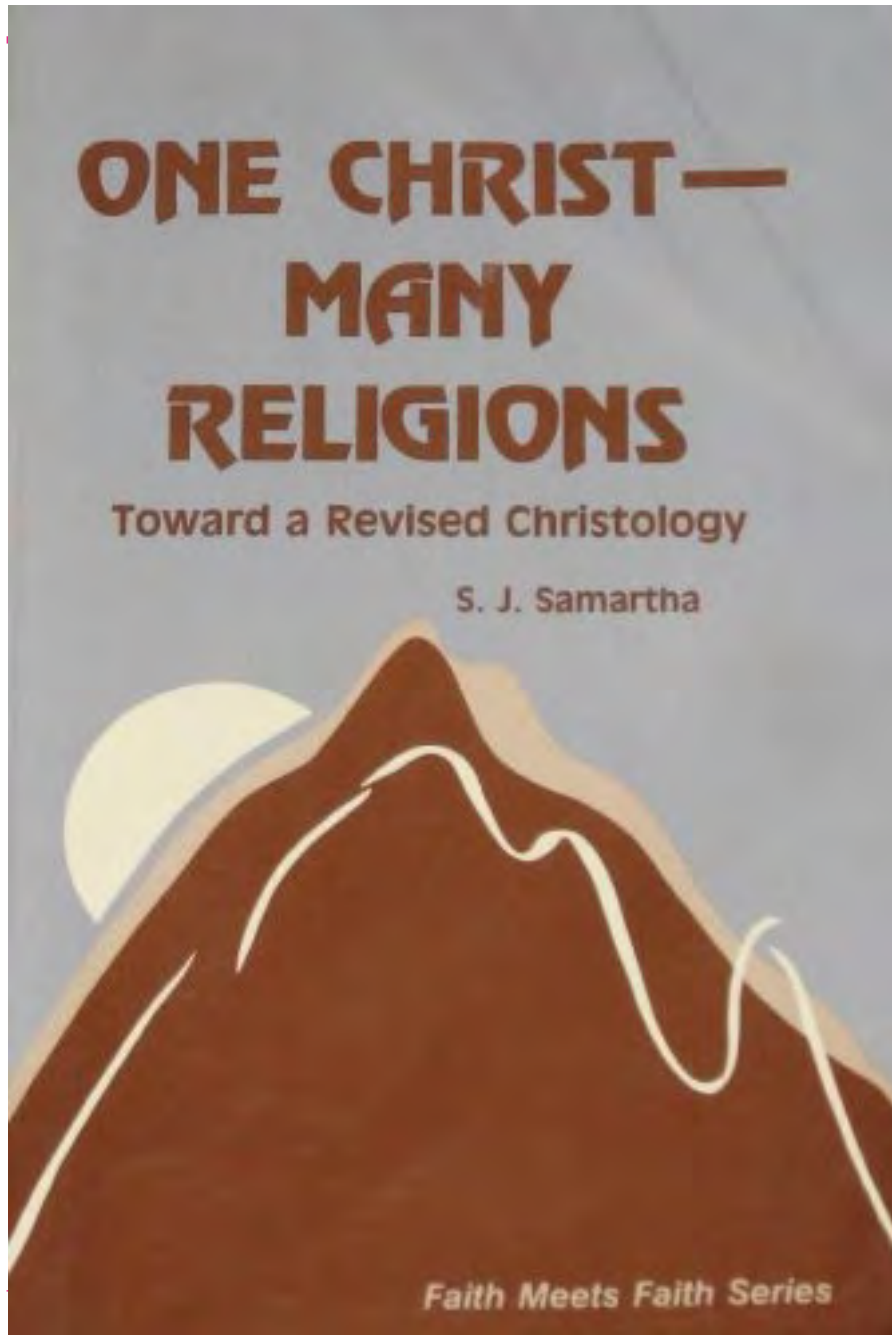
– Edmund Kee Fook Chia

A RELATIONSHIP CHARACTERIZED BY MUTUALITY





INTER-SCRIPTURAL CONTINUITY



‘retaining the
mystery of God

While
acknowledging the
distinctiveness of
Jesus Christ’ ...

as Christians sought
to relate with their
neighbours from
other faiths

“THE PREVIOUSNESS OF CHRIST...”

Ariarajah's
proposal for a

**'Composite
Christology'**

for a

**'Holistic Vision
of Salvation'.**

S. WESLEY ARIARAJAH

YOUR GOD MY GOD OUR GOD



RETHINKING CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
FOR RELIGIOUS PLURALITY

“Composite Christology”

...We need a new ‘composite Christology’ that envisions a ‘holistic salvation’ understood at the personal, social and all other dimensions of human life. In doing so it should hold together Jesus the teacher, healer, life-giver, the one who initiated the reign of God, and one who mediates our life in God.

Wesley Ariarajah

We also need to place this Christology-Soteriology in the context of all other witnesses to God's saving work in the world, and God's overall mission of healing God's creation. We can, as Christians, affirm without any hesitation that we have such a large vision and hope for the world because of our belief that 'God was in Christ' reconciling the world unto Godself and has called us to become Christ's disciples to participate in this work.'

Ariarajah, Your God, My God, Our God,

Selfie: The World's Great Religions.

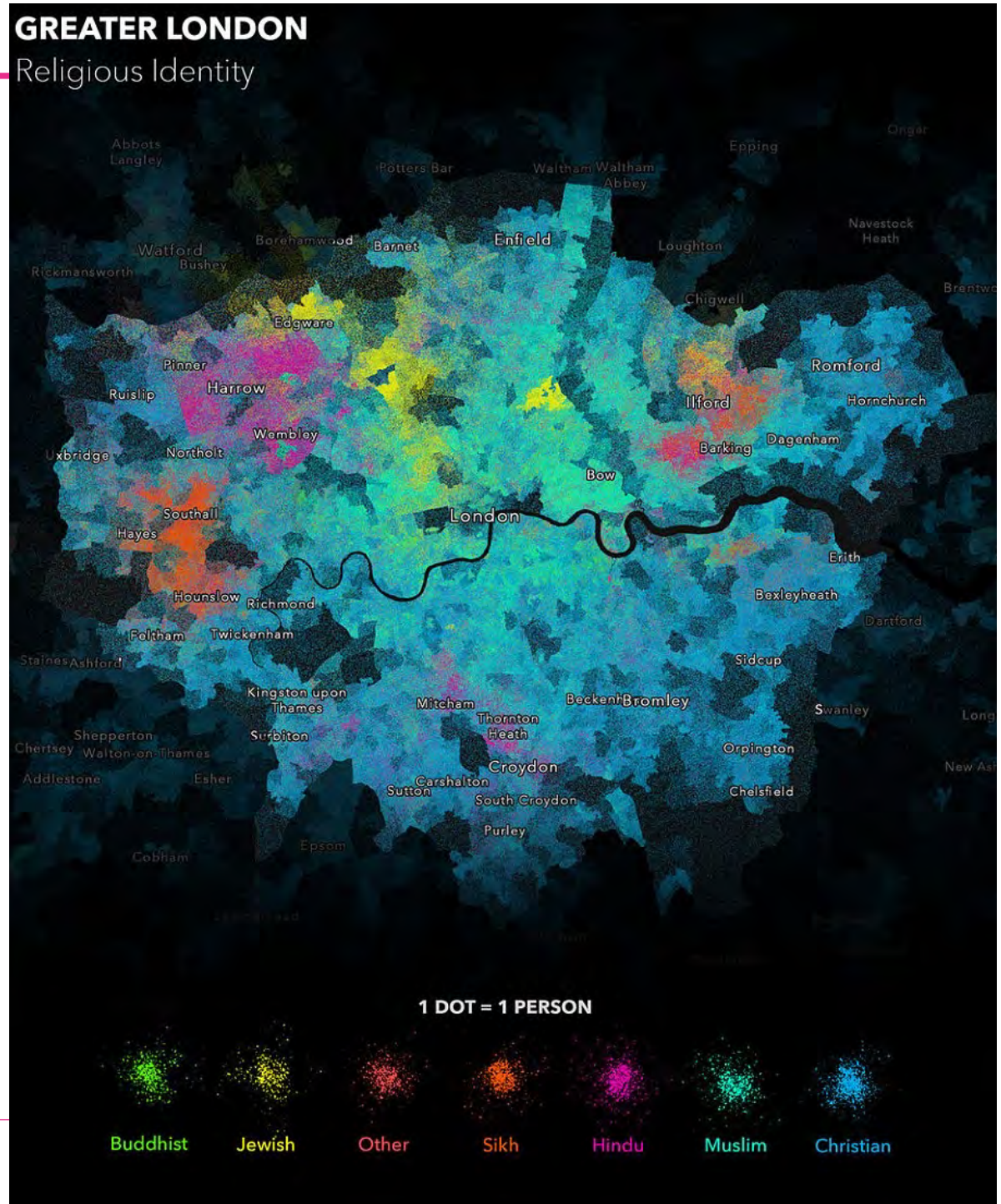


It seems as if the world “has gone
irreversibly interfaith.” -



Ben Flanagan's Dot Density Map of Religious Diversity in Greater London

(<https://www.Dailymail.Co.Uk/news/article-6121487/colour-coded-london-map-uses-one-paint-dot-person-faith.Html>)



The Five Marks of Mission sum up the Anglican Communion's understanding of Mission.
The Church Ceylon demonstrates a shared commitment to God's Holistic Mission.



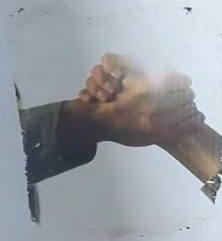
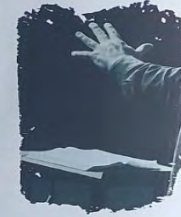
TELL

We have to tell everyone about the Good News of the Kingdom of God.



TEACH

We have to Teach the Faith to Believers and Nurture them after Baptism.



TEND

We have to respond to human need by Loving Service.



TRANSFORM

We have to engage in Prophetic Mission to Challenge anything that robs people of life.



TREASURE

We have to work to preserve God's world, our common home.



TRANSCEND

THE CHURCH OF CEYLON MARK OF MISSION

We have to maintain harmonious co-existence and dialogue with people of all faiths and recognize God's presence among them.






6. TRANSCEND

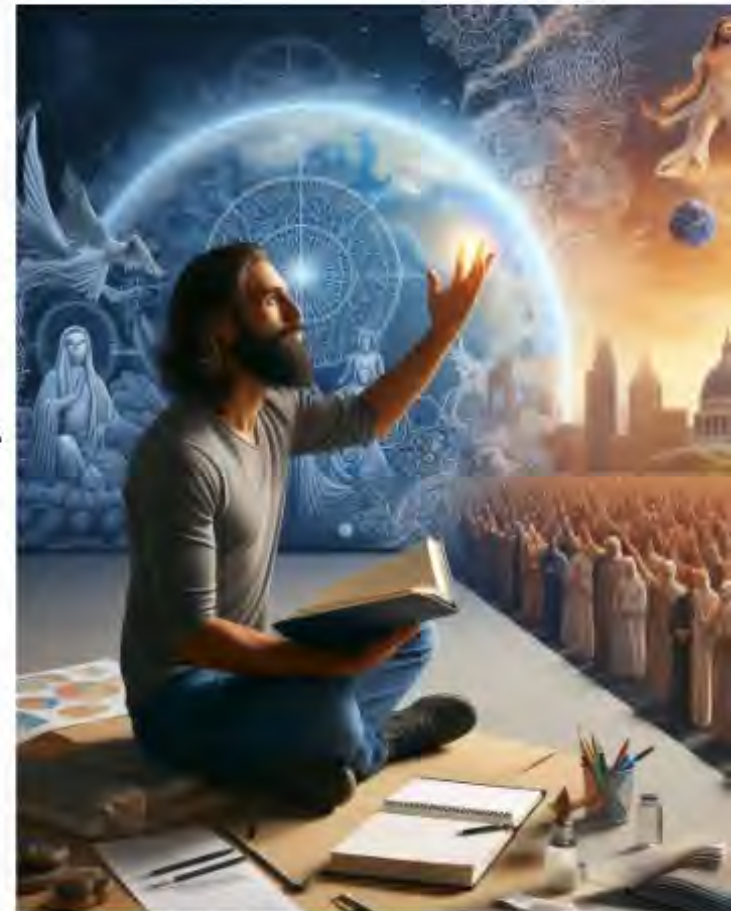
THE CHURCH OF CEYLON MARK OF MISSION

To engage with people of diverse faiths and ideologies and to discern God's presence among them.

பலதரப்பட்ட விசுவாச ஒழுங்கில் மற்றும் சித்தாந்தத்தில் பயணிப்போரோடு தொடர்புபட்டு அவர்கள் மத்தியிலான இறை பிரசன்னத்தை உணர்தல்.

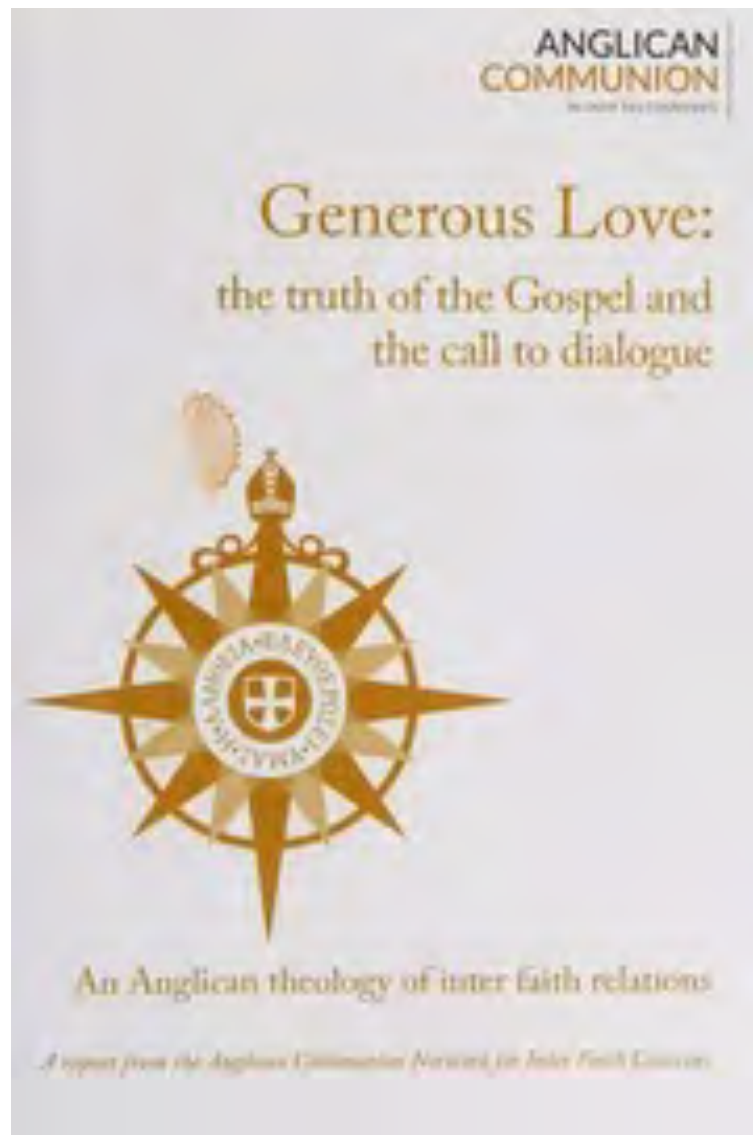
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- We have to maintain harmonious co-existence and  with people of all faiths and recognize God's presence among them.





What shape does proclaiming the gospel take in such a context?



As God both pours out his life into the world and remains undiminished in the heart of the Trinity, so our mission is both **a being sent** and **an abiding**. These two poles of **embassy** and **hospitality**, a movement ‘going out’ and a presence ‘welcoming in’, are indivisible and mutually complementary, and our mission practice includes both.

ROOTEDNESS IN CULTURE AND CONTEXT

Helicopter Christology **vs** Bullock Cart Christology



ALSO CONNECTED WITH FOLK TRADITIONS



C.S. SONG

A parable of people's
political theology



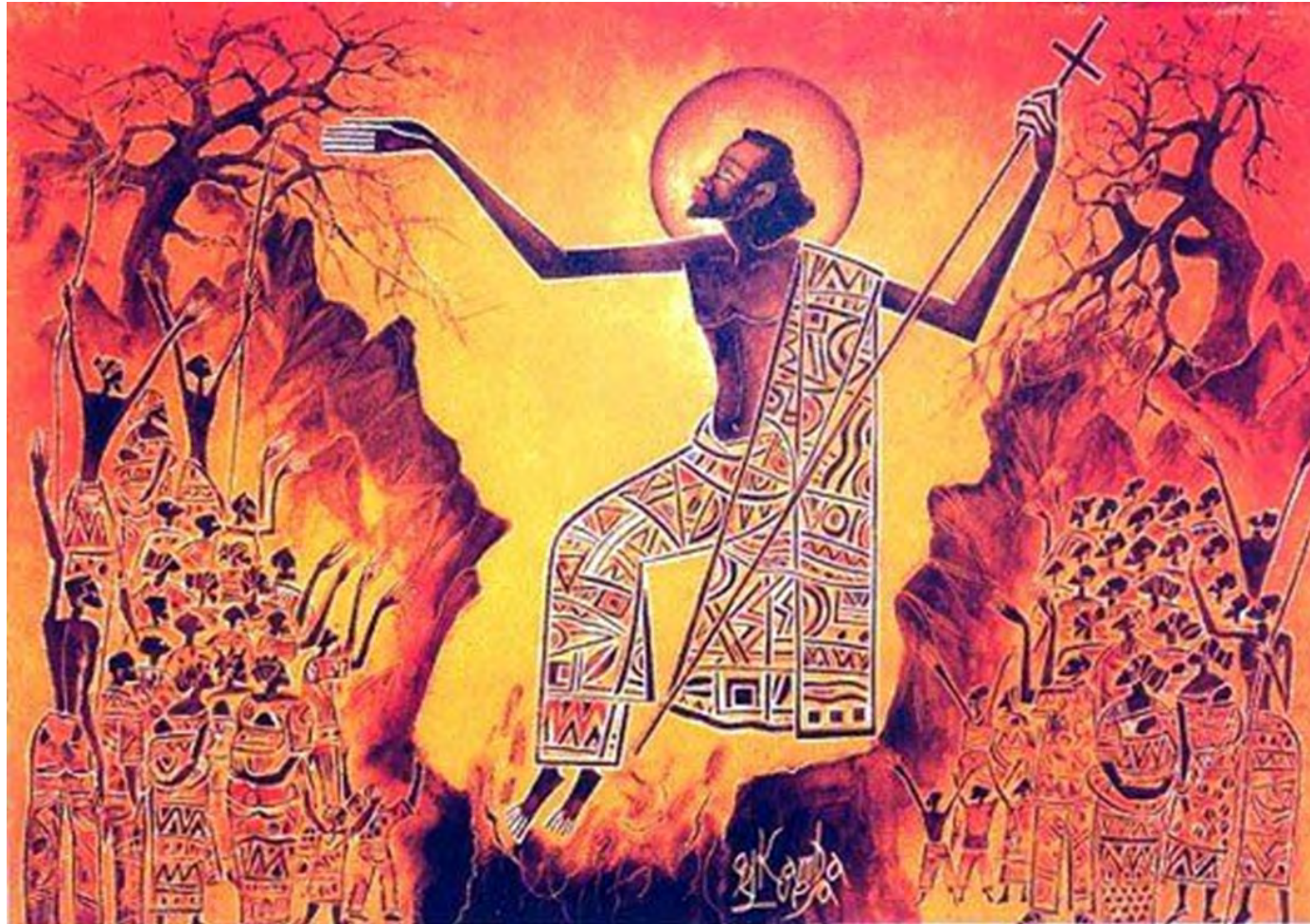
AFRICAN THEOLOGIES - INCULTURATION



**Emerged in the context of the
Africanisation of the church which
would pave the way for**

**‘a theology grounded in biblical
faith but would yet speak to the
African soul’.**

AFRICAN THEOLOGY



JESUS AS CHIEF / HEALER



He is the one
who cooks his food in huge palm-oil pots.
Thousands of people have eaten,
yet the remnants fill twelve baskets.
If we leave all this, and go wandering
off—
if we leave his great gift, where else shall
we go?

— Afua Kuma

CHRISTOLOGY – NEW WAYS ON UNDERSTANDING CHRIST



ROOTEDNESS IS REFLECTED IN PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY

Built Theology



THEOLOGY REFLECTIVE OF THE WIDER CONTEXT







THE CEYLON LITURGY – 1933

“AN ATTEMPT... TO GIVE THE RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND AN OPPORTUNITY OF ADEQUATE EXPRESSION”



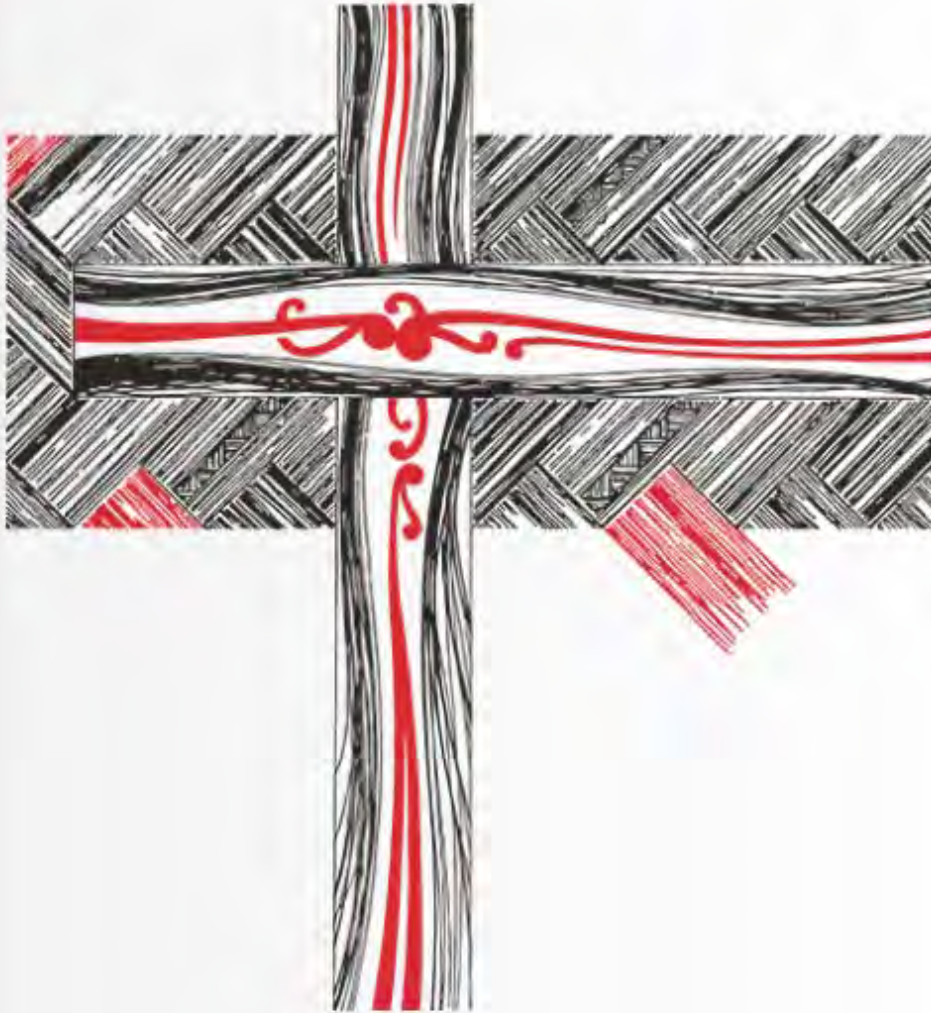


**STRONG
EMPHASIS ON THE
WORSHIP OF A
COSMIC CHRIST,
AND A CONCERN
FOR A TRULY SRI
LANKAN WAY OF
WORSHIP**

“Vast spaces of our native temperament remained unsatisfied by this unbalanced spiritual diet. Whole areas of personality remained untouched, with certain emotions uncatered for nor used as an approach to deeper spiritual understanding.”

A New Zealand Prayer Book

He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa



**RECENTERED BY
PRAYER**

A number of characteristics in this prayer book reflected local Maori culture. First, in addressing God, the prayer book emphasizes God's tender and gentle ways. God is called "God of grace," "ever loving God," "God of truth and beauty," and "merciful God."

One particular prayer emphasizes this tenderness:

Abba God we call you Father

And your care for us is motherly as well

Protect our power to love and be
loved,

And make us glad to be called your
children

One whanau [extended family] in
Christ.

- *Page 46, A New Zealand Prayer Book*

REDISCOVERY OF IDENTITY AND LIBERATION IN CHRIST

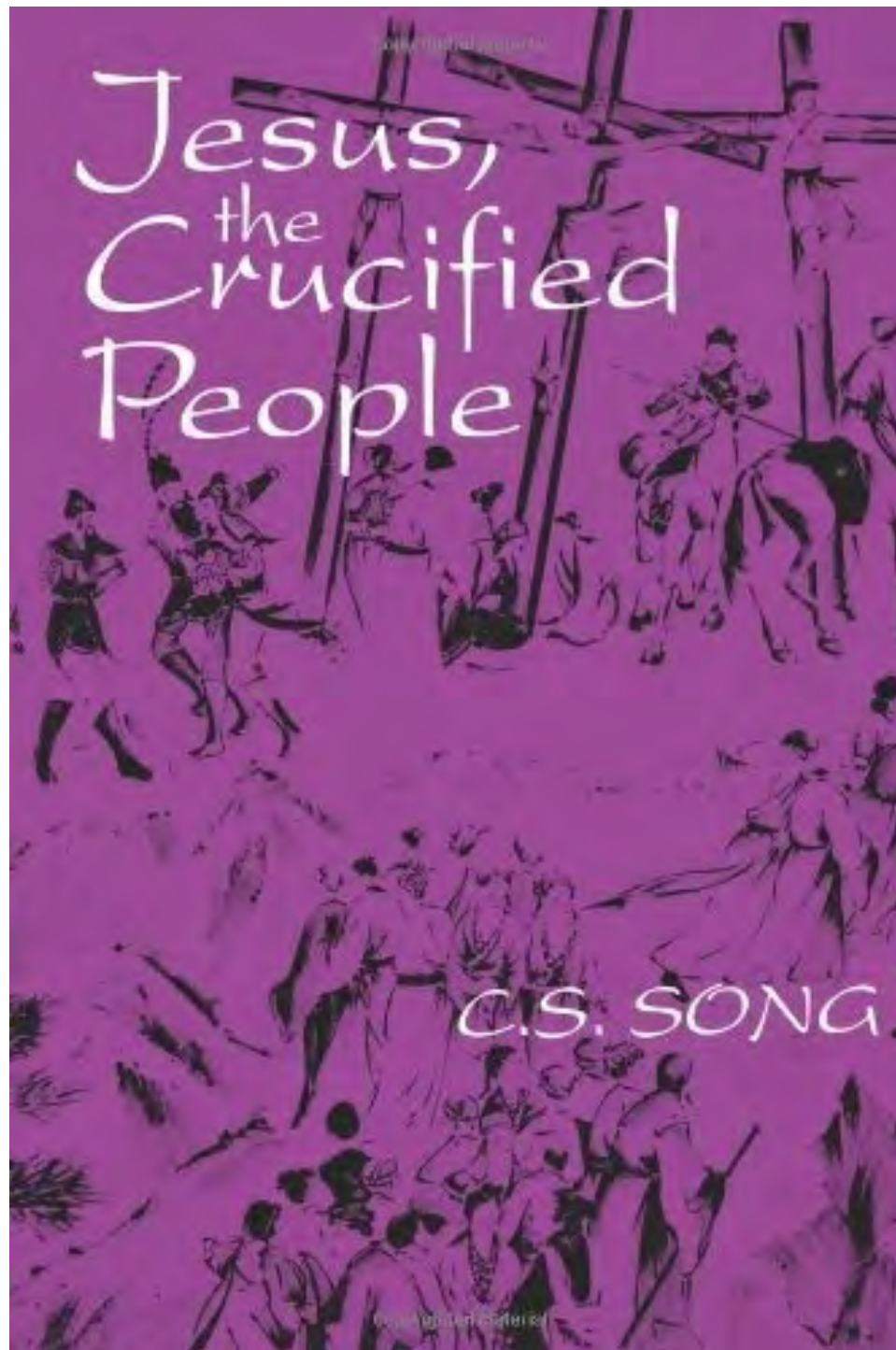
*(Identity-Specific Theologies of
Liberation)*

BAPTISM IN THE CALVARY OF ASIA'S POVERTY





Shift in focus - ‘From The Doctrine Of God To Life Of The People’.



Doesn't mean that they
did not focus on God...

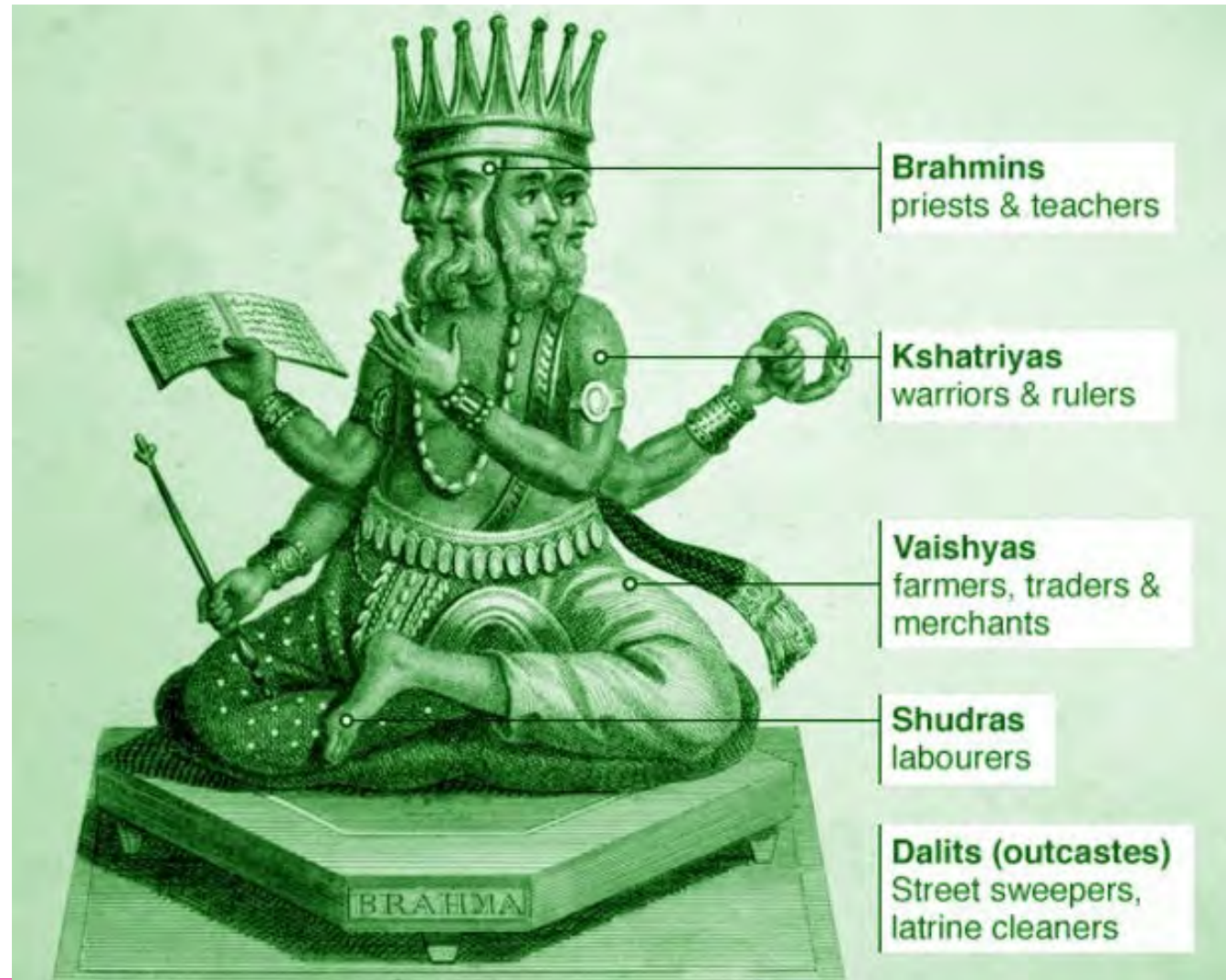
As Sathianathan Clarke says, “Asian theology will not leave the historical Jesus to rest peacefully and remain withdrawn from the cry of suffering experienced by the poor and marginalized communities, or from the hope for freedom their cries express”.





WHO ARE THE DALITS?

DALITS – THE DOWN-TRODDEN





Dalit Theology: Re-imagining God:

**“Are we prepared to say
that my house-maid,
my sweeper,
my bhangi (scavenger)
is my god?”**

Nirmal



‘In the ritual practices of the dominant religions, anything polluted and polluting distances the human from the divine. Inversely, in the Dalit imagination of the divine and the practice of the ritual, the dichotomy of purity and pollution is not only dismantled, but pollution is privileged as the necessity in the divine human interaction and the life-giving and life-saving acts of the divine. To be divine is to be polluted.’

- Joseph Prabhakar Dayam

BLACK THEOLOGIES OF LIBERATION



INCARNATION

This painting represents the love of God for our African American people in a voyage of time and space. It shows the history of these people from their beginnings in Africa.

On the lower left side is a Zulu warrior with shield, looking up into the sky; below him stands a princess also looking up; to her left are two slaves, one standing and the other sitting on the ground.

This grouping of figures is the representation of millions of Africans who were brought in shackles from the motherland. They are watching their beloved land disappear over the horizon - a homeland they will never see again.



In the lower center of the painting are plantations of the deep south where slaves laboured in the fields for many years in the most dehumanizing conditions. These figures look steadfastly up into the sky.

On the lower right side of the painting the figures represent their African descendants. Though their lives have changed significantly since the civil rights movement, still today they are victims of prejudice in most levels of society.

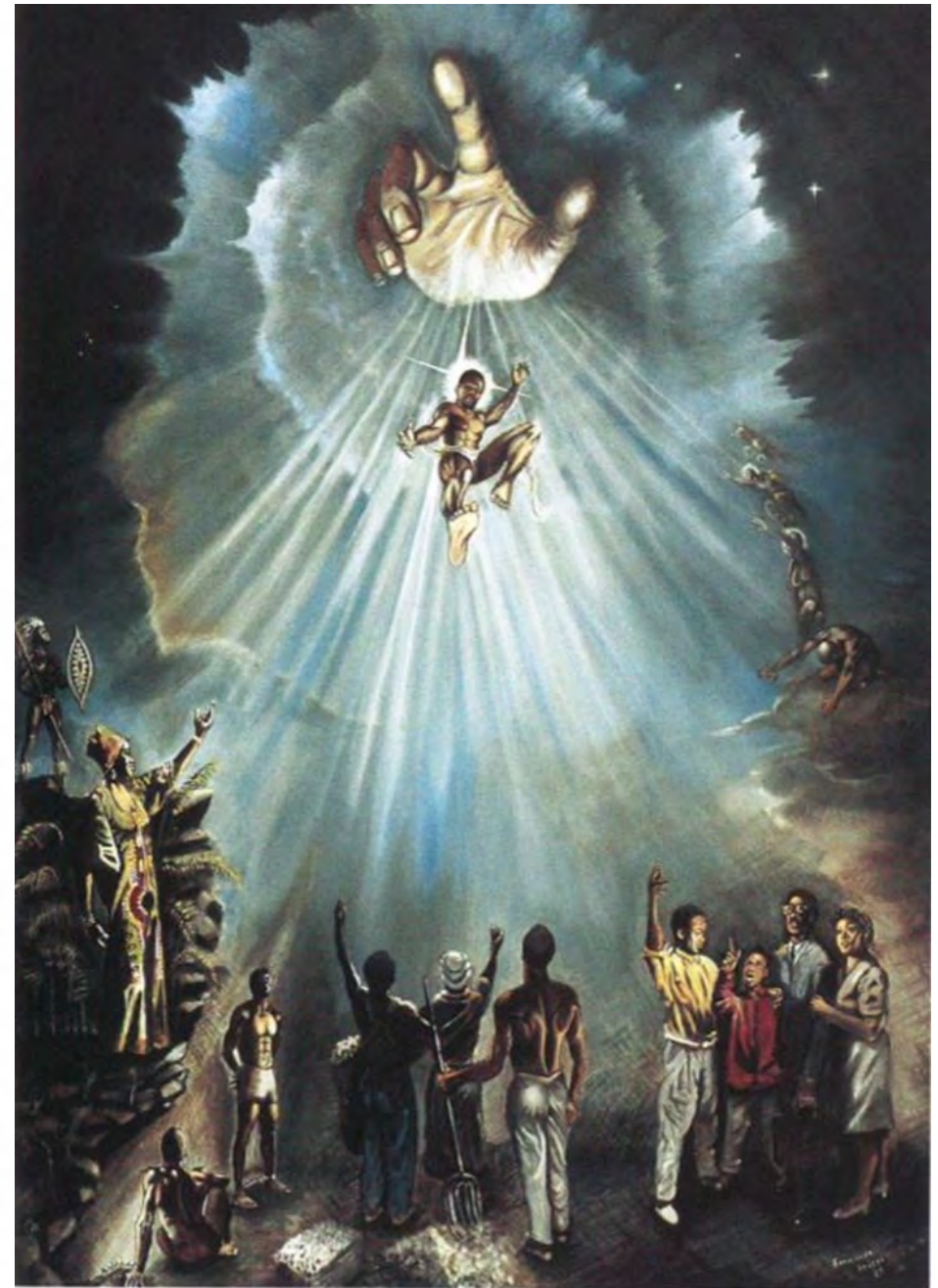
Their pain-filled existence has not been overlooked by the loving and compassionate God.

On the center right side are the souls of the deceased ascending to God as the Son descends from God's hand. "Emmanuel" - God among us.

This is just one facet of a diamond that has many sides. My painting endeavours to emphasize the facet of God made man - the great gift of incarnation for all people of the world in time and in space.

- Fernando Arizti

Fernando Arizti, Mexico / USA, *Incarnation* (detail)

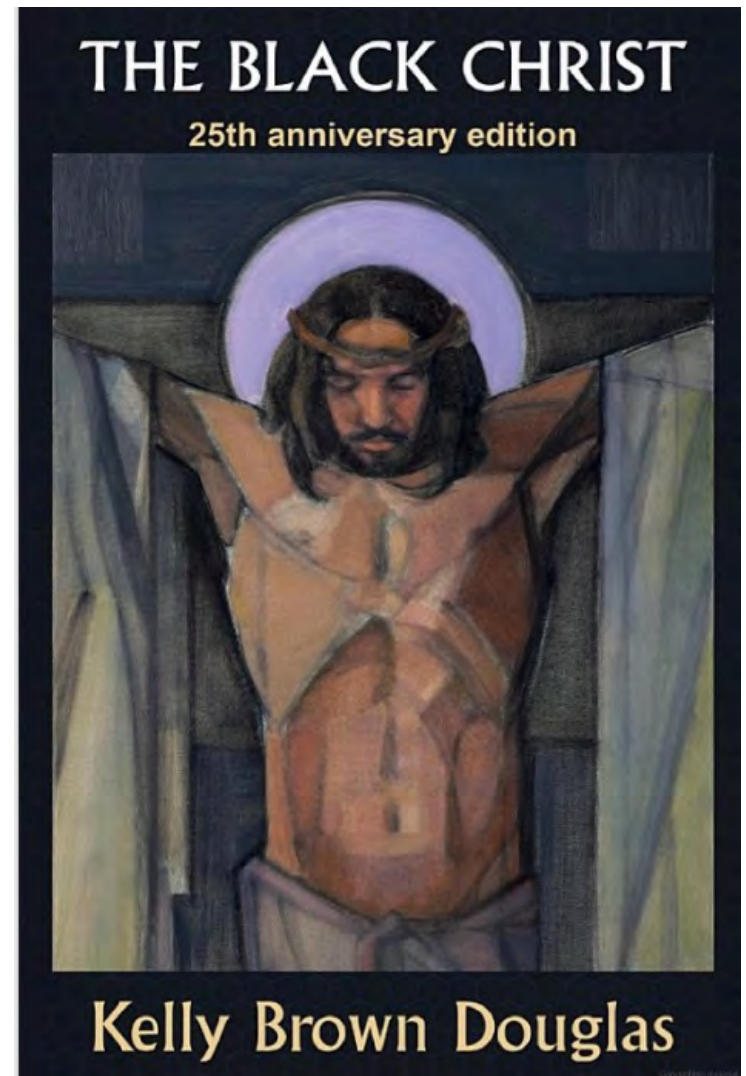


Fernando Arizti, Mexico / USA, *Incarnation*, 1989

“Black theology is a theology of liberation.
It seeks to Plumb the black condition in the light of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, so that the black community can see that the gospel is commensurate with the achievement of black humanity.... It is the affirmation of black humanity that emancipates black people from white racism, thus providing authentic freedom for both white and black people. it affirms the humanity of white people in that it says no to the encroachment of white oppression.”

Statement of National Conference of Black Churchmen (sic) June 1969

...the blackness of Christ is about more than a white/black colour line... In this regard, Christ's blackness indicates his deep and personal identification with people of colour as they suffer the pain, heartache and death exacted on them by the insidiousness of white supremacist culture.

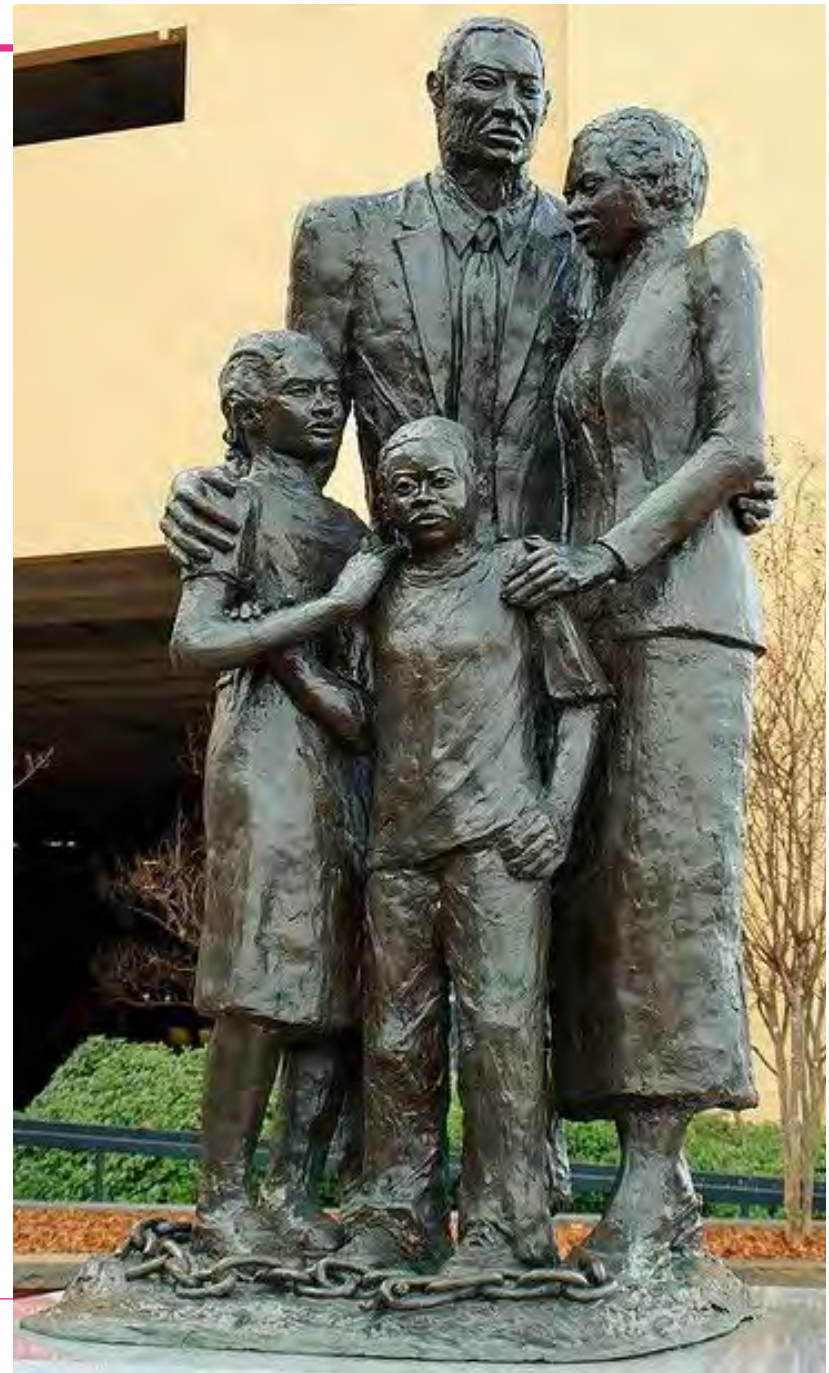


...And so, we might paraphrase the gospel question for today: “but Lord, where did we see you dying on the cross?” And Jesus would answer: “on a Florida sidewalk with Trayvon, or at the US Mexican border with an immigrant refused asylum, or in a detention centre with a brown child separated from his or her parents, or in a juvenile court with the black child trapped in the poverty to prison pipeline. As you did to one of the least of these, you did it to me”.

“because black theology is survival theology, it must speak with a passion consistent with the depths of the wounds of the oppressed. Theological language is passionate language the language of commitment, because it is language which seeks to vindicate the afflicted and condemn the enforcers of evil. Christian theology cannot afford to be an abstract dispassionate discourse on the nature of God in relation to humankind; such an analysis has no ethical implications for the contemporary forms of oppression in our society.”

**THE CHAINS MAY HAVE
FALLEN...**

NEVERTHELESS THEY REMAIN



LIVE GOD'S JUST FUTURE
NOW



Ig Eng Teng, Singapore, *The Way*, 1987, cement-fondu, 102 x 68 x 40 cm

REPENTING (PAST)

&

**REPAIRING
(UNJUST PRESENT)**



Eng Teng, Singapore, *The Way*, 1987, cement-fondu, 102 x 68 x 40 cm

RESISTING EMPIRES – OLD AND NEW

(POSTCOLONIAL AND DECOLONIAL THEOLOGIES)

“Unholy Alliance of the Missionary, Merchant and the Military”

– Aloysius Pieris

Christianity, Commerce and Civilization



Jamie S. Scott says, “by the middle of the nineteenth century, under the double aegis of “the bible and the flag”, governments, merchants, explorers, and other adventurers were exploiting the aura of ethical responsibility lent by religion to every effort to carry British civilisation to a benighted world.”

TUTU QUOTES THIS (DOESN'T SAY IT)

When the missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible and we had the land. They said “let us close our eyes and pray.” When we opened them, we had the Bible, and they had the land.

Bishop Desmond Tutu
Nobel Peace Prize Awardee



COLONIALISM DOES NOT BELONG TO THE PAST ALONE

MESSY LEGACIES OF COLONIALISM CONTINUE

“the memory of European imperialism remains a live political factor everywhere from Casablanca to Jakarta, and whether one is talking nuclear power with Tehran or the future of the renminbi with the Chinese, contemporary diplomacy will fail if it does not take this into account.”

Shashi Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire*

The geographical boundaries drawn by the “Arbitrariness Of A Colonial Mapmaker’s Pen,”



One of the dangers to consider is whether in our activities we are not replicating old models of dominance....

Emergence from the recognition...

... that the global South, the Tri continental countries, that is the nations of the three non-Western continents (Africa, Asia, Latin America, while not forgetting Oceania), **for the most part remains in a situation of subordination to Europe and North America**, typically in a position of economic inequality.

POSTCOLONIAL THEOLOGY

“Post colonial theology begins in particularity, is the agency of marginalised voices, considers coloniality as the best lens through which to view imperialist oppression, practises hybridization, and seeks to resist dominant forms of theology”



ALSO ABOUT PRESENT EMPIRES

The Empire as the new context



“a decentred and
deterritorialising
apparatus of rule,”

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri,
Empire,

‘MISSION QUO VADIS’ AFTER ARUSHA

“Arusha Call to Discipleship” issued

13 March 2018

Participants from the World Council of Churches Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) issued a “Call to Discipleship” on 13 March, the closing day of the conference. More than 1,000 people gathered in Tanzania for the CWME, and all are engaged in mission and evangelism, coming from different Christian traditions across the world.





The Arusha Call to
Discipleship says:

*“We observed the shocking
accumulation of wealth due
to one global financial
system”.*

This global imperial system has made the financial market one of the idols of our time. It has also strengthened cultures of domination and discrimination that continue to marginalize and exclude millions, forcing some among us into conditions of vulnerability and exploitation.”

THE NEW FACE OF THE EMPIRE



“Nationalism has long been part of the corporate global project. The freer global capital becomes, the harder national borders become. Colonialism needed to move large populations of people—slaves and indentured labor—to work in mines and on plantations. Now the new dispensation needs to keep people in place and move the money—so the new formula is free capital, caged labor. How else are you going to drive down wages and increase profit margins? Profit is the only constant. And it has worked to a point.”

- Arundathi Roy

But now capitalism's wars for resources and strategic power (otherwise known as "just wars") have destroyed whole countries and created huge populations of war refugees who are breaching borders. The spectre of an endless flow of unwanted immigrants with the wrong skin color or the wrong religion is now being used to rally fascists and ethno-nationalists across the world. That candle is burning at both ends and down the middle, too. It cannot all be laid at the door of resource-plundering or strategic thinking. Eventually it develops a momentum and a logic of its own.

MISSION IN A 'KNOTTED INTERRELIGIOUS AGE'



REALITY OF MIGRATION



“The fact that in our current global economy it is easier for a coffee bean to cross borders than those who cultivate it raises serious questions about how our economy is structured and ordered”



“... our children’s future and the future of our common home depend on it”.

“Empire makes itself most evident in how power is used and profit made and for whom. Empire enables us to name the contested space between God and the world, for this is not the world as God wants it, not the fullness of life for all that Christ promised, nor the vision of shalom inspired by the Spirit. This contested space is where God enters in mission and calls others to share in counter-creating the world beyond Empire.”

Mission From The Margins



Not Objects... but Agents of Mission

In the context of empire, affirmation of the agency of the margins safeguards us from succumbing to the imperialistic framework of the empire because ‘we will continue to support empire by default unless we look for those particular and often repressed places where we encounter alternatives’.

- Joerg Reiger

Together Towards Life:



People on the margins have agency, and can often see what, from the centre, is out of view. People on the margins, living in vulnerable positions, often know what exclusionary

forces are threatening their survival and can best discern urgency of their struggles; people in positions of privilege have much to learn from the daily struggles of people living in marginal conditions’.

Unless Christian witness is reshaped as With-ness in solidarity with the margins, the church risks losing its identity as an instrument of the divine kin-dom of justice and peace. It will lose an opportunity to participate in the reign of God unveiling itself among the excluded and despised people of the world’.

RENEWING AND REPAIRING GOD'S CREATION

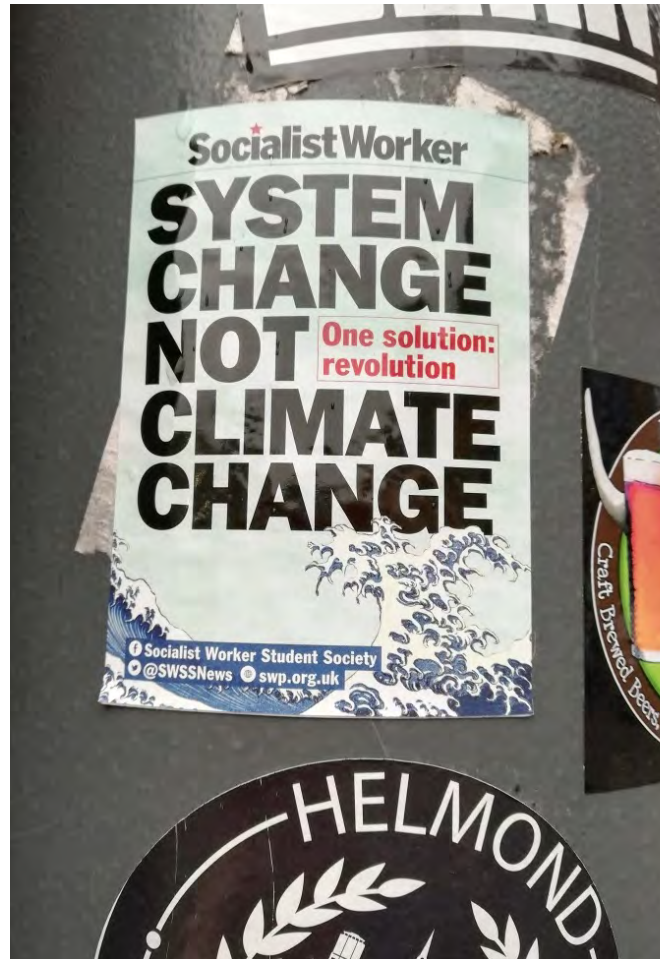


The word *Theomoana* – meaning God the ocean – is used to express the world encompassing, interconnecting nature of God.

THEOMOANA

“The very construction of the word ‘*Theomoana*’ speaks of God’s care of the whole of creation. It is a theological and ecological approach that challenges the human arrogant tendency to treat the planet earth and its life with disrespect. *Theomoana* advocates a humility that honours the creation as God’s gift. This is of vital importance at this time when abuse of the gifts of planet earth has been so great that there is now threatening global disaster in the form of climate change.”

USPG's Experience in Philippines



Ecological Discipleship is Rooted in Justice

HELP US RETHINK OUR RESPONSE TO ECO ISSUES

Move beyond feel good environmentalism

We cannot fix the crisis through life-style changes – through becoming responsible consumers.

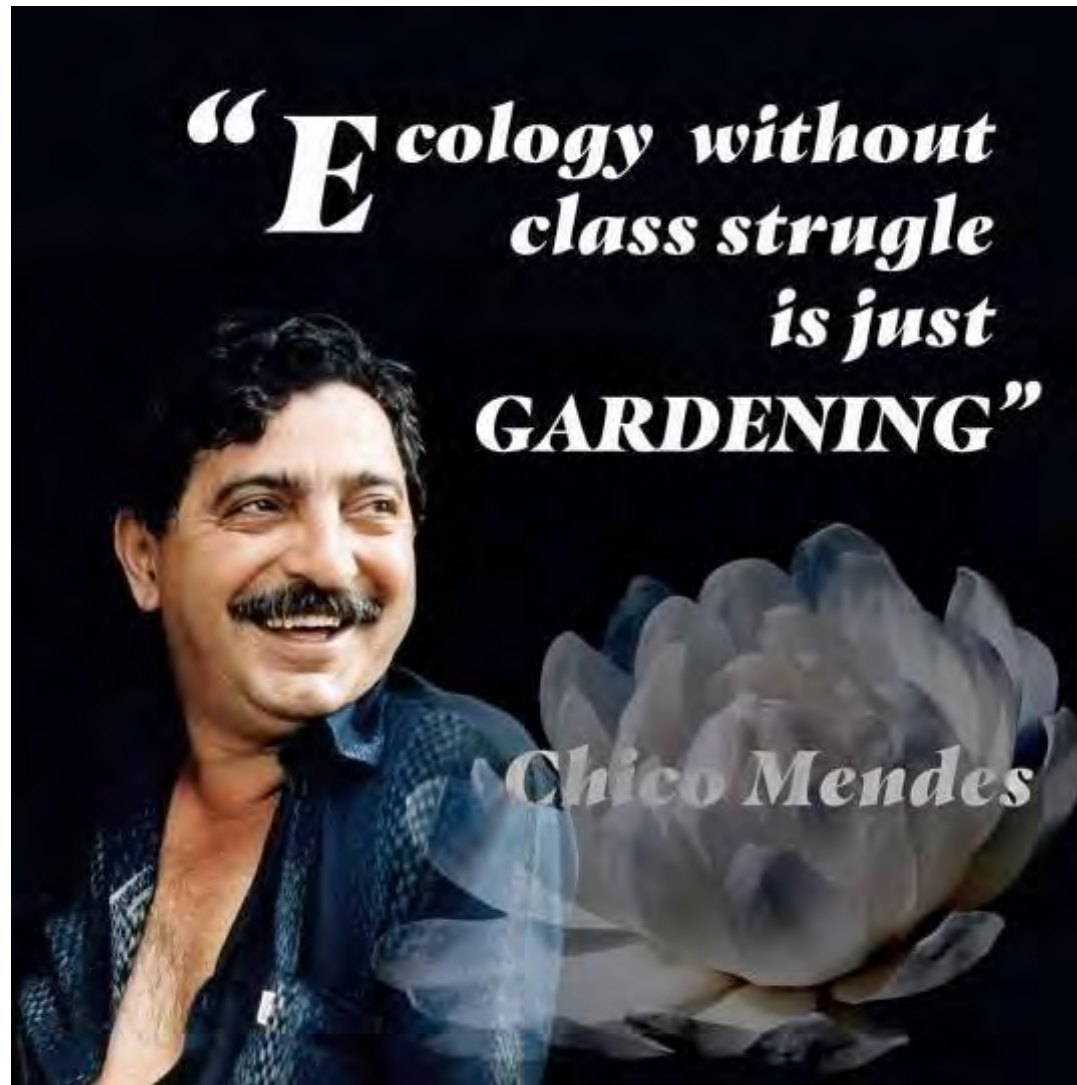
We need to discern this as a justice issue

George Zachariaiah,

USPG Rethinking Mission Conference, 2022

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ECO-DISCIPLESHIP IS NOT COSMETIC











UNIVERSITY

*"Weaving the Patchwork
of Justice and Peace
in a Broken World"*



22nd GENERAL CONVENTION
National Council of Churches
in the Philippines



November 21-25, 2007
Maria Antonia Paris Retreat House
#48-A Cenacle Drive, Sanville Subdivision
Culiat, Quezon City



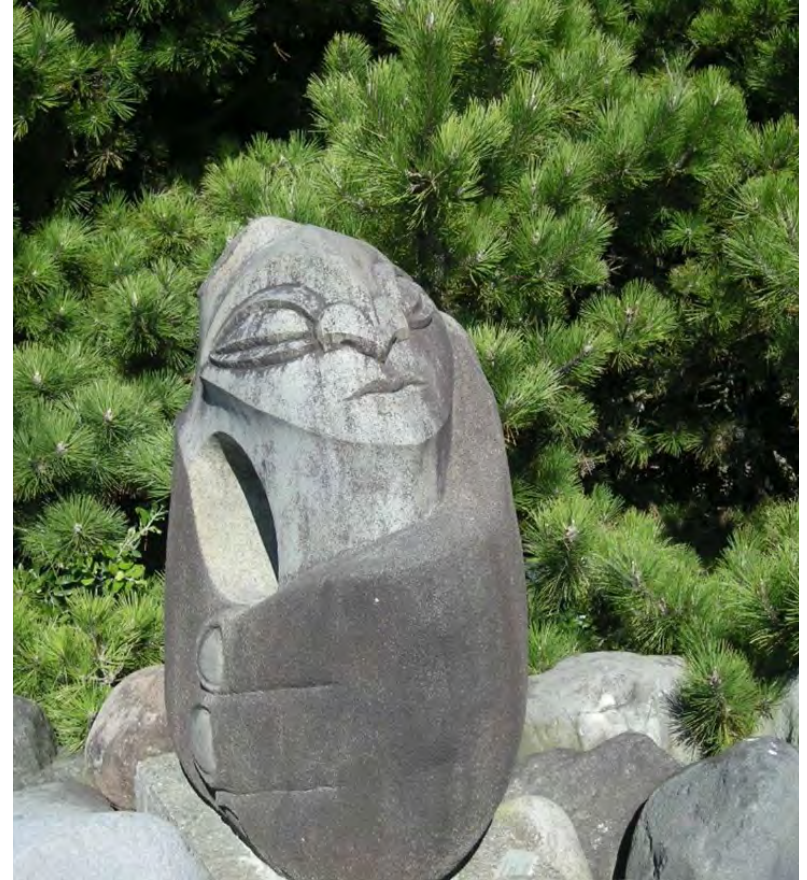
REPAIR AND RECONCILIATION





O JESUS, BE THE CANOE THAT HOLDS ME UP IN THE SEA OF LIFE

O Jesus, Be the canoe that
holds me up in the sea of life;
Be the rudder that keeps me in
the straight road;
Be the outrigger that supports
me in times of temptation.
Let your Spirit be my sail that
carries me through each day.
Keep my body strong so I can
paddle steadfastly on in the
voyage of life. Amen



World Christianity pursues a threefold conversation:

- across borders of culture (mission studies)
- across borders of confession or communion (ecumenics), and
- across borders with other religious faiths (world religions)

- Dale Irvin

How do you understand mission?



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Mission is more **being** than
doing

about **who** and **how** we are...
and less about **what** we do

Mission - the heartbeat of the
church

“The heart of this church will slowly turn to stone if we think our primary mission work is to those already in the pews inside our beautiful churches. We are in cardiac crisis if we think we can close the doors, swing our incense and sing our hymns, and all will be right with the world. The heart of this body is mission”

“we have a nagging sense that there is indeed a "cardiac crisis" at the local level in many places... the question of how we can allow the Spirit, at every level of the church, to "offer a pacemaker jolt to tweak the rhythm of this heart" is as urgent as ever...”

Christopher Duraisingh

How do we respond to this
pacemaker jolt of the Spirit so
that our wills are in rhythm with
God's own will for the world?



- How can we be caught in the God-movement?

- Understanding our being as “being in – participation”...



Participating in God's ways and work of creation, redemption and sustenance...

The is what makes mission
relational



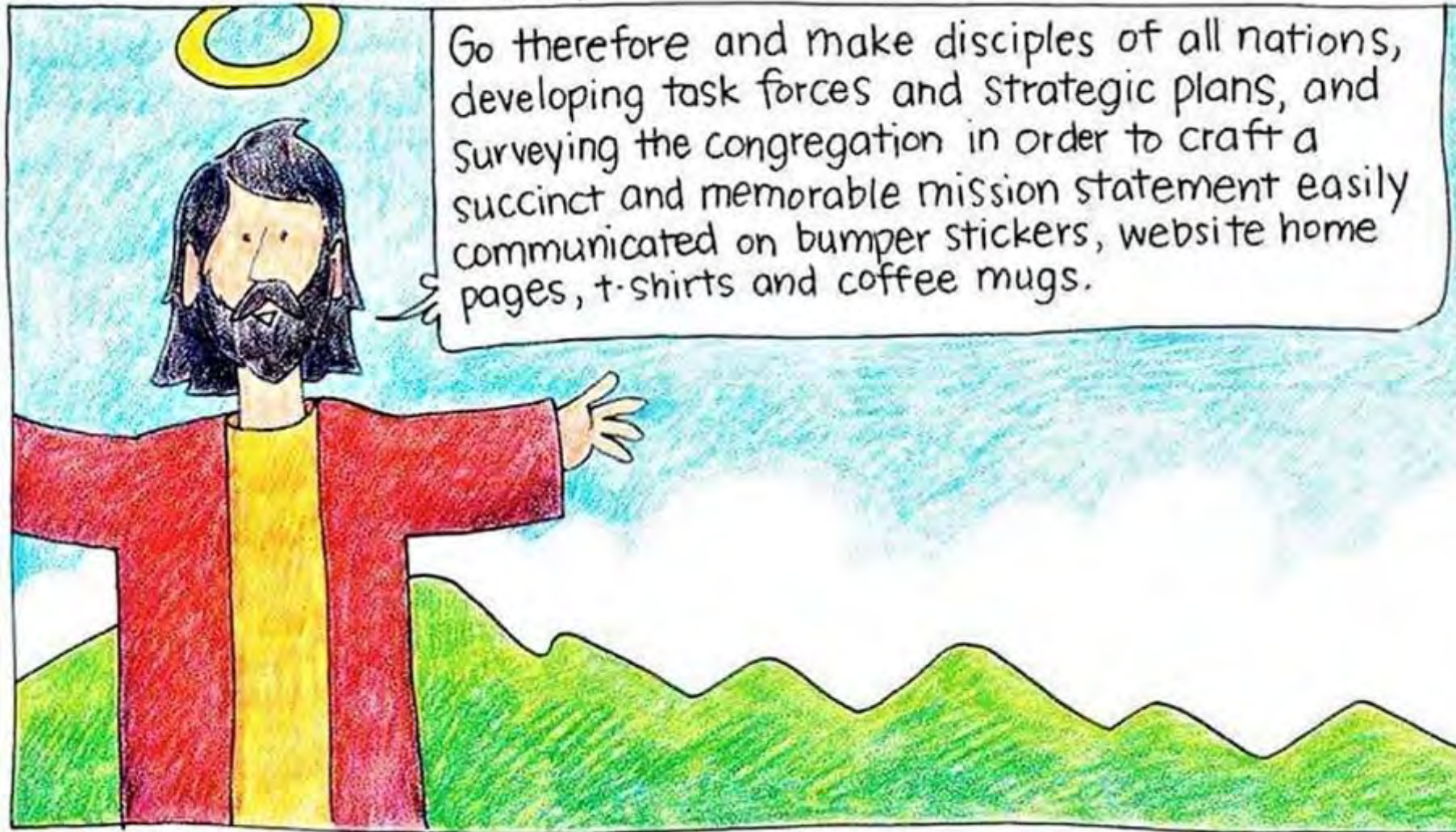
With-Ness

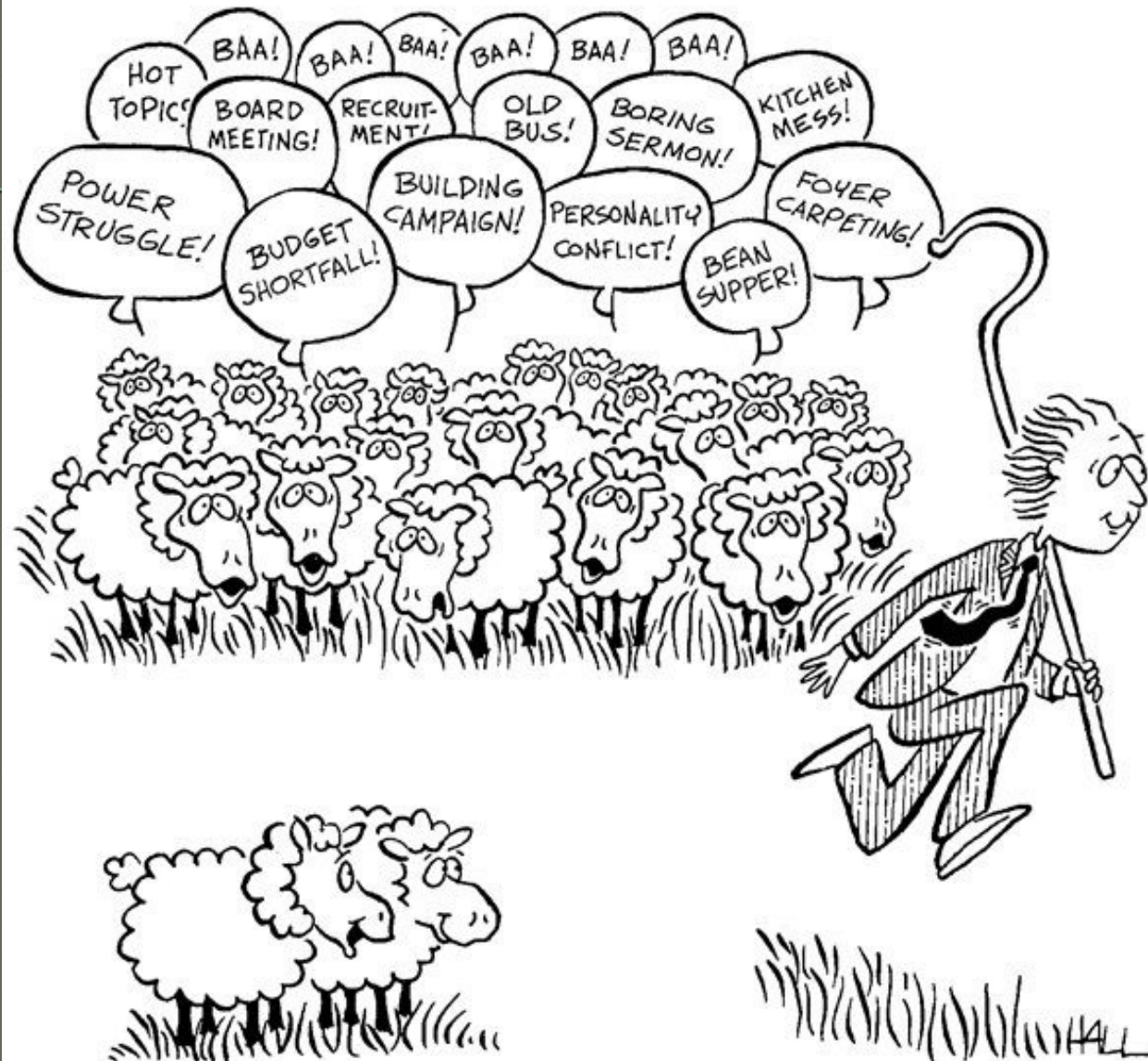
Partnership
with God

with God's people, and
with God's creation

Much to say today... Cultures of membership

THE GREAT COMMISSION REVISITED





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"You've got to admire him. He's always quick to leave the ninety-nine to search for the lost one."

Humility: Christian Witness as With-Ness:

