

POSTCOLONIAL THEOLOGIES: DIVINITY & EMPIRE.
Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, Mayra Rivera eds.
Chalice 2004

- ‘Colonialism’: political control of groups, settling lands with new residents, exploiting the land through military and administration.
- ‘Imperialism’: rules from the centre and extends power outwards.

With global technology colonies are a risk we don’t need any longer. So

- ‘Neo-colonialism’ is reconstruction of old subjugation. If the basic control remains, then it is imperialism still (eg in the academy – we still operate from assumptions and benefit from them – anthropology comes close in studies of the poor)
Economic rule works best below the surface.
- subaltern class does not have conscientisation as a class.

Western working-class don’t always benefit from empire, can have solidarity with subalterns.

Bible formed against background of Empires.
Church is Hybrid of Roman Empire.

Religious revivalism is often akin to anti-colonial resistance.

Liberation Theology led to realising the multiple forms of oppression.
But we cannot have it in common. Now globalised imperial power of USA,
(Europe, China and India)
Not binary anti-imperialism ~ Pedagogy of the Oppressed. (Frierie)
Said, Bhabha, Spivak.

Themes:

Identity:

Made in image of Triune God.

Old Binaries of native/alien, white/black, pure/impure, spirit/matter.

Boundaries are the place of negotiation & hybridity & shared fears(Bhabha)

this is a **Third Space** we are not individuated entities, but parts of a community – of which Anglo is a part.

But often identity needs displacement experience to become conscious.

Borderlands:

Sam Gill studies Australian Aborigines network of tracks/journeys taken by ancestors – non-competitive – Jesus’ relation with the Land as nomad.

Postmoderns on web are not territorial/imperial? Roots and routes together.

‘Journey’ – pilgrimage.

Mark: points of departure and arrival noted. Sea of Galilee becomes a bridge!

Jesus transcends boundaries (Rome/Temple), we negotiate at them.

Latino theology majors on Frontier *fronteras* displaced migrant exiles.

Mulatez, mestizaje. Dialogical nature of colonialism.

Relationships come prior to individual.

Solidarity therefore imperative – Mary and the Poor.

Obversely, home can be place of rejection (Nazareth; East Ham) and where we exchange with foreigners.

But **contextual theology** has invested too much in roots in a mobile culture. So we have to blend vernacular and cosmopolitan cultures ~ our own and those around us ~ become internationalists.

Illusion of closed off identity: ‘idolatry of identity’ since it denies the rest of creation.

Colonialism hardened identities – you must imitate me. Be the SAME!

But the mimic becomes “almost the same but not white.” But survival is about connections (Said)

Pentecost

Multilingual understanding dancing on head of Apostles – wildfire.

Neither Grk/Jew = both.

Church task not boundary protection but border crossing – look to in between places. Not synergy of Christ, Commerce, Conquest.

Sugirtharajah

Max Warren: Empire has brought benefits and peace, grateful natives, joining us in common cosmopolitan culture.

Niebuhr: modern empires are servants of global commonality.

Basic superiority.

Predatory economics.

How it feels on receiving end.

M.M.Thomas:

God uses one evil (empire) to defeat another – caste

Defeats one God and offers materialism, secularism, rationalism

Nation-building prepares for reception of Christ.

Offers western-educated elite. India then plays ‘catch-up’.

Emperor/saviour:

Autonomous self-made, self-mastering individual – saving disabled.

Fix the failing or abnormal – Afghanistan – Platonic ideal.

Western Theology ~ Constantinian captivity of thought. Asian theologians can internalise this monolithic notion and talk of Asian theology. (Poverty is Asian theology? Many are wealthy!) To speak of Asianness is OK to find an early voice but not for too long. All cultures are involved in one another – not pure.

Losing oneself to find oneself – the Hybrid Christian. [lg]

Christian praxis takes place somewhere.

‘God bless America’ – God on imperialist side! To reverse the binary and say

‘God is now on side of poor’ does not redeem the border relationship.

The person of Jesus

Receive **‘the Empire of God’ as a child**, but wealth/status will deny entry.
He reverses the map of power. Mk 10:40 Slave/diakonos as the liberator!
Parables – ‘almost the same but not quite’ undermining of empire.
The imperialist is addicted to oppression of others through trade.
Kenosis necessary for salvation & life.

Ambiguity in NT about relationships with Rome and authority:
Gerasenes 5:1-9, Pontius Pilate ambiguity, Mk 13 is not the strike at empire
of Revelation, I Peter 2:13-16, paidon, diakonos,
Jesus is the Divine/Human Hybrid.

Catherine Keller

Empire has built-in contradiction – it mixes differences up to create hybrids.
Pentecost miracle therefore possible.
But empire was high price for Church to pay for this miracle.
Globo-latin-ization overtook polyglossia. Now the anglo-balisation of earth.
The space of flows leads to homogeneity not expected negotiated borders –
There is no outside/r any more. No beyond for the safe God to be – there is
now Mutually Assured Vulnerability. ‘Hospitality’ has no host or alien.

Some argue **Neo-nationalism!**:

Fluid Postcolonialism or USA Empire?

More people died in Mexican boarder prior 9/11 than Berlin wall’s history.

[perhaps no binary between colonial and Empire! – lg]

avoids crypto-imperialisms of exclusionary truth

Love cannot be disembodied. We are in but not of empire. Ecology ~ Love.