

## **II. THEOLOGICAL VOICES REFLECTING THE NEW ANTIOCH**

### **SECTION INTRODUCTION**

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The Book of Acts tells the story of the first commissioning of missionaries out of Antioch (Acts 13:1), noting the context as that of prophets and teachers fasting and gathered for worship and prayer. Strengthened with spiritual power, Barnabas and Saul (Paul) were perceived through the Spirit to be called and set apart for a special mission, a first missionary journey to the dark continent of Europe. Strengthened with spiritual power, the three prophets and teachers remaining in Antioch, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen, lay their hands on the two departing ones, indicating by their names that at least two of the three may have been African in origin.<sup>1</sup>

While the gospel is embedded in Judaism, this scene and the events it portrays in Acts chapters 13-14 carry us to a first council of the church at which issues of gospel and culture are preeminent, the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35), to be the early church's first cultural crisis, occasioned by Antioch and its missionary aftermath. The decision reached: one did not have to become Jewish before becoming a follower of Jesus.

We stand today on the point of another cultural crisis, a "clash of civilizations" – and we are learning that we do not need to become "western" before becoming Christian. The first chapter in this section, "Listening to Voices Outside Our Gate," by Charles Onyango Oduke, SJ, reminds us

of this. Oduke asks us to perceive, through the lens of the destruction of the U. S. World Trade Center and Pentagon (September 11, 2001), a larger world, one in which local and international actions interpenetrate. The language of contemporary political reference, use of antiquated or demeaning sociological terms such as, “third world” perpetuates historical myopia, lacks social realism and conveys disrespect.<sup>2</sup> Mission requires global partnerships and networking toward the healing of the world. Christian mission requires, in Oduke’s opinion, the perspectival outlook of “cosmopolis,” an idea advanced by Bernard Lonergan, which rejects the “screening of memories., the falsification of history....” We are at an historical moment which requires us to listen to the cry of the citizens of the world: “Listening to voices outside one’s gate is a humble admission for the need for all cultures to complement one another.”

One way to listen to voices “outside one’s gate” – whether this be Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas or the Pacific – is to recognize that God speaks all languages.<sup>3</sup> Using the work of the 19th century Hindu convert to Christianity, Indian nationalist, journalist and theologian, Brahmabandhav Upadhyay (1861-1907), missiologist Timothy Tennent asks us in the chapter, “Listening to Voices Outside the Gates,” to take note of not only the linguistic translatability of the Christian message, but its *cultural* translatable nature as well. Not only does the gospel come to us as an enscriptured text, but also as an encultured message. It must be made intelligible in specific, local contexts. Drawing on the work of Orlando Costas, authentic theology is “reflecting on the faith in the light of one’s historical context.” Upadhyay sought to use the language of *advaitic* Hinduism as an interpretive bridge to better communicate Christianity to enquiring Hindus.

In “Beyond Huntington’s Gate: Orthodox Social Thinking for a Borderless Europe,” Marian Gh. Simion writes about how the end of global bi-polar conflict has impacted the Orthodox churches in their encounter with society, particularly as European political theory experiences the end of the Grotian [Hugo Grotius] statist model. A challenge of globalization is the need to revisit the Kantian universalistic model, but in alliance with Christian universalism – “no more Jew or Greek” – in order to shape Europe’s new identity and perhaps that of the wider family of nations; theologically, to make space for the churches to exercise their prophetic role within a strategy of “adaptability”. This is challenging not only for Europe, but also for North America as pointed out by John B. Kauta, “Is North America a Mission Field? What Does the World Church Say?”

Our journey through this section asks us to move, “Outside Many Gates,” as mission today mandates many conversations. This is to con-

tinue Paul's dialogue with society as revealed in his Letters,<sup>4</sup> theologian Mark Heim's intent as he documents four "conversations" in Costas' life that shape methodology: "Just as the Macedonian call to Paul had been the means by which the gospel passed into the European world, Orlando saw this call as one by which the renewed gospel might come again to the dominant European culture of North America, where (as he put it) the North American Hispanic community and other racial minority communities were "the bridge between mainstream North America and the peoples on the periphery of the world." These conversions were brought to an agenda for the churches that included the internal horizons of universality, ecumenism and world Christianity, and gave attention to three external horizons, "critical literacy" in religion,<sup>5</sup> the scientific cast of culture, and the universality that is constituted by the world religions.

In "Between the Gates," Samuel Solivan reflects on Costas' many roles as evangelist, educator and mission analyst – taking the gospel to the crossroads of contemporary life, theology "between the gates" of life that mark the boundaries of political, economic, religious or social acceptability. Here Costas' methodology exemplifies what Miroslav Volf identifies as crossing boundaries of "exclusion and embrace." Costas sought conversation partners from different contexts and between different sets of borders or boundaries, breaking open the intramural conversations that often dominate theological reflection and missional action.

Listening beyond the gates takes each of us into the realm of the other, an important move toward the maturation of identity. The gospel has long been in the thrall of European and North Atlantic culture, but for all the good that has come of this, it is not an unmitigated blessing. It has come with a price. That price has been increasingly set by the political and economic power residing in transnational corporations and in the technology that shapes perception, captivates the imagination, and offers legitimacy to current consumerist and other practices.<sup>6</sup>

Listening "outside" and "beyond" our gate asks us to take up participation in global community, rejecting what Robert Bellah identified as an "ontological individualism," a failure to see how we are embedded in a deeper social ecology where individual interests are linked to the common good.<sup>7</sup> The restoration of social ecology must be one of the goals of Christian mission, lending both meaning and authenticity to mission.<sup>8</sup> Global community requires that we see ourselves as global citizens. Few have been as tireless in promoting such an idea as Quaker peace activist Elise Boulding,<sup>9</sup> a cause taken up by the former president of Notre Dame University, Theodore M. Hesburgh. There can be no place for discrimination or

social and economic exclusion from the perspective of global citizenship, no priority given to corporatism, cultural dominance or any perspective that promotes benign or lethal forms of dependency.<sup>10</sup>

Global consciousness has been driven by mission, not just by corporatism and technology – and it is important to ask who has been in the driver's seat. Leslie Sklair and colleagues have argued that global capitalism driven by politically connected transnational corporations drive the culture.<sup>11</sup> This may be, but as the rise of global Fundamentalism illustrates, the picture is not always so clear. Of the five categories of persons that political scientist Richard Falk identifies as engaged with global needs and networks – global reformers, elite global business people, global environmental managers, politically conscious regionalists, and trans-national activists – four of the five have grassroots activism at their core.<sup>12</sup> In his later discussion of globalization, Falk makes the distinction of globalization from above and from below, the former being economic and often brutal in nature and the latter oriented to global human rights, often alive in relation to living religious traditions.<sup>13</sup> Legitimacy for such activism is not drawn from any state, whether in areas of global economics, environmentalism, human rights, but from a kind of natural law although seldom identified as such.<sup>14</sup> The connection made between globalization and mission by Dana Robert, earlier in this volume, now becomes clearer.

If the Christian movement gains legitimacy from universalism associated with a kind of “natural law,” it also finds this through its expression of local culture. Both are implied in Andrew Walls' work.<sup>15</sup> Local cultures become caught up in a larger Christian movement to the extent that they can be articulated through theology.<sup>16</sup> The International Missionary Council (Jerusalem, 1930) stressed that the Christian message must be expressed in national and cultural patterns, implying movement beyond Euro-North American cultures. This indigenization was furthered by the Theological Education Fund in the 1970s with its emphasis upon contextualization. Decolonization in political and mental sovereignty, signaled by the Liberation and then Pentecostal theologies of Latin America,<sup>17</sup> offered legitimacy to an array of theologies – water buffalo theology (Thailand), minjung theology (Korea), and other national theologies throughout Asia<sup>18</sup> as well as to such rapidly growing movements as African Initiated Churches (AICs) and indigenous theologies.<sup>19</sup> Examples such as these offer opportunities for debate as charges of syncretism, accommodation, situational and biblical fidelity have vied with one another through phases of adaptation, incarnation, and self-conscious identity formation.

Local theologies have permitted the expression of suppressed iden-

tities through affirmation of an inherent human dignity.<sup>20</sup> Group consciousness, histories of privilege and depravation – as well as local languages and folk ways – crowd together to shape these identities – and identity has political implications. The Christian movement, growing worldwide, struggles to find the way through these complexities of gospel and culture to “integral mission,” affirming, perhaps, what Kwame Appiah calls, “rooted cosmopolitanism.”<sup>21</sup> We are told in the text to “fix our eyes on Jesus” (Hebrew 12:2), yet we are more aware than ever of how differently he may be depicted.<sup>22</sup> But he is the one – prophet, priest and king – who gives identity to the church and gives the church courage to be the body of Christ in the world.<sup>23</sup>

### End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Mensa Otabil, *Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia. A biblical revelation on God's Purpose for the Black Race* (Accra, Ghana: Alter International, 1992).
- <sup>2</sup> See for debate on the term “third world” in Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, *Sharing Jesus in the Two Thirds World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).
- <sup>3</sup> See Puritan linguist John Eliot's encounter with Chief Waban in *The Day-Breaking, if not the Sun-Rising of the Gospell with the Indians of New-England* (London, 1647) , in Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, 3 ser. IV (1834) cited by J. Tremayne Copplestone, *John Eliot and the Indians, 1604-1690* (Boston: Published by the estate of Eleanor D. Copplestone, 1998): 71-72.
- <sup>4</sup> Rodney Clapp, *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996); see also Rodney Petersen, “Violence and the Church: Tales of Hope,” in *Violence, Truth and Prophetic Silence. Religion and the Quest for a South African Common Good*, C. W. du Toit, ed. (Pretoria: UNISA, 2000): 102-128.
- <sup>5</sup> See Mark Heim, “Renewing Ways of Life: The Shape of Theological Education,” in Petersen, ed., *Theological Literacy for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Eedmans, 2002): 55-67.
- <sup>6</sup> Howard J. Wiarda discusses the impact of “dependency” theory whereby development between a stronger and weaker partner may not always be synchronous but in favor of the stronger entity. See *Introduction to Comparative Politics. Concepts and Processes* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson, 2000): 79-99.
- <sup>7</sup> Robert Bellah et al, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996 updated ed.); and see Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone : The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001 ed.).
- <sup>8</sup> As the Willowbank Report puts it, such effort requires the renunciation of “a cultural imperialism which both undermines the local culture unnecessarily and seeks to impose an alien culture instead.” See John Stott and Robert Coote, eds., *Gospel and Culture* (Pasadena: William Carey Library,

1979): 442.

- <sup>9</sup> Elise Boulding, *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History* (Syracuse: University of Syracuse, 2000): see “Ministry in the 21st Century: Building Cultures of Reconciliation,” *Newsletter of the Boston Theological Institute*, vol. XXXII, no. 2 (September 18, 2002).
- <sup>10</sup> C. René Padilla and Lindy Scott, *Terrorism and the War in Iraq: A Christian Word from Latin America* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Kairós, 2004): “Christians believe that identity does not depend on race or nationality, social or economic position, or status or gender, but that we all bear the image of God.”
- <sup>11</sup> Leslie Sklair, ed., *Capitalism and Development* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
- <sup>12</sup> Richard Falk, “The Making of Global Citizenship,” in Bart van Steenberg, ed., *The Condition of Citizenship* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 127-40, esp. 138.
- <sup>13</sup> Richard Falk, *Religion and Humane Global Governance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).
- <sup>14</sup> Compare Rico Lie and Jan Servaes, “Globalization: Consumption and Identity – Toward Researching Nodal Points,” in Georgette Wang, Jan Servaes and Anura Goonasekera, eds., *The New Communications Landscape* (London: Routledge, 2000), 307-32, and Margaret Scammell, “Internet Civic Engagement: Age of the Citizen-Consumer” [<http://jsis.artsci.washington.edu/programs/cwesuw/scammell.htm>] (2001), with Hans Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Much of the work of the World Council of Churches in its efforts on “Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation,” has developed in relation to a Natural law perspective.
- <sup>15</sup> Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in Trans-mission of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996).
- <sup>16</sup> Robert Schreier, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999); see also John Parratt, ed., *An Introduction to Third World Theologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- <sup>17</sup> Enrique Dussel, ed., *The Church in Latin America, 1492-1992* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992); and *Mysterium Liberationis. Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed., Ignacio Ellacuría, SJ and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993). On Pentecostalism: Andre Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani, eds., *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America* (Indiana University Press, 2001).
- <sup>18</sup> John C. England, et al, *Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide Authors, Movements, Sources*, 3 vols. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004).
- <sup>19</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of Non-Western Religion* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996); John Parratt, *Reinventing Christianity: African Theology Today* (African World Press, 1996).
- <sup>20</sup> Felix Wilfred, *The Sling of Utopia* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2005): See the chapters, “Struggles of Suppressed Identities” (pp. 23-45) and “Minorities in an Age

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of Globalisation" (46-76).

<sup>21</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> The term "integral mission" (Spanish: *misión integral*), forged by the Latin American Theological Fraternity (FTL), a theological movement since the 1970s.

<sup>23</sup> Rodney Petersen, "Church and University. The Threefold Ministry and the Offices of Christ," in Pater and Petersen, eds., *The Contentious Triangle. Church, State and University. A Festschrift in Honor of Professor George Huntston Williams* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University, 1999): 359-81; see: Alister E. McGrath, *Theology: The Basics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004): The work of Christ "summarized under three offices or ministries (*the munus triplex Christi*): prophet, priest, and king. ..." (p. 67).

