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Reimagining Mission in the Postcolonial Condition

Reimagining Mission in the Postcolonial Condition
A Theology of Vulnerability and Vocation at the Margins

Missie in de Postkoloniale Conditie
Een theologie van kwetsbaarheid en roeping vanuit de marges
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor in de godgeleerdheid
aan de Protestantse Theologische Universiteit te Amsterdam & Groningen
op gezag van de rector, prof. dr. M.M. Jansen,
ingevolge het besluit van het college voor promoties
in het openbaar te verdedigen op woensdag 30 november 2016 des middags te
1.45 uur
door

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geboren op 28 april 1986
te Hoorn

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This dissertation is made possible by the generous support of Stichting Zonneweelde, Ridderlijke Duitse Orde – Balije van Utrecht, dr. Hendrik Muller Vaderlandsch Fonds, Stichting Het Scholten-Cordes Fonds and the J.E. Jurriaanse Stichting.

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Acknowledgments

During my five years of research at the PThU, I have been very grateful to work on this important, joy-giving and sometimes indignation-provoking subject. I have been feeling blessed to be able to delve so deeply into the heart of the mission of the church, to gradually discover the depths of vulnerability as a generative theme for a progressive mission theology, and to have the academic freedom to develop this theme further. I have also felt indignation over the woes of the colonial past, its virulent neocolonial mutations as well as the scarcity of missional theology that engage these legacies in a critical, constructive and creative way. I have been working therefore this last couple years on a progressive mission theology that engages this past and re-imagines contemporary mission theology as a vocation to vulnerability and marginality. This dissertation can therefore be read as an attempt to decolonize mission theology. It is therefore my sincere hope that this dissertation will be of service to churches and mission organizations in their journey towards postcolonial forms of mission.

This dissertation could not have been written without a supportive academic environment and friends. I always considered these kind of sweeping statement a nice academic convention, but did not consider they were true to such extent as I have found during these years of much appreciated companionship.

In the first place, I want to thank my supervisor, Mechteld Jansen. I have greatly benefited from your faith in me as well as in my project, your careful readings of my texts, and the way you always made time for my project, even in your busy function as first-ever female academic dean of the PThU. Most of all, I have benefitted from our inspiring conversations in which I always had the feeling that we understood each other well. Many thanks to my second supervisor, Stanley Skreslet, for your insightful comments and immense knowledge of the literature.

This dissertation has been written in the final years of the PThU in Utrecht. I still think back fondly of the *knusse*, cozy place that we managed to create in the ugly van Unnik building. Many thanks to the companionship of Jenny, Henk-Jan, Pieter, Ilonka, Rima, Nienke, Ronelle, Marcel, Leo and Theo. A highlight during these time was the unforgettable trip to Lebanon under the leadership of Rima. The history-making move to Amsterdam brought new companionship, in the form of Gé, Heleen, Kees, Johanna and Joyce.

I have been blessed to enjoy many conversations with and feedback from esteemed missiologists, such as Jan Jongeneel, Joerg Rieger, Kirsteen Kim, Stephan Bevans, Robert Schreiter and Darell Guder. I thank the welcoming and stimulating companionship I have found with the *OPP* during the wonderful study weeks in Maarssen. I have enjoyed working as an editor for TussenRuimte under the editorship of Wilbert van Saane and later Foka van den Beek. I felt supported by the Nederlandse Zendingsraad [Dutch Missionary Council] under leadership of Gert Noort, which gives me hope that this dissertation can be useful for various mission organizations. I thank Lesley, Hans, Ryan and Jedidiah for their corrections on my English language and their efforts to smoothen out my Dutch-colored English.

Many thanks to the community I found with NOSTER under the inspiring leadership of Anne-Marie de Korte. I have greatly benefitted from the annual two-day conference, but most of all from the systematic seminar under the supervision of Marcel Sarot and Stephan van Erp. Many thanks to Marcel for his oftentimes humorous unveiling of many unwritten academic *mores* and the annual bbq for the seminar that he hosted in his backyard. Stephan proved not only the most skilled academic networker ever, who landed me side-jobs as editor for gOdschrift and *kroniekredactie* voor *Tijdschrift voor Theologie*. His invitation to attend the Schillebeeckx conference in August 2014 proved to be life changing, since I met my partner during that conference. Many thanks to Luke, my wonderful companion, who has played an invaluable role in the final two years of my dissertation journey. Bouncing my ideas around has sharpened my mind and has helped me to articulate them much more clearly. It is high time to embark on a new adventure and make our relationship short-distance!

Many thanks to my parents, who have raised me in a climate which made this dissertation possible, deeply involved in supporting many of their missionary friends and family, while also being open and sympathetic to this new and sometimes critical perspective I have employed in my dissertation. Many thanks to my brother Laurens, whose humorful and engaged company (with craft beers) has been invaluable to this process. My father for his continued support, fatherly pride and helpful and enthusiastic anticipation of the day of the PhD defense. I have oftentimes thought that this dissertation would not have been possible without my close friends, and it is an honor to thank them here. Elsbeth, Erika and Hozjin, for being there during the whole process. Sijbrand for being the most enthusiastic *paranimf* in the history of *paranimfen*, and Wout for our thought provoking conversations.

1. Introduction

1.1 EXPLORATION OF THE RESEARCH TOPIC

The 10th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in 2013 in Busan, South Korea, presented a new statement on mission and evangelism, entitled *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*.[1] This statement is the first official declaration by the World Council of Churches on the mission of the church since the 1982 document, *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*.[2] The adoption of this landmark statement signals profound shifts in the theology of mission. One area that has undergone significant change is the social location of mission: instead of being directed *at* the margins, mission is conceptualized as originating *from* the margins of society.

The perspective of marginality offers a compelling incentive to reconceptualize mission encounters from the periphery. The adoption of *Together towards Life* signifies the willingness to rethink the foundation, goals and social location of mission anew. At the same time, *Together towards Life* represents a critical perspective on the history of the missionary enterprise. The incentive for formulating a new statement on mission and evangelism lies in the perceived shift of Christianity's 'center of gravity' from the global North to the global South. The ensuing question that governs this document is therefore: 'What are the insights for mission and evangelism – theologies, agendas and practices – of the 'shift of the center of gravity of Christianity?''[3]

My dissertation, which equally attempts to rethink mission theology for contemporary contexts, locates itself therefore in a wider ecumenical current in order to rethink mission in the context of World Christianity. I associate myself with the World-Christian turn, which signals the breakthrough of the World Christianity paradigm within theology.[4] In contrast to *Together towards Life*, I will problematize the language of the shift of the center of gravity by pointing out the dangers of a numerical approach to World Christianity. One of the main tasks of this introductory chapter will therefore be to interact with contemporary definitions of World Christianity and to scrutinize critically the presuppositions embedded in

[1] 'Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes', *International Review of Mission* 101, no. 2 (2012): 250–80.
[2] *Mission and Evangelism* is not replaced but complemented by the new statement. 'Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation', in *'You Are the Light of the World': Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches 1980-2005* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 4–38.
[3] 'Together towards Life', 251.
[4] Paul V. Kollman, 'Understanding the World-Christian Turn in the History of Christianity and Theology', *Theology Today* 71, no. 2 (2014): 164–177.

these definitions.

In tandem with its articulation of the necessity to rethink mission within World Christianity, *Together towards Life* promotes a postcolonial missiology, which actively strives to dismantle and subvert lingering colonial approaches to mission. The term postcolonial signals in a temporal sense the period after colonization. At a more complex level, the word postcolonial denotes an explicit stance to engage the legacy of colonialism and to strive actively towards a decolonial position.[5] The entanglement between mission and colonialism is famously explained by David Bosch:

> The very origin of the term "mission," as we still tend to use it today, presupposes the ambience of the West's colonization of overseas territories and its subjugation of their inhabitants. Therefore, since the sixteenth century, if one said "mission" one in a sense also said "colonialism." Modern missions originated in the context of modern Western colonialism.[6]

A postcolonial missiology is therefore characterized by a critical and honest assessment of the enduring legacy of colonialism within mission theology and practice. This dissertation will make use of various directions and methods to advance a postcolonial methodology.

Firstly, a critical assessment of the legacy of terms used in missionary discourse is called for. In the second chapter, I will employ postcolonial geography in order to offer a critical evaluation of spatial metaphors in use in missionary discourse; terms such as mission field and frontier. The second chapter has therefore a transitional character: it uses the postcolonial framework established in this introductory chapter and further establishes a postcolonial geography. The second half of the dissertation consists of three thematic chapters that build forth upon this postcolonial framework. The third chapter focuses on the epistemological priority of theologizing from *below*, from the perspective of multiple and interlocking marginalizations. Theologizing from below signals a break from theologizing from above, which denotes a hegemonic approach to theology; a form of theology that is at home in contexts of empire.[7] In order to advance a mission theology from below, one must take seriously the epistemological priority of those who are relegated to the margins of society. Thirdly, in order to avoid all associations with totalizing systems, postcolonial theologizing cherishes its fragmentary character.[8]

[5] Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera Rivera, *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004).
[6] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series 16 (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 302–3.
[7] Ibid., 423–24.
[8] Recent theologizing about the fragment signifies the abandonment of a totalizing thought system in theology. These types of theology are characterized by their epistemic humility and attempt to overcome all totalizing tendencies. William Myatt, 'Public Theology and "The Fragment": Duncan Forrester, David Tracy, and Walter Benjamin', *International Journal of Public Theology* 8, no. 1 (2014):

Fragmentary theology is characterized instead by epistemic humility, distaste for conformism and the desire to disclose 'theological pathologies.'[9] With Bosch's scathing criticism in mind, one could argue that this entanglement of mission and colonialism is indeed a 'theological pathology' and should be addressed through the development of a postcolonial mission theology.

In the third, fourth and fifth chapters of this dissertation, I will offer the reader three themes, or fragments, that I consider to be beneficial for the re-imagining of postcolonial mission encounters. As already indicated, the first theme will be marginality, in order to problematize the center-periphery structure as the foundational role for colonial mission practices. The quintessential role of marginality in a postcolonial mission theology leads to the second theme, namely the advancement of a missiology of vulnerability. Vulnerability signifies human openness, relationality and denouncement of invulnerability. Living out vulnerability in this way leads to openness for the vulnerable *other* through recognition of one's own vulnerability necessitated by the epistemological priority of the perspective from the margins. The third theme of vocation suggests that the lens of vocational presence can provide an incentive for responding to one's call in life not by negating marginality and vulnerability, but to find vocation within these situations.

This introductory chapter will first guide the reader through an exploration of the current situation of mission in the context of the Netherlands. The goal of this section is, on the one hand, to give the reader factual information about the context in which this dissertation is written, such as data on the deployment of cross-cultural missionaries and the terminology that is frequently used. On the other hand, this introduction also problematizes certain developments and tendencies of contemporary mission practices. Consequently, the detected problems and omissions lead to the research question and the outline of the argument that this dissertation will advance.

1.2 MISSION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NETHERLANDS

This section explains the context in which conversations about mission are conducted within the Netherlands. This dissertation has been written both for Dutch and international audiences. The distinction between national and international becomes increasingly questioned within a postcolonial framework which seeks to destabilize the pervasive fiction of home and homeland.[10] Nevertheless, the particular debates about mission in the Netherlands inevitably bear upon this research

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[9] Ibid., 104.

[10] The second chapter will explore in more detail the difficulties with the concept of home and homeland.

project. For international audiences, who are not well versed in the specific trajectory of missiological reflection in the Netherlands, this paragraph serves as an introduction. In this section, I will therefore discuss first how the ecclesiology of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands [PCN][11] articulates the foundational role of mission for the church. The assessment of these formal statements on mission leads to a short evaluation of the mission praxis of the PCN and on the role of language to describe mission workers.[12]

1.2.1. *Protestant Church in the Netherlands – Policy*

Mission is firmly anchored within the church order of the PCN. The tenth article of the church order, which is concerned with the missionary, diaconal and pastoral work of the church, affirms that the devotion to mission should permeate the totality of the church's existence.[13] Furthermore, the church order affirms the role of the local congregations:

> On account of its missionary task, the congregation is devoted in its entire existence to witnessing and ministry to those who do not know the Gospel or are alienated from it, so that they too may share in the salvation in Jesus Christ.[14]

The church order places therefore the primacy of the missionary involvement of the church with the local congregation. The emphasis on the local congregation is affirmed as well in the first policy document of the PCN, *Learning to Live out of Wonder* (2005), which states succinctly that 'the congregation is therefore missionary. She is there to translate and bring the World to life over de [sic, EDH] borders of the church and Christianity.'[15] In the same document, the missionary calling of the church is listed as the third of twelve policy points, which focus on

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[11] The Protestant Church in the Netherlands [PCN] is a merger of the Netherlands Reformed Church, Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. After an extensive process that spanned over half a century, the PCN came formally into being in 2004. See for an overview of the history of the merging process: Arjan Plaisier and Leo J. Koffeman, eds., *The Protestant Church in the Netherlands: Church Unity in the 21st Century: Stories, Lessons and Expectations* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2014).

[12] This section focuses mainly on the development of the PCN due to the limited scope of this research. For an overview of the mission of churches with a majority of members with a background of migration, see Daniëlle Tabitha Koning, *Importing God: The Mission of the Ghanaian Adventist Church and Other Immigrant Churches in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 2011).

[13] 'Kerkorde en Ordinanties van de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland', 2016 2004, sec. 10, http://www.protestantsekerk.nl/Lists/PKN-Bibliotheek/Kerkorde-en-ordinanties-compleet.pdf. 'Church Order of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands: Article I - XIX', 2004, sec. 10, http://www.protestantsekerk.nl/Lists/PKN-Bibliotheek/Churchorder-protestant-church-articles-I-XIX-2004.pdf.

[14] 'Church Order of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands: Article I - XIX'.

[15] 'Learning to Live out of Wonder', 2005, 2, http://www.protestantsekerk.nl/Lists/PKN-Bibliotheek/Learning-to-live-out-of-wonder-2009.pdf.

the role of the local congregation.[16] The connections with migrant churches and cross-cultural partnership are listed under the 'the cooperation with other churches and organizations.' The missionary element of these partnerships is defined through the emphasis on a mutual learning process between the Dutch church and the partners abroad.[17] As a result, a distinction is made between on the one hand the local mission of each congregation, which primarily extends to the immediate sphere of influence of these congregations and, on the other hand, the mission of the church abroad, which is subsumed under the heading of ecumenical contacts. This means therefore that mission is something that happens within the Netherlands, not necessarily abroad. The international realm is the location of ecumenical assistance.

The 2012 memorandum *The Heartbeat of Life* aims to convey 'the vision for the life and work' for the PCN.[18] The document consists of four themes which describe the witness of the church. The fourth theme outlines the ecumenical and missional character of the church, formulated as 'together with all the saints: being a church with others.'[19] The document claims: 'Our church is a manifestation of the worldwide church, nothing more and nothing less.'[20] In addition, a warning against provincialism is issued: 'There is more church than the church in the Netherlands. We shouldn't become parochial in our thinking.'[21] The overall tone of this section of the document is optimistic about the growth of faith in non-Western contexts and the ability to learn about the burgeoning faith in the Majority World.

1.2.2. *Protestant Church in the Netherlands – Praxis*

Both the church order and the first policy document of the PCN are characterized by a strong missionary impetus. In the same year however, on the eve of the formal merger of the mother denominations of the PCN, Jan Jongeneel complained about the lack of missionary zeal and passion in those denominations.[22] He considered

[16] Ibid., 4.
[17] Ibid., 5.
[18] 'Protestantse Kerk Nederland - Visienota: De Hartslag van het Leven', accessed 4 August 2014, http://www.pkn.nl/overons/protestantse-kerk/missie-en-visie/Paginas/Visienota-2012.aspx. The memorandum is translated into English and German by the PCN. References in the text are to the English translation.
[19] 'The Heartbeat of Life - Memorandum Concerning the Vision for the Life and Work of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands', 2012, 24–26, http://www.protestantsekerk.nl/overons/protestant-church/Paginas/Statements.aspx
[20] Ibid., 24.
[21] Ibid. See for an overview and analysis of the current state of affairs with regard to missional dynamics in the Dutch protestant churches: Henk de Roest, 'Pionieren en lekepreken. Een praktisch-theologische analyse van de nieuwe missionaire dynamiek in de Nederlandse kerken, met name de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland' (Dies Natalis lecture, PThU, 2013).
[22] Jan A. B. Jongeneel, 'Christelijke Theologie als Missionaire Theologie', *Kerk en Theologie* 55, no. 1 (2004): 42–53.

it problematic that the line of Dutch theological thinking which stressed the missionary task of the church, as expressed through influential theologians such as A.A. van Ruler, J.C. Hoekendijk, H. Berkhof and J. Verkuyl, was discontinued by a younger generation of theologians. Henk de Roest, professor in the practical theology at the Protestant Theological University in the Netherlands,[23] used Jongeneel's observation to contrast the enthusiasm for mission in the early 2000s with the landmark shift that took place in approximately the next decade.[24] From the perspective of the early 2010s, one can conclude that terms such as missional church, pioneering and new forms of being church have become part and parcel of the ecclesial discourse in the Netherlands. The usage of these terms is not confined to the more evangelically inclined part of the church, which has historically been more comfortable to use this terminology, but has spread throughout various segments of the church. However, the adoption of a mission-centered discourse has not been without its difficulties. De Roest lists six objections that are commonly voiced to the recent missional focus of the church, which range from the profoundly theological to the practical.[25] De Roest has supervised empirical research regarding the nature of activities which are employed by local congregations in order to become a missional church. He concludes that a significant number of these activities are ill-defined in terms of expected outcome and their missional character. As a result, the term 'missional' can be applied to almost any activity that local churches carry out: from celebrating birthdays to kids' activities to Christmas services. Moreover, most of those activities were structured along a 'come-to-us' format, revealing that the activities mainly took place on church premises and persuaded outsiders to participate in these church activities. The activities were, in the vast majority of cases, organized without explicit cooperation with other denominations.[26] Although the research of De Roest points to problems within the missional praxis, I consider the renewed missional élan as a positive development, so far as it points to a church which truly tries to be church in the world, and is not first and foremost concerned with its own inner life and continuity. In 2014, the PCN celebrated her 10th anniversary. The commemorative church service was broadcast on national television and was attended by the Dutch king and queen, who are members of the PCN.[27] The 10-year milestone was an occasion

[23] See for an overview of publications regarding the mission of the Protestant church in the Netherlands (PCN): https://www.pthu.nl/Over_PThU/Organisatie/Medewerkers/h.p.deroest/recent-articles-and-downloads/ (accessed September 29, 2016).
[24] De Roest, 'Pionieren en lekepreken. Een praktisch-theologische analyse van de nieuwe missionaire dynamiek in de Nederlandse kerken, met name de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland', 2.
[25] Ibid., 9–11.
[26] Ibid., 5–7.
[27] The liturgy of the church service is available via this link: http://www.protestantsekerk.nl/actueel/campagnes/Tien-jaar-Protestantse-Kerk/Paginas/Viering-Vieren-en-Verbinden.aspx (accessed January 31, 2016). The video recording of the commemorative church service is available via this link: http://www.npo.nl/pkn-10-jaar/14-09-2014/VPWON_1229868 (accessed January 31, 2016)

to look back on the genesis of the PCN and to celebrate a new missional fervor.[28]

The missional activities researched by de Roest were carried out by existing local congregations. The missional activity by the PCN is not only carried out through historical congregations, but is increasingly focused on new pioneer sites. In November 2012, the national synod of the PCN decided upon the realization of 100 pioneer sites by 2016. Pioneer sites are locations designed for experimentation with new and creative ways of being church in a secular context. The emphasis on pioneering as a distinct activity with its own terminology warrants a further scrutiny to the topic of pioneering, which I will provide in section 1.2.6.

From late 2009 until late 2014 three so-called missional rounds were carried out. The 80 classes [presbyteries] of the PCN received instruction on the implementation of the missional vocation in the local churches.[29] These missional rounds served to raise awareness of the missionary task of the local congregation and offered resources for implementation in local congregations. The next missional rounds are scheduled for 2016-2018 and will focus on the theme 'share your life.'[30]

In autumn 2014,[31] various churches and organizations organized an ecumenical 'national missional festival.'[32] This one-day festival focused on the missional character of the church in the Netherlands. There was no attention devoted to the international aspect of mission. The attention given to the intercultural aspect of mission too was confined to the Netherlands. Significantly, connections with Christians with a background of migration were not explicitly taken into account.[33]

The continued organization of the missional rounds - in which all local congregations of the PCN are welcome to participate - as well as the organization of a high-profile missional festival shows that the awareness of missional church has permeated the church. Yet, the PCN remains inward-looking in various respects. There is a lack of ecumenical cooperation in the missional activities employed by local congregations, a lack of engagement and discovery of a common mission with migrant churches, and a lack of engagement with the international aspect of mission.

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[28] http://www.refdag.nl/kerkplein/kerknieuws/tien_jaar_protestantse_kerk_is_missionair_moment_1_851759 (accessed January 31, 2016)

[29] http://www.protestantsekerk.nl/missionair/Revitaliseren/missionaire-ronden/Paginas/Default.aspx (accessed November 11, 2015).

[30] http://www.protestantsekerk.nl/missionair/Revitaliseren/missionaire-ronden/Paginas/Missionaire-Ronde-4.aspx (accessed November 11, 2015).

[31] Another missional festival (not discussed in this dissertation) was held in autumn 2015. See: www.landelijkmissionairfestival.nl (accessed November 10, 2015).

[32] The organization of this festival was mainly carried out by the PCN and was held at the church headquarters. However, a broad coalition was formed with other churches and organizations.

[33] www.landelijkmissionairfestival.nl (accessed October 20, 2014).

1.2.3. *Relationship between Local and International Mission*

Although I have focused above on the developments in mission policy and praxis in the last decade, the impetus to be a missional church has deep roots in the Dutch theological tradition. The current discussion about missional church can be traced back to discussions from the 1960s onward about the role of the church in the public sphere. The current discussion can therefore be understood against the backdrop of the work and life of J.C. Hoekendijk (1912-1975), who has influenced the climate in Dutch mainline Protestant churches with regard to the stance these churches should take concerning their relationship with the secular world. His famous maxim 'church inside out' signals the provisional character of church structures and the radical orientation towards *shalom* for the world. Hoekendijk could therefore be considered a forebear of the current discourse in the Netherlands about missional church.[34] As far back as the 1960s, many Dutch congregations had resolved to be church for others and stressed the responsibility of the church for the world.[35] Yet, where Hoekendijk's ecclesiology was famously only instrumental, the focus of these newer missional efforts is clearly on the establishment of new churches and the witness of existing churches. Hoekendijk asserted that every mission theology which focused on the church is doomed to derail since this theology has chosen the wrong focal point.[36]

The *oude wijken pastoraat* [pastoral presence within older and disadvantaged neighborhoods of major cities], alternatively called *buurtpastoraat* [neighborhood pastoral presence], which rose to prominence in the 1980s and 1990s, is an example of a type of mission that is deliberately focused on the world instead of the church. This approach turned out to be controversial sometimes, because the focus of this type of mission was mainly on pastoral presence within often impoverished neighborhoods, and was not concerned with establishing or revitalizing churches in these neighborhoods. Instead, the pastoral presence led to an emphasis on low-profile contacts to meet people where they are in life, and focused on being exposed to their walks of life in order to be as close as possible to their situation and

[34] Theo L. Hettema, 'De missionaire gemeente: blijvend binnenste buiten? Een vergelijking tussen Hoekendijk en de Emerging Churches', 2010, http://home.kpn.nl/tlhettema/pdf/HoekendijkEM.pdf. Published in revised form in: Theo L. Hettema, 'De missionaire gemeente: blijvend binnenste buiten? Een vergelijking tussen Hoekendijk en de Emerging Churches', in *Een lichte last: Protestantse theologen over de kerk* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2010), 81–97.

[35] Rein Brouwer, ''Missional Church and Local Constraints: A Dutch Perspective', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 30, no. 2 (2009): 56. See for an overview of the theology of Hoekendijk: Frank Anthonie Petter, *Profanum et Promissio: het begrip wereld in de missionaire ecclesiologieën van Hans Hoekendijk, Hans Jochen Margull en Ernst Lang*e (Groningen: University Library Groningen, 2002).

[36] Johannes Christiaan Hoekendijk, *De kerk binnenste buiten* (Amsterdam: W. ten Have, 1964). Cited from the Dutch original. English translation: Johannes Christiaan Hoekendijk, *The Church inside out* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966).

frame of reference.[37]

Even though the current discourse is much more ecclesiocentric, recently emphasis has been placed on alleviating the burden that elaborate church structures bring with them for those who are forced to keep them up. In the words of the 2015 document *Church 2025*:

> 'Given the fact that the pressure felt by frequent meetings and the organizational structure of the church is most often too high, not too low, it will be a balancing act to find the minimal structure needed to hear and to share the gospel, to be a community of faith and to be a witness of God in this world.'[38]

This recently released document paints the vision of simplified church-structures in order to face the challenges of the contemporary times.

The developments in the discourse of the missional character of the church has not brought any clarification regarding the connection between new missionary fervor in the Netherlands, international mission work and the position of Christians with a background of migration in the Netherlands. An example of the lack of clarity is the question regarding the role of the mission / world diaconate[39] / development committees in light of their contribution to the mission of the church. These committees are active in local congregations and function to familiarize the congregation with the role of mission, worldwide diaconate and development and raise funds for projects.[40] The recent discourse on the missional church seems to be largely unconnected to the role of these committees, which in local congregations are important brokers of the international dimension of the life of the church. In light of the neglected role of these committees in the broader discourse about the missional character of the church, it seems fitting that the vision document 'The Heartbeat of Life' has issued a warning against a parochial stance of the church. Yet, it remains unclear how in a postcolonial, increasingly interconnected world, the connection between the local and international manifestations of the missional church will be implemented.

Another problem is that when attention is given to the international role of the church the motive for this involvement is increasingly framed in terms of self-interest. The motif of self-interest indicates the expected benefits for the church in the Netherlands from the experience of expatriate mission workers.[41] I consider

[37] Rein Brouwer et al., *Levend lichaam* (Kampen: Kok, 2007), para. 2.3.2.

[38] 'Kerk 2025: Waar een Woord is, is een weg', 2015, 9, http://www.protestantsekerk.nl/Lists/PKN-Bibliotheek/WaareenWoordis-iseenweg.pdf.

[39] The Dutch *werelddiaconaat* [literally: world diaconate] is a word that seems to be in use only in the context of these specific committees and designates the diaconal role of the church in a worldwide context.

[40] 'Protestantse Kerk Nederland - Vrijwilliger Zending & Werelddiaconaat', accessed 4 August 2014, http://www.pkn.nl/actief-in-de-kerk/werken/vrijwilligers/Paginas/Zending-en-werelddiakonaat.aspx.

[41] Interview with (among others) Rommie Nauta, program coordinator for Church in Action. Laura Dijkhuizen, Aart Mak, and Wilbert van Saane, 'Mensen in de zending anno 2014', *TussenRuimte*, no.

this problematic since a pragmatic argument for missionary involvement should not trump a more sustained and paradigmatic reflection on the perceived role and necessity for international involvement.

Another area in which the foreign policy of the PCN is criticized is their perceived managerial approach to international mission. A managerial approach means an increasing emphasis on foreign work through the implementation of projects, which need to be managed and budgeted accordingly. The managerial approach is considered to be a replacement of an earlier emphasis on dialogue and partnership. These partnerships are considered non-instrumental because they existed to embody the value of partnership without expressing ulterior motives.[42]

In conclusion it can be said therefore that the emphasis on the domestic role of the church in the Netherlands does not appear to be balanced with a clear expression on the perceived need and necessity to be involved in international aspects of mission.

1.2.4. *Mission Workers in Context: Terminology*

The role of language in the discourse on mission warrants attention, because the language for mission workers reveals parts of the underlying theologies of mission.[43] The Dutch equivalent of missionary [*zendeling*] seems to be oftentimes replaced nowadays by the composite term 'uitgezonden medewerker,'[44] which roughly translates as 'sent out co-worker or sent out colleague.' The emphasis on the act of sending implies ties with the home base because the 'uitgezonden medewerker' will invariably be sent from a local church. In addition, the rather abstract noun 'uitzending' [sending out, commissioning] is in use, denoting the whole process of commissioning workers for service in mission. The shift from *zendeling* towards *uitgezonden medewerker* reveals a shift to a more professional view of mission. The term *uitgezonden medewerker* is not restricted to a context of mission but can for example be used in a legal context as an equivalent term for

3 (2014): 42–47. See also the wording in the annual report of *Kerk in Actie* [Church in Action], the organization which has a mandate to carry out mission on behalf of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands: "Zending anno 2013 gaat over het wereldwijd delen van geloof, hoop en liefde. Kerk in Actie deelt haar gaven, maar deelt ook in de gaven van de wereldkerk" [Mission in the year 2013 is about worldwide sharing of faith, hope and love. *Kerk in Actie* shares her gifts, but shares also in the gifts of the worldwide church]. 'Kerk in Actie | Jaarverslag 2013', *Kerk in Actie*, 25, accessed 20 October 2014, http://www.kerkinactie.nl/over-kerk-in-actie/jaarverslag.

[42] Jaap Breetvelt and Philip Quarles van Ufford, eds., *Als uw leerlingen tussen de volken... : op zoek naar de missionaire roeping van de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland anno 2010* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2010).

[43] Due to the scope of this research, I limit myself here to terminology of mission workers in a Protestant context. The same holds true for the next section in which I discuss data regarding the amount of Protestant mission workers.

[44] http://www.kerkinactie.nl/projecten/uitgezonden-medewerkers (accessed July 20, 2015).

expatriate worker. In addition, the term *zendingswerker* [mission worker] is in use.[45] Although slightly activist in nature, the word is easier to use than the composite term 'uitgezonden medewerker.' The word *zendingswerker* avoids the negative connotation of the word *zendeling* while retaining the mission element. Finally, the term *veldwerker* [fieldworker] is sometimes employed. This terminology has the disadvantage of conjuring up the image of the 'mission field,' an expression whose colonial associations are deeply problematic.[46] The Dutch discourse on mission workers in general has the advantage that the element of sending is in focus. Mission is therefore connected primarily to local church communities which are involved in the sending out of mission workers. Mission workers in the context of the Netherlands are often indicated with the term *missionair werker* [missional worker]. The term *pionier* [pioneer] is mainly used for mission workers who work within the Netherlands establishing new communities of faith. The discourse on pioneering will be explained further in an excursus later in this chapter.

1.2.5. *Mission Workers in Context: Data*

Relatively little research has been carried out regarding the number of Dutch missionaries involved in cross-cultural assignments. The numbers that are available show a steep decline in the amount of foreign missionaries. The data gathered on students at the Hendrik Kraemer institute[47] between 1971-2000 show that between 1971-1980 the number of missionary workers was 221, in the time period 1991-2000 the number was 99.[48] The most recent research regarding the number of mission workers has been carried out by the Dutch *Reformed Daily*, a confessional Dutch newspaper. These data were gathered in 2013. The total number of cross-cultural missionary workers originating from the Netherlands was 620.[49] The organizations with the highest amount of missionary workers[50] are Wycliffe Bible Translations (123),[51] Gereformeerde Zendingsbond [Reformed Mission League] (109)[52] and OMF (Overseas Missionary Fellowship) (65).[53] The Dutch Mission

[45] https://www.gzb.nl/over-gzb/projecten-werkvelden (accessed July 20, 2015).
[46] The concept of the "mission field" will be more closely scrutinized in the next chapter.
[47] The Hendrik Kraemer Institute was in charge of educating the missionaries of the Nederlands Hervormde Kerk [Dutch Reformed Church], one of the predecessors of the PCN.
[48] Hans Visser and Wilbert van Saane, 'De gaven zijn mensen', in *Als uw leerlingen tussen de volken... : op zoek naar de missionaire roeping van de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland anno 2010*, ed. Jaap Breetvelt and Philip Quarles van Ufford (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2010), 100.
[49] Because of safety reasons, no data are available from organizations that work in so-called creative access countries.
[50] Some of these organizations / churches provide the possibility for joint missionary workers, resulting in a slightly inflated number.
[51] http://www.wycliffe.nl/
[52] http://www.gzb.nl/ (English translation of policy plan http://www.gzb.nl/head-menu/english)
[53] http://omf.org/nederland/

Council, a council organization with a membership of 22 mission organizations and churches, does not gather information regarding the number of missionary workers. However, the general director of the Dutch Mission Council confirmed that the numbers cited by the Dutch Reformed Daily are most probably a correct estimate.[54] The reason why these facts and figures are incorporated in this section is that these numbers provide a quick window into the changing landscape of mission. However, they by no means suggest that the practice of mission hinges primarily upon the agency of foreign missionaries. Rather, I am suggesting that an emphasis on the agency of missionaries does not sit well within an interpretative framework that strives to foreground the role of local agency and transformation.[55]

The Dutch Mission Council has recently started a reflection process on the continuing role and function of sending out mission workers. The study process has resulted in the publication of a special issue of the Dutch journal for intercultural theology on this topic. Mission is defined in the opening article as a vulnerable, interpersonal encounter, favoring the personal character of mission over an approach which focuses on managerial methods and transferring of funds.[56] The preliminary findings of the committee focus on the connection between local and international context, the role of partnership and mutuality and the distribution of funds.[57]

1.2.6. *The Term to Pioneer*

Although pioneering has become a recent staple in the discussion about mission in the Netherlands, to my knowledge no reflection has been carried out on the history and colonial associations on the term itself. A pioneer place [*pioniersplek*] is defined by the PCN as "an innovate form of being church which connects to our changing culture and is first of all focused on people who do not know the gospel and who are not (any more) involved in a local congregation."[58] The Dutch verb *pionieren* is a close cognate of the English *to pioneer* and English language texts

[54] Ardjan Logmans, 'Onderzoek: Ruim 600 Nederlanders voor zending actief in buitenland', accessed 23 September 2015, http://www.refdag.nl/kerkplein/kerknieuws/onderzoek_ruim_600_nederlanders_voor_zending_actief_in_buitenland_1_738930.

[55] Eleonora Dorothea Hof, 'Het gewicht van het zwaartepunt: Recht doen aan het wereldchristendom' 68, no. 4 (2014): 261–281.

[56] Eleonora Dorothea Hof and Wilbert van Saane, 'Zending: kwetsbare ontmoeting over grenzen', *TussenRuimte*, no. 4–8 (2014).

[57] Gerrit Noort, 'Uitzending gewogen', 2014.

[58] Brochure "Pionieren vanuit de Protestantse Kerk", 2015, 9. http://www.protestantsekerk.nl/werkvelden/missionair/pionierenorientatie/Paginas/Brochure.aspx (accessed February 25, 2016) In Dutch: "Een pioniersplek is een vernieuwende vorm van kerkzijn die aansluit bij onze veranderende cultuur en allereerst gericht is op mensen die het evangelie niet
kennen en niet (meer) betrokken zijn bij een bestaande kerk."

that use this word can be translated without problems into the Dutch verb *pionieren*. The same holds true for the related noun pioneer, which is equivalent to the Dutch *pionier*. Although the semantic field of pioneering seems to be primarily related to pioneering within the context of the Netherlands, in this excursus I want to draw attention to the parallels with pioneering in a colonial context in order to suggest that the word itself is reminiscent of this context. Andrew Walls has reminded us that the 'the missionary pioneer was spoken of in the vocabulary of the imperial pioneer,'[59] and it is therefore important to take the conflation between the two discourses seriously.

The pioneering discourse overlaps with the idea of discovery, the idea of being the first one to chart and to cultivate a certain area.[60] As such, the idea of pioneering is colonial at heart, since the narrative of pioneering and cultivating focuses on the pioneering actor and favors her/his perspective. Yet, the turn to World Christianity is bound up with a move away from the agency of missionaries to local appropriation, which challenges a Euro-centric discourse.[61] Consequently, the association of missionary pioneering with colonial pioneer narratives might prove to be detrimental to telling a variety of stories. If the story of the missionary is no longer central in the historiography of mission, it follows that the story of the pioneer is no longer the central story that is told about pioneer sites. The principle of the primacy of local appropriation stays the same when transferred from foreign missionaries to pioneers in a Dutch context. Concretely this means that I assert the need to listen to the stories of people who find themselves attracted to the pioneer sites and find spiritual guidance and community there. What are their life stories? How do they write their spiritual biography? I would therefore suggest foregrounding their stories when discussing pioneer work, for example during the numerous study days and symposia that are organized on the topic of pioneering.

The cultural anthropologist Geert Hofstede distinguishes five dimensions to compare cultures with each other.[62] One of these dimensions is the so-called masculinity, determining how much independent and autonomous behavior is valued in a certain culture. The Netherlands scores 14, while Great Britain (66) and the United States (62) have a significantly higher score.[63] This means that many people in the Netherlands value cooperation and mutual interdependence to a much

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[59] Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 4.
[60] Elizabeth Furniss, 'Timeline History and the Anzac Myth: Settler Narratives of Local History in a North Australian Town', *Oceania* 71, no. 4 (2001): 279–97.
[61] Paul V. Kollman, 'After Church History? Writing the History of Christianity from a Global Perspective', *Horizons* 31, no. 2 (2004): 322–42.
[62] Geert H. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations across Nations* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001).
[63] Gerrit Noort et al., *Als een kerk opnieuw begint: handboek voor missionaire gemeenschapsvorming* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2008), 297. This book, *When a Church Starts Over: Handbook for For-*

higher extent than many people in Great Britain and the United States, where autonomy and independence are highly valued. I suggest therefore that these differing cultural values are important to take into account when borrowing literature in pioneering from Anglo-Saxon contexts.[64] As the authors of *Als een kerk opnieuw begint* suggest, one should be alert that these cultural traits promote an image of a pioneer as a strong, self-sufficient and independent personality type. It is therefore a real danger that this description of a pioneer mainly attracts men, since they are socialized to exhibit these traits. One should be very careful not to craft images of pioneering that tacitly omit female agency. The research that has been conducted so far suggests that currently the number of male pioneers vastly outnumbers female pioneers. Research carried out by the Christian University for Applied Sciences in the Netherlands (Ede) interviewed ten church pioneers, of whom only one person was female.[65] In addition, Martijn Vellekoop surveyed 281 church planting initiatives that started after 1990 and found that 94% of the respondents (not necessarily all pioneers) were male.[66]

One of the ways in which this emphasis on strength and independence as a characteristic of a pioneer might be expressed in the contemporary discourse on pioneering would be to emphasize the physical and mental health of the church planter or pioneer. One of the nine characteristics of a church planter (used interchangeable with a pioneer) as put forth by Gerrit Noort et al. is that she/he should be energetic and in good mental and physical health.[67] I wonder to what extent this characteristic is an unconscious reflection of a pioneer mentality that values physical strength, self-sufficiency and independence. In other words, is it possible to be a pioneer when one has a chronic illness, a physical impairment or experiences issues with one's mental health? This question will be further explored in the chapter on vulnerability, which problematizes the celebration of invulnerability and able-bodiedness.

Yet, the authors of *Als een kerk opnieuw begint* clearly acknowledge problems with an emphasis on the individual pioneer. They note that many churches in the

mation of Missional Communities is a joint project by four Dutch experts on church planting and missional communities, Gerrit Noort, Stefan Paas, Henk de Roest and Sake Stoppels. As the author of this chapter (Stefan Paas) points out, there are much more cultural dimensions that could be considered. Furthermore, cultures should not be considered as bounded wholes without internal variation. Citing these figures mainly points out the problematic aspects of using a culture-specific term in another cultural setting without considering the implicit cultural values this term carries with it.

[64] The editors of *The Pioneer Gift* acknowledge though that pioneering is an ambiguous term and that it is for those who are really finding new ways outside already established church structured a mixed blessing that the term has moved away from the periphery of the church to the center. Jonny Baker, 'The Pioneer Gift', in *The Pioneer Gift: Explorations in Mission*, ed. Cathy Ross and Jonny Baker (London: Canterbury Press, 2014), 2.

[65] The research in question was carried out by the *Christelijke Hogeschool Ede* (Christian University for Applied Sciences in the Netherlands) Noort et al., *Als een kerk opnieuw begint*, 295.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., 294.

Netherlands have a strong tradition of shared leadership through the presbytery form of church governance. They propose therefore to focus on shared leadership, carried out in egalitarian teams, as a way forward in order to avoid dependency on a strong leader and in order to create a more inclusive environment for both women and men.[68]

To conclude this section, I want to advance a more theological argument that points out a problem with the connotations of pioneering as being the first to 'cultivate' a certain area. From a pneumatological perspective, as advanced in *Together towards Life*,[69] the Spirit works in the world and precedes human missional activity. The *missio Spiritus* points to the active involvement in working toward reconciliation and justice. As a consequence, human beings are not the first to pioneer in a certain geographic or social location; the Spirit has gone before them.

1.3. GOAL AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The goal of the research project is to enable a constructive conversation on mission theology in the postcolonial context of World Christianity, with a special emphasis on the role of mission encounters initiated by people who identify themselves as Dutch.

The overview of mission in the context of the PCN shows that attention to mission has flourished in the decade following the genesis of the PCN in 2004. I consider this renewed attention to mission as a positive development, in so far as a renewed desire for mission is connected to the heart of mission – *missio Dei* – and is not primarily concerned with *missio ecclesiae* as a project focused on the survival of the church itself. The overview on mission in the context of the PCN revealed several problems. In the first place, the renewed interest in mission seemed to be primarily focused on a narrow subset of the Dutch population. As a consequence, the experience and contributions of migrant Christians, as well as the ongoing ethnic diversification of the society are hard to account for.

In the 1960s, Hoekendijk had already written about the danger that the mission of the church might become focused solely on the people of a nation state [*volk*], and I consider his prophetic remarks still relevant in light of the contemporary circumstances. Hoekendijk argued that when the church is oriented towards the people of a nation [*volk*], she would only be addressing the middle class of industrious people, such as shop owners [*middenstand*].[70] Hoekendijk adds that this type

[68] Ibid., 298.
[69] 'Together towards Life'.
[70] Hoekendijk, *De kerk binnenste buiten*, 32–33. "Indien dit [de overgang van etnologie naar sociologie, EDH] niet gebeurt en de kerk zich tot het 'volk' blijft richten, spreekt zij in werkelijkheid slechts de middenstand aan, voor welke het 'volk' nog de reële samenlevingsvorm en concrete sociale ruimte is. Andere groepen (bv. boeren, arbeiders, intelligentsia), die in een andere sociale ruimte verkeren

of church must necessarily be bourgeois [*burgerlijk*]. Interestingly enough, roughly half a century later, Hoekendijk's warnings have been confirmed by empirical research regarding the cultural milieus in which the PCN is at home. The research indicated that the PCN mainly reaches the traditional middle classes [*traditionele burgerij*], and to a lesser extent, people who identify as postmaterialists.[71] Although I have focused here specifically on mission encounters within the PCN, one should not get the impression that I equate mission encounters solely with the PCN.[72]

A second, related, problem that I discern is the general absence in discussions about mission of how the World-Christian turn might bear upon mission practices which are carried out within the Netherlands. The transnational character of World Christianity questions the rigid demarcations between the homeland and foreign countries, between the Netherlands and abroad. Related to the absence of the World-Christian turn is the general lack of constructive engagement with the postcolonial condition, as it pertains to the ramifications for the Netherlands as a country with an imperialist past. The PCN seems well aware of the dangers attached to employing Western missionary actors, given the current backlash against a Western presence in many countries.[73] My dissertation locates itself in the World-Christian turn and in the second chapter I will discuss further how both World Christianity and the postcolonial condition affect geographic ideas on the nature of Christian mission.

The third observation is that conversations on mission might benefit from a sustained interaction with theological themes that explain the social location of mission, the theological anthropology of mission and the ways in which one becomes involved in mission. The chapters three, four and five of this dissertation will enlist a broad spectrum of theological themes to anchor the praxis of the church.

It is my expectation that the discourse on mission will benefit from addressing these three problems. It is my hope that this dissertation will spark constructive

(buurtschap, dorp, klasse, 'Europese cultuur') gaat dit spreken voorbij. Dit type van volkskerk *moet* burgerlijk zijn."

71 http://www.protestantsekerk.nl/Lists/PKN-Bibliotheek/20110127-presentatie-Motivaction.pdf (accessed February 29, 2016).

72 It is unfortunate that the English version of the website of the PCN presents itself as the main protestant church in the Netherlands. Under 'Ecumenical Network' no information is listed about the ecumenical ties with other denominations (both protestant and otherwise) in the Netherlands. Also, the English translation of the PCN might give rise to the idea that the PCN is the main Protestant church in the Netherlands. In reality, the denominational landscape is more diverse, with highly developed ecumenical ties between the various (Protestant) denominations. This dissertation in no way wants to convey the impression that somehow mission encounters associated with the PCN are favored. http://www.protestantsekerk.nl/overons/protestant-church/Paginas/Ecumenical-Network.aspx (accessed September 30, 2016)

73 Kerk in Actie Jaarverslag 2014, 23 https://www.kerkinactie.nl/over-kerk-in-actie/jaarverslag (accessed March 1, 2016).

conversations about the nature of mission among mission organizations. I imagine that this dissertation could play a constructive role in facilitating discussions on how to make the transition to an openly postcolonial way of practicing mission. In particular, the second chapter might help to facilitate these discussions since it addresses several terms, such as the mission field and the frontier, that are in currently in use in mission discourse and harbor colonial legacies. Furthermore, I imagine that this dissertation might engender discussions within communities of faith about their role as actors within World Christianity. In the chapter on vocation I will outline a communal model of vocation. Instead of focusing on the individual, this model advances a communal approach to vocation. Communally oriented vocation challenges churches to work towards a more inclusive membership, especially along the axis of ethnicity, in order to advance a more inclusive model of vocation. This expectation is closely connected to the necessity of marginality as a foundational model for the social location of mission. As indicated in the still relevant work of Hoekendijk, there is a need to broaden mission practices beyond the narrow conflation of the mission of the church with a particular ethnicity and a bourgeois ethic. Therefore, shifting the social location of mission to the margins could prove to be a powerful antidote against inside-looking forms of mission.

The lack of well-defined theological underpinnings for mission encounters in this postcolonial context reveals the need to rethink these parameters from the ground up. In accordance with the current context and the perceived problems of this context, I have formulated the research question as follows:

How can mission theology reimagine Dutch mission encounters in the postcolonial context of World Christianity?

This dissertation will answer this question through the attempt of a progressive and 'modestly witnessing'[74] approach to mission theology. 'Modestly witnessing' means in this context the thoughtful search of a *Via Positiva* for contemporary mission theology.[75] This *Via Positiva* will be decisively marked by the complicity of mission in the colonial project and will bear the indelible marks of the past. This dissertation proceeds to carve out a space in which this project can be undertaken. Marion Grau laments that

> there seem only [a] few spaces in which to articulate a resolute progressive Christian witness in praxis that gives account of the full complexity of the laments and loss, the hybridities and tensions, as well as the chances and hopes of polydox soteriologies.[76]

[74] Marion Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony: Salvation, Society and Subversion* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 287.

[75] Grau lists in this context the five marks of mission as an example of viable articulations of mission theology. Andrew F. Walls and Cathy Ross, eds., *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008).

[76] Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*, 15.

Grau uses the word progressive in this citation to explain how many mainline churches, who would characterize themselves as progressive, for example in the realm of sexual ethics, have relatively little room for mission. She therefore wants to open up those spaces, where mission is not subsumed under development or ecumenical relationships, but also is not content with maintaining the status quo. A progressive mission is therefore inevitably postcolonial, because witnessing in a postcolonial world needs to reckon with the "laments and loss" of our history. It is my aim therefore, through seeking an answer to the main question, to provide such a space for a progressive approach to mission. This dissertation makes room for 'the complexity of laments and loss,' through the second chapter, which will elaborate on the usage of salient terms in the discourse of mission, and tries to uncover the extent to which they are decisively influenced by their colonial provenance.[77] As I have already indicated above, the constructive chapters of the dissertation will focus on the themes of marginality and vocation. In addition, the fourth chapter will advance a theological anthropology in order to focus on vulnerability as a characteristic of humankind. Consequently, the emphasis on vulnerability as a fundamental human characteristic provides a way marker that characterizes the openness of mission encounters.

In the beginning of this section I defined conversations as a goal of this dissertation. Conversation in a postcolonial sense means that the very playing field within which conversations takes place becomes questioned. This means that a level playing field between equals cannot be presupposed, because postcolonial theory time and again directs the attention on the inequality that has been willfully constructed as part and parcel of the colonial enterprise. This inequality still shines through in the proceedings of academia, which in and of itself is not a foreigner to constructions of academic centers and peripheries. It matters therefore that this dissertation has been written in Utrecht and Amsterdam, and in the biographical section I will outline the history of these cities to a greater extent. As Katy Sian notes in the introduction of her edited volume of conversations with postcolonial thinkers, the element of biography in these conversations is of salient importance. Not however to turn these conversations into "highly individualized accounts", rather, to discover how they connect to the "broader conversations of a general culture". As a consequence, conversations enable us to "attempt to map out the discursive configurations of the postcolonial."[78]

Similarly, the word conversation is used in the edited volume on *postcolonial conversations*, and in the introduction by Brian McLaren, he narrates how he came to understand the role of conversation: (…) *postcolonial* was a key term in a par-

[77] See for my article on the role of lament in missiology, Eleonora Dorothea Hof, 'A Missiology of Lament', *Swedish Missiological Themes* 101, no. 3–4 (2013): 321–38.
[78] Katy Sian, ed., *Conversations in Postcolonial Thought* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 2.

allel conversation among those who had been dominated and colonized by the excessively confident."[79] McLaren, an important influencer towards a more *generous orthodoxy*[80] within the Evangelical world, has come to recognize that this conversation can only take place through an awareness of the harmful role that those who are and were "excessively confident" in their own rationality, their own theology and their own superiority, have played. It is precisely this awareness that plays a large role in how I define conversation: an awareness that the playing field for conversations have not been level, and still aren't, and that conversations therefore are characterized by power dynamics. It is within these historically fraught circumstances that this dissertation inserts itself, with humble hope that conversations indeed might be transformative and lead to a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. The chapters on marginality and vulnerability therefore are a contribution to facilitate a decolonial conversation, because I will argue that mission from the margins through vulnerability provides a viable way to carry out these conversations.

In addition, the emphasis on conversation attempts to open up a discursive space, in which mission practitioners might insert itself in order to discuss most fruitfully how they can transform their mission practice in a postcolonial key. In the last segment of this chapter, I will therefore elaborate more upon the possibilities and pitfalls of locating oneself in a discussion that attempts to provide input for future mission endeavors.

1.4. OUTLINE OF THE ARGUMENT

Edward Said, whose ground-breaking work *Orientalism* contributed immensely to the bourgeoning field of postcolonial theology, asserted that 'beginnings have to be made for each project in such a way as to enable what follows from them.'[81] The starting point of each research reflects the epistemic location of the author and enables the directions and conclusions of the research project. One's dissertation outline is therefore not self-evident, but searches for the most suitable interplay between text and context in order to articulate one's theoretical positions. My dissertation started with the development in missionary discourse, both within the

[79] Brian D. McLaren, 'Reflections on Postcolonial Friendship', in *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations: Global Awakenings in Theology and Praxis*, ed. Kay Higuera Smith, Jayachitra Lalitha, and L. Daniel Hawk (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 14.

[80] Brian D. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I Am a Missional, Evangelical, Post/Protestant, Liberal/Conservative, Mystical/Poetic, Biblical, Charismatic/Contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-yet-Hopeful, Emergent, Unfinished Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

[81] Cited in: Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge Classics (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 16.

World Council of Churches, and the decade-old PCN. The description of this context problematized three elements, and the research question indicates the direction this research will take, namely to articulate which themes might guide the ongoing reflection on contemporary mission. The research question employs three key terms discussed in this dissertation. The present chapter will therefore provide a working definition of the three key terms in the research question: a) mission encounters; b) World Christianity and; c) the postcolonial condition. As this research aims to provide theological ideas to help shape the parameters of a viable, progressive theology of mission, the delineation of the context in which such a theology of mission might be operative is of paramount importance.

In the section entitled, 'Mission Encounters,' I will focus on the role of encounter in mission. Mission is a much contested and – sometimes deliberately – multivalent concept. The emphasis on encounter highlights the interpersonal dimension of mission. The definition of mission I seek to provide will, in the main body of the text, function as a measuring rod against which my other theological explorations can be checked. The second term that warrants my own definition is the term World Christianity. As I have indicated in the introduction to this chapter, I am critical of articulations of World Christianity that are primarily based on the numerical changes in the demographic of worldwide Christianity. Instead, I will search for a definition of World Christianity that will include the option for underrepresented communities of faith. In order to highlight the element of encounter in World Christianity, I stress the transnational character of World Christianity, which enables encounters across borders. Intertwined with the definition of World Christianity is the third theme that needs definition, namely the postcolonial condition. This dissertation incorporates postcolonial criticism because of the conviction that if the (neo)colonial entanglements of mission and empire are not addressed, their invidious effect will continue. In addition, recent contributions to the field of postcolonial theory strongly suggest a need to situate the Netherlands within a discourse on the postcolonial condition.[82] Postcolonial theology questions the centrality of the perspective of rational and autonomous research, and instead insists that one's biography and one's theological projects are intertwined. I will therefore explain how my own biography has interacted with the arguments I am advancing. Although this dissertation has been written with the expectation that it will facilitate future conversation about mission theology, postcolonial theory expresses caution about projects that intend to map the future. The reason for this caution is that future-directed projects might inadvertently engage in a discursive colonization of the future. In the section 'future-directed writing,' I will explain how my dissertation responds to this issue.

[82] Gert Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands: Sixty-Five Years of Forgetting, Commemorating, Silencing* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011); Elleke Boehmer and Sarah de Mul, eds., *The Postcolonial Low Countries: Literature, Colonialism, and Multiculturalism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012).

The discipline of missiology is obviously characterized by its study of the phenomenon of mission, but is not bound to a specific method and feels at home in a variety of disciplinary approaches, such as the social sciences and anthropology. Mission is a complex phenomenon because of its deep historical roots, its worldwide occurrence and its entanglement with empire.[83] Disciplines such as history, the political sciences and geography are therefore natural conversation partners for the discipline of missiology.[84] This multidisciplinary approach is complicated and enhanced by the intertwining of mission and anthropology and geography in the commencing phases of these disciplines.[85]

My conversation partners in this dissertation are postcolonial geography, anthropology and feminist theory (of which intersectional theory is an integral part) and disability theory. In the second chapter, I will employ postcolonial geography in order to address the problem of national borders as a primary ordering principle for mission. Postcolonial geography will help me to address some lingering questions of World Christianity, namely the unwarranted emphasis on geographical areas such as continents and nations. Postcolonial geography questions the reductionist nature of area-geography, and is consequently helpful to address area-missiology. In this second chapter, I will also enlist the help of the discipline of anthropology. When I discuss the colonial origins of the term 'mission field,' anthropology allows me to draw parallels with the usage of the term within the discipline, for which fieldwork is a defining method. This parallel consequently enables me to make use of the criticism that is leveled from a postcolonial perspective within anthropology on the centrality of the metaphor of the field.

Feminist theory will provide valuable resources in various chapters. The resources that are developed within intersectional theory originating from a feminist perspective will be applied to the discussion on marginality in order to allow for a multi-axial description of marginality. The deployment of intersectionality can reduce the risk of succumbing to the portrayal of marginality in monolithic or essentialist terms. Feminist theology also proves to be useful in the chapter on vulnerability, since feminist theology will draw our attention to the bodily dimension of vulnerability. In my overview of the missiological literature on vulnerability, it will become apparent that this bodily dimension is mainly absent. Finally, I will make use of feminist theology in my chapter on vocation. Feminist theology helps us to mend the omissions in vocational language since this theology questions

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83 Stanley H. Skreslet, *Comprehending Mission: The Questions, Methods, Themes, Problems, and Prospects of Missiology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2012).

84 Jan A. B. Jongeneel, *Missiological Encyclopedia: The Theology of Mission / Missionary Theology in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, vol. 2, 2 vols, Missiological Classics Series 3 (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2006).

85 Jonas Adelin Jørgensen, 'Anthropology of Christianity and Missiology: Disciplinary Contexts, Converging Themes, and Future Tasks of Mission Studies', *Mission Studies* 28, no. 2 (2011): 186–208; Michael A. Rynkiewich, 'Do We Need a Postmodern Anthropology for Mission in a Postcolonial World?', *Mission Studies* 28, no. 2 (2011): 151–69.

whether women are tacitly included or excluded from this language.

To recapitulate, the second chapter will function as a transitional chapter between this introductory chapter and the chapters three, four and five with a primarily systematic-theological character. The second chapter has a largely critical character, since it assesses the spatial metaphors that together are instrumental in upholding a geographically expansive perspective on mission.[86] The constructive part of the chapter describes the contextual nature of border-crossing, in order to search for a mission praxis in which divisive social boundaries can be crossed, without perpetuating the forms of Western entitlement that have often accompanied geographical expansions of the border. The final section of the chapter brings in the topic of planetarity, as a way of imagining the planet as an interconnected whole. The planetary imagination complements my own perspective on World Christianity and adds an additional argument to find a third way beyond either geographically expansive perspectives on mission or insular, parochial practices of mission.

After having established the spatial framework of contemporary mission, the three subsequent chapters will each examine in depth one aspect of the answer on the research question. Taken together, these three elements of the answer will paint a comprehensive picture of how contemporary mission might be practiced.

Mission from the margins, vulnerability and vocation are three distinct but interlocking themes that enable a rethinking of the impetus for mission encounters in the postcolonial context of World Christianity because of their potential to a) locate mission agency at the margins rather than at the centers of power; b) use the concept of shared vulnerability as a correction against strategies of invulnerability and; c) design communal conceptions of vocation instead of individual and territorially determined ways of living vocation.

The first thematic chapter, the third chapter of the dissertation, builds on the idea of mission *from* the margins – proposed by *Together towards Life* – as a foundational element of a contemporary theology of mission. Mission from the margins signals a profound leap from the traditional paradigm, in which mission was primarily directed *at* the margins. The goal of the chapter on marginality is to open up a new perspective on the social location of mission, in order to attend to the problem of increasing parochialization of mission in the Netherlands. I will enter into discussion with authors who have experienced various forms of marginalization in their life and who use their own life story as a resource of theologizing. The primary question that I ask to those authors is how their Christology provides clues to the margins as the preferred social location of mission. Ensuing from the answer to this question, I am interested in the consequences for the perceived center, if margin and center are switching places. One of the main criteria for the suitability

[86] Martha Frederiks, 'Kenosis and a Model for Interreligious Dialogue', *Missiology* 33, no. 2 (2005): 212–13.

of a framework of marginality is the possibility to speak about marginality without succumbing to essentialist depictions of the margins. I employ therefore, as indicated earlier, intersectionality theory, in order to provide multi-axial accounts of marginality.

The fourth chapter builds on the findings on the multi-axial nature of marginality. The generative theme of vulnerability provides additional resources to destabilize a homogenizing perspective on marginality. In line with the findings of the chapter on marginality, I will search for ways in which the shared condition of human vulnerability can be articulated. Vulnerability as a shared human condition eliminates a sharp distinction between those who are considered marginal and those who assume the power to depict others as marginal. Ever since the espousal by David Bosch of a framework of mission *as* vulnerable, the theme of vulnerability has been embraced within missiology. I start the chapter with an overview of contemporary approaches of the role vulnerability plays in theologies of mission. In line with the postcolonial character of this dissertation, I will critically question the extent to which these theologies have the ability to prevent the promotion of invulnerability in mission praxis. Where I find the reviewed sources lacking, I will search for other approaches to vulnerability, in which the vulnerable condition of humanity is more clearly articulated. My espousal of vulnerability should not be read as condoning of all forms of – afflicted – vulnerability, but rather as a mindfulness of vulnerability. I will search therefore for possibilities, together with Sarah Coakley, to find divine empowerment within one's vulnerable condition.

Finally, the third theme of vocation will be discussed in the fifth chapter. The impetus to discuss vocation is to search for alternative options of imagining vocation that are not bound to geographically expansive practices of mission. The first part of the chapter will therefore have a critical character, since I will research with the help of Charles Taylor the inner structure of vocation. In the constructive part of the chapter, I have proposed four way markers: narrative, community, spirituality, and being in the presence of those who are poor. These way markers are informed by the findings of the preceding two chapters. Vocation becomes therefore defined by a vulnerable presence, which arises out of the foregrounding of the experience of marginalization.

1.5. MISSION ENCOUNTERS

The present section addresses the question of what definition of mission best enables me to answer my research question. I am not trying to propose a definition that is valid in all contexts, but instead I am interested in a definition of mission that fits the context of the present research project. The tendency to subsume vastly

diverging elements under the heading of mission makes mission a notoriously difficult concept to define, despite the oft-quoted maxim that 'if everything is mission, nothing is mission.'[87] David Bosch, although himself acutely aware of the danger of overextending the definition of mission, still provided thirteen elements in the emerging paradigm of mission outlined in his work.[88] The contextual nature of mission allows for a focus on the particular elements of the theology of mission that are especially appropriate in addressing contextual needs. The contextual nature of mission in the context of the post-Christian West has been described by Lesslie Newbigin who pointed out clearly the specific challenges for witnessing to Christ in the predicaments of his time.[89]

In order to arrive at a working definition of mission for the present project, I have singled out three markers which guide my formulation of a working definition of mission. The first marker, which I consider necessary for all forms of Christian mission, is a basis in Trinitarian theology. The second and third markers are contextual in nature and enable me to zoom in closer to the context in which contemporary mission takes place. The second marker is the postcolonial character of contemporary mission. The third is tailored to the problem identified earlier in this chapter, namely that current Dutch mission praxis has difficulty coming to terms with the interrelated character of our planetary world,[90] and consequently seems ill-equipped to engage it in mission.

Firstly, then, mission is anchored in Trinitarian theology.[91] A consensus seems to be emerging in missiology around a Trinitarian foundation for mission.[92] The Trinitarian foundation locates the source of mission in the overflowing love, community and interdependence within God.[93] Although the primacy of the Trinity in theologizing on mission is well-established, it seems that the ensuing emphasis on the *missio Dei* is being compromised recently. The charge against *missio Dei* theology is that it has been used for a wide variety of often diverging missiological agendas,[94] is thoroughly elitist in character,[95] has widened the gap between God's

[87] Stephen Neill, *Creative Tension. The Duff Lectures, 1958* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1959), 81.
[88] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 368–510.
[89] Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).
[90] The use of the word planetary foreshadows the second chapter, in which the planetary character of mission will be explained further.
[91] John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).
[92] Tormod Engelsviken, 'Missio Dei: The Understanding and Misunderstanding of a Theological Concept in European Churches and Missiology', *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 367 (2003): 490.
[93] "Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes," *International Review of Mission* 101, no. 2 (2012): paragraph 2, 19.
[94] J. Andrew Kirk, *What Is Mission? Theological Explorations* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999), 25.
[95] "One can also argue that *missio dei* is an elite understanding which has been by and large separated

essence and the world[96] and is used in a 'theologically imperialistic way' to list everything the church is supposed to be doing.[97] Because of these reasons, it seems wise to foreground the Trinitarian foundation of mission, while taking into account the possibility that the sound theological idea of *missio Dei* has been compromised in practice.

In my working definition of mission, I seek dialogue with the recent statements on the nature of mission as they have been made by the Edinburgh *Common Call 2010*[98] and *Together towards Life*[99] as guidelines for my reflections on mission. The Edinburgh *Common Call* employs vocational language to indicate that 'the church, as a sign and symbol of the reign of God, is called to witness to Christ today by sharing in God's mission of love through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.' This statement shows the Trinitarian character of the *Common Call*, highlighting the interconnectedness of witness to Christ through the empowerment of the Spirit.

Together towards Life proceeds as well from within a Trinitarian framework. Within the Trinitarian framework the *missio Spiritus* functions as an interpretive lens through which the mission of the church is considered. The very first paragraph sets the Trinitarian stage in a three-fold statement of belief in the three persons of the Trinity, which stresses the life-giving mission of the Trinity. The focal point for the affirmation of belief in the Father is that God created the whole *oikumene* according to His image and is continually at work in creation to protect and to strengthen the world. Faith in Christ is founded upon a reference to John 10:10, as Christ has come to give life in all its fullness. The Holy Spirit is the giver of life, the one who sustains life and who works for the renewal of creation. As the second paragraph of *Together towards Life* affirms:

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from popular understandings of mission theory and practice." Philip L. Wickeri, 'The End of Missio Dei - Secularization, Religions and the Theology of Mission', in *Mission Revisited: Between Mission History and Intercultural Theory: Essays in Honour of Pieter N. Holtrop*, ed. Volker Küster (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2011), 36.

[96] Flett, *The Witness of God*, 25.

[97] Engelsviken, "Missio Dei," 485.

[98] 'Common Call' (Edinburgh 2010 Centennial World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 2010), http://www.edinburgh2010.org/en/resources/papersdocuments.html. For the study process that led to the Common Call see Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim, eds., *Witnessing to Christ Today*, Edinburgh 2010 Series, II (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2010). See also Jacques Matthey, 'From 1910 to 2010: A Post Edinburgh 2010 Reflection', *International Review of Mission* 99, no. 2 (2010): 258–275. The Edinburgh conference received considerable news coverage in the Dutch Christian media, see for example the 16 articles that are devoted to the conference in *Reformatorisch Dagblad* [Dutch Reformed Daily]. http://www.refdag.nl/dossiers/overzicht-dossiers/kerk-godsdienst/internationale-conferenties?ps_7_6756=1#subdossier_7_6756 (accessed August 7, 2014).

[99] For literature on and responses to *Together towards Life*, see Kirsteen Kim, 'Introducing the New Statement on Mission and Evangelism', *International Review of Mission* 101, no. 2 (2012): 316–21. See also the responses in the April 2014 and November 2013 issues of International Review of Mission.

> Mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation. The missionary God who sent the Son to the world calls all God's people (John 20:21), and empowers them to be a community of hope.[100]

In language echoing the Cape Town Commitment,[101] *Together towards Life* ends with stating that 'we commit ourselves together in humility and hope to the mission of God, who recreates all and reconciles all.'[102] The commitment to the Trinity is an important feature of the document, an acknowledgment of the agency of the Spirit, who works towards healing and renewal within the whole of creation.

Second, as mission perpetually seeks to be in tune with the challenges of contemporary times, mission should first and foremost display awareness of postcolonial matters, as the postcolonial context continues to affect the realm of mission. It is therefore important to stress that mission encounters taking place in the Netherlands are part and parcel of being under the postcolonial sphere of influence. The colonial history of the Netherlands is only partially dealt with at this present moment, although the debate on racism has witnessed a great upsurge.[103] Postcolonial analysis could shed new light on the entanglement of mission and empire in the history of Dutch mission and might guide new initiatives in mission encounter, or even sound a warning about some ill-conceived projects in mission.

Lastly, a working definition of mission should help to overcome the distinction between homeland and 'foreign countries,' by focusing on the transnational character of mission.[104] In the second chapter I will focus on the construction of a distinction between a 'home base' and 'mission field' and how this distinction has helped to create a qualitative difference between mission work abroad and mission work in the Netherlands. I will argue that the geographical images regarding 'mission base' and 'mission field' are obscuring the transnational and interconnected character of Christian mission. The challenge for contemporary articulations of

[100] 'Together towards Life', para. 2.

[101] 'Cape Town Commitment: A Declaration of Belief and a Call to Action' (Lausanne III, Cape Town, 2010). See for reflection on the Cape Town Commitment: Robert J. Schreiter, 'From the Lausanne Covenant to the Cape Town Commitment: A Theological Assessment', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35, no. 2 (2011): 88–92.

[102] 'Together towards Life', para. 112.

[103] Recent literature in this field includes Boehmer and Mul, *The Postcolonial Low Countries*; Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands*. For Germany, the state of research and the inclusion of postcolonial awareness in theology has been discussed extensively by Michael Nausner. Michael Nausner, 'Hybridity and Negotiated Boundaries Even in Germany: Reflections on the Reception of Postcolonial Theory and Theology', *Journal of Postcolonial Networks* 2, no. 1 (2012): 1–30.

[104] Hilde Nielssen, Inger Marie Okkenhaug, and Karina Hestad Skeie, eds., *Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Unto the Ends of the World*, Studies in Christian Mission 40 (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Claire Brickell, 'Geographies of Contemporary Christian Mission(aries)', *Geography Compass* 6, no. 12 (2012): 725–739.

mission is therefore to affirm the planetary character of the world against the unequal commodification of globalization. The section on planetarity in the next chapter will outline the distinction between planetarity and globalization and argue for a planetary approach of mission. In short, planetarity questions the economic priority of the global perspective and instead emphasizes the earth as a living organism in which humans ought to work together for the flourishing of the whole planet. Although postcolonial theory questioned ingrained binaries such as Western/non-Western or missionary/native,[105] parochial reflexes seem to be reinforcing those binaries again.[106]

Another pressing reason to stress the interconnectedness of the local and the global is the subtle racial overtones that linger in the distinction between evangelization and mission. In the words of Klippies Kritzinger in the South African context of the Dutch Reformed tradition: 'mission is what white Christians do among black people, and evangelism is what they do among lapsed white Christians.'[107] Kritzinger is referring here to the tendency to connect mission with outward-reaching forms of Christian engagement, which crosses ethnic and racial lines in that process. Evangelism is consequently connected with the process of reaching inwards, connecting with one's own social group without crossing the same racial and ethnic barriers. The distinction between evangelism and mission, however well-meaning, might reveal an ordering of mission and evangelism along racial lines.[108] Although the Dutch context is notably different from the South-African context, the distinction between mission and evangelism surfaces in the Netherlands as well.[109] I therefore consider it an imperative for my own definition of mission to address the entanglement of the missionary encounter and race ideologies. To my knowledge, racism, white privilege and the missionary encounter has been extensively studied from a Catholic perspective.[110] It would be beneficial for

[105] Arun W. Jones, 'Scholarly Transgressions: (Re)writing the History of World Christianity', *Theology Today* 71, no. 2 (2014): 222.
[106] Kirsteen Kim, *Joining in with the Spirit: Connecting World Church and Local Mission* (London: Epworth Press, 2009), 13.
[107] J.N.J. Kritzinger, '" Mission As..." must We Choose? A Dialogue with Bosch, Bevans & Schroeder and Schreiter in the South African Context', *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 39, no. 1 & 2 (2011): 34.
[108] For more information regarding the South-African context see Cobus Van Wyngaard, 'The Language of "diversity" in Reconstructing Whiteness in the Dutch Reformed Church', 2012, http://umkndsp01.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/6072; Cobus Van Wyngaard, 'White Christians Crossing Borders: Between Perpetuation and Transformation', accessed 25 July 2014, http://www.academia.edu/7239100/White_Christians_Crossing_Borders_Between_Perpetuation_and_Transformation.
[109] See for example the distinction between mission and evangelism in the description of the Dutch Reformed Churches (Liberated), a small Dutch Protestant denomination. 'Zending en Evangelisatie', *GKV*, accessed 7 August 2014, http://www.gkv.nl/actief-in-de-kerk/zending-en-evangelisatie/.
[110] Paul V. Kollman, 'Mission Ad Gentes and the Perils of Racial Privilege', *Theological Studies* 70,

postcolonial mission to continue this research from a Protestant perspective, and it is my hypothesis that the work of Kritzinger might be helpful for this endeavor. His work helps to critically review the distinction between evangelism, which is connected to the familiar and the home country, and mission, which has usually been connected to the foreign. However, in the upsurge of a discourse on mission in the PCN in the last decade, the word evangelism seems to have fallen out of use. It seems therefore that the term mission, which used to be applied to foreign mission, has witnessed a shift in meaning and has taken over some of the meanings associated with evangelism. It remains hard to assess, however, to what extent the term evangelism is still in use as a term to describe mission efforts within the Netherlands.

In my definition of the research question, I have chosen to qualify mission with the noun 'encounter.' The primary reason to focus on mission encounter is the inter-personal dimension of mission and its inherently personal character.[111] I follow the lead of Kritzinger, who argues that mission is defined by transformative encounters: 'Mission as praxis is about concrete transformation; it is specifically about transformative *encounters*: among people, and between the living God and people, leading to people being called, sent, healed, and empowered.'[112] Thus, missiology as a discipline becomes 'encounterology,' i.e. a critical reflection on the encounters that take place in mission.[113] However, my emphasis on mission encounter does not mean I hold only an anthropocentric perspective on mission. Instead, with the word encounter I express the necessity to encounter each other in, through and with the whole of creation. The other is never to be understood in a disconnected way from the world in which we all find our home. Encounters are modelled upon the way of Christ. Even though mission encounters is a broad category, life-affirming encounters cannot take place in a disposition / mindset other than Christ's disposition / mindset (Philippians 2:5).[114] The term encounter prefigures therefore the emphasis on vulnerability in chapter four, which emphasizes the

no. 4 (2009): 904–928; Laurie M. Cassidy and Alexander Mikulich, *Interrupting White Privilege: Catholic Theologians Break the Silence* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2007); Margaret Guider, 'Moral Imagination and the Missio Ad Gentes: Redressing the Counterwitness of Racism', *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 56 (2013): 49–69.

[111] See for concrete examples in the Algerian context: Marian Maskulak, 'The Mission and Dialogue of Encounter', *Missiology: An International Review* 41, no. 4 (2013): 427–437. See for an anthropological perspective: Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[112] Kritzinger, '" Mission As..." must We Choose?', 52. Emphasis in original. See for a spiritually developed account of mission as encounter: Madge Karecki, 'Contemplative Encounter and Mission Praxis', *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 37, no. 3 (2009): 24–36.

[113] J.N.J. Kritzinger, 'Faith to Faith – Missiology as Encounterology', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 29, no. 3 (2008): 764–90.

[114] See for the most recent articulation of the primacy of the way of Christ in mission encounters: Stefan Paas, 'The Discipline of Missiology in 2016: Concerning the Place and Meaning of Missiology in the Theological Curriculum', *Calvin Theological Journal* 51 (2016): 45.

necessity to open up oneself to the perspective of the other, in order to find transformation through the mindfulness of our shared vulnerability.

In summary, I define mission in its postcolonial context as resting on a Trinitarian foundation, allowing reflection on mission as a profoundly theological activity; that is, concerned with the embodiment of the sending of the Trinity. Further, I see mission as displaying postcolonial awareness, for example in the explicit engagement with lingering though covert racist tendencies. Lastly, with my use of the term mission in this dissertation I seek to overcome the formal distinction between domestic and foreign mission in order to shun an imagining of mission as an expansive enterprise. In sum, for the purposes of this dissertation, mission is defined as interpersonal encounter in the postcolonial context of World Christianity characterized by witness to the life-giving and life-affirming Triune God.

1.5.1. *Excursus on the Missional Church*

After having defined what I mean by mission, I now turn to a brief excursus explaining how I relate this project to the missional church movement. This will explain the extent to which I borrow from resources developed within that movement. The missional church movement, which rose to prominence in North America in the late 1990's, combines a focus on the missional character of all theology with an emphasis on the primacy of ecclesiology.[115] The movement proceeds from the assumption that the era of Christendom had a negative influence on Christian mission. In Christendom, mission was more or less a program that the church carried out, and was not connected to the heart of the church.[116] With the end of this era, new possibilities open up for Christian mission.[117] In addition, the movement attempts to take ongoing pluralization in society seriously through the acknowledgment of the postmodern context in which theology seeks to find articulation. The theological wells from which missional church drinks are the *missio Dei* theology and the theologies of Bosch and Newbigin, and behind them, Karl Barth. Since Newbigin was one of the first to articulate a robust missiology aimed at Western culture, and thoroughly explored the questions of plurality and postmodernity, he contributed immensely to the ongoing missional conversation.[118]

[115] Key publications include: Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); Darrell L. Guder and Lois Barrett, eds., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).
[116] "In the ecclesiocentric approach of Christendom, mission became only one of the many programs of the church." Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 6.
[117] "Newbigin believes that Christendom is one of the primary factors that cripples a missionary consciousness of the church." Michael W. Goheen, *'As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You': J.E. Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2000), 435.
[118] Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*.

Newbigin was equally critical about the possibility of mission during Christendom.[119] Bosch provided a multidimensional articulation of mission and his approach facilitates the contextualization of his thought in numerous situations.

I appreciate the missional church conversation for its outspoken affirmation of the missional character of reality and its foregrounding of the missional character of the Triune God. The movement articulates the primacy of ecclesiology, thereby advocating the communal character of church life. The expression of the primacy of ecclesiology needs to be understood against the backdrop of debates that have been waged within missiology from the 1960s onwards. The missional church takes here a perspective that is in opposition to Hoekendijk, who argued in favor of secularization, and bypassed visible church structures to a large degree.[120] Especially in the context of the Netherlands it is important to stress the emphasis on missional church brought by Hoekendijk, as explained by Rein Brouwer.[121] In the work of Hoekendijk, eschatology always precedes ecclesiology, and being missional means that that the church is turned inside out: radically in service for the world.[122]

Yet, as Brouwer advocates, one need a dense ecology of the context in which a church community locates itself in order to move from espousing the idea of being missional towards being missional in the concrete realities of life. Brouwer reminds us as well that one needs to probe deeper than just to state that we are finding ourselves in modernity or post modernity and that we live in a culture that is increasingly antagonistic to Christianity.[123] Although Brouwer calls for more engagement with the social sciences in order to study the ecology of congregations in more detail, and I commend his call, it falls outside the scope of this dissertation to provide this. What I can provide however, is to provide a richer context analysis in terms of the postcolonial condition. This is in line with the work of Brain McLaren, who argues to focus more on postcolonial theory in the conversation of the missional church in order to discuss not only issues of epistemology but also of justice.[124]

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[119] Goheen, *As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You*, 435.
[120] It is therefore not surprising that, for example, Goheen is quite quick to dismiss the influence of Hoekendijk. Michael W. Goheen, 'The Missional Church: Ecclesiological Discussion in the Gospel and Our Culture Network in North America', *Missiology: An International Review* 30, no. 4 (2002): 481–82.
[121] Brouwer, ''Missional Church and Local Constraints: A Dutch Perspective', 56–57.
[122] Hoekendijk, *The Church inside out*.
[123] Brouwer, ''Missional Church and Local Constraints: A Dutch Perspective', 58.
[124] By advancing the conversation from postmodern to postcolonial, we build from theoretical matters of knowledge, language, truth, and certainty to intensely practical and ethical matters of violence, domination, justice, and power (remembering that injustice is, at heart, an abuse of God-given power). Brian D. McLaren, 'Church Emerging: Or Why I Still Use the Word Postmodern but with Mixed Feelings', in *A Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, ed. Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones (Baker Books, 2008), no page numbers in online edition.

The missional church movement positions itself in some respects as contrasting with the predominant line within the World Council of Churches, where a pneumatological approach to mission is in the foreground and thus subordinating ecclesiology to the primacy of pneumatology. For the World Council of Churches, the Spirit of God is active in surprising ways, working towards everything that is life affirming and contributing to human flourishing. A sustained emphasis on pneumatology however need not exclude the ongoing role of the church, as the church is commissioned in *Together towards Life* to be a community devoted to the furthering of life for all and to form a missional community.[125] The Christocentric approach of Newbigin provided however a strong impetus for mission, as Goheen asserts, "For Newbigin, the very being of the church is constituted by Christ's commission: 'as the Father has sent me, I am sending you' (John 20:21). The church's nature and identity is given in its role to continue the mission of Jesus. Newbigin unfolds Christ's mission in terms of the Father's reign, Jesus' inauguration of this reign, and the Spirit's witness to its presence."[126] Newbigin's theology is always Trinitarian,[127] although Goheen argues that Newbigin could have reflected more on the work of both Father and Holy Spirit. [128]

In light of the strong denouncement of a Christendom framework, it is surprising that some authors of the missional church movement still seem to have a form a longing towards a time when the church was thriving and had more influence. These authors argue for adherence to the principles of missional church as a remedy against the ongoing malaise in (mainly) the North American church. Interestingly, the rise of non-Western Christianity is not always depicted as a success story. In the words of Hastings:

> A thriving church that influenced Western culture and spawned mission movements that touched the far corners of the world is now under siege. Now the Two-Thirds World has 70 percent of the world's Christians, and missional activity is no longer primarily from the West to the rest of the world but from and to six continents.[129]

By stating that 'a thriving church (…) is now under siege,' Hastings employs militaristic vocabulary. In the discourse of Hastings, it stands to reason that if a 'once thriving church' is perceived to be 'under siege,' the advance of non-Western forms of Christianity is not something about which to celebrate, but stands rather in stark contrast with the formerly victorious church of the West. In the same vein, the work of Guder and Barrett illustrates an approach where the decline of the church is seen as calling for revival. In their words: '(…) the churches of North

[125] 'Together towards Life', para. 10.
[126] Goheen, 'The Missional Church', 162.
[127] Goheen, *As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You*, 163.
[128] Ibid., 429.
[129] Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 33–34.

America have been dislocated from their prior social role of chaplain to the culture and society and have lost their once privileged positions of influence.'[130] Alan Hirsch, lastly, aspires '(…) to halt the hemorrhaging decline of the faith in these parts [North America, EDH] of the world.'[131]

Inasmuch as the missional church movement aspires to a revival of the church in North America, it does not sufficiently challenge the aftermath of empire and its virulent neocolonial permutations since the movement hardly pays attention to the interwovenness of church and empire. It seems therefore that the language employed within the missional church movement is, at least from what could be gleaned from these citations, is different from the discourse within the emerging field of World Christianity. The field of World Christianity stresses the primacy of transnational ties and the multiple interlocking meanings generated in the complex make-up of World Christianity. I consider the resources provided by the missional church movement only to be helpful to the extent that they recognize the pressing need to engage in an active and self-reflective decolonial stance.[132]

1.6. WORLD CHRISTIANITY

1.6.1. *The Turn to World Christianity*

Recent developments in the study of Christianity have given rise to the claim that a 'turn' to World Christianity has taken place. The language of the turn expresses the similarity of the World-Christian turn to other landmark turns in disciplines such as the humanities and the exact sciences. The turn to World Christianity signifies the necessity to theorize within studies of Christianity from the perspective of World Christianity. Paul Kollman, who has forged the expression 'the turn to World Christianity,' indicates the consequences for the study of Christianity when the full implications of the World Christianity paradigm have become clear:

> We are moving – unevenly but steadily- "beyond the turn," where scholars of Christianity will be expected to consider the world or global implications of their work. To ignore such implications will place one's scholarship outside of an emerging consensus.[133]

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[130] Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*, 78.
[131] Alan Hirsch, 'Reawakening a Potent Missional Ethos in the Twenty-First Century Church', *Missiology* 38, no. 1 (2010): 6.
[132] Paul Chung attempts for example to reconcile missional church and World Christianity with each other. Paul S. Chung, *Reclaiming Mission as Constructive Theology: Missional Church and World Christianity* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012).
[133] Kollman, 'Understanding the World-Christian Turn in the History of Christianity and Theology', 166.

The fundamental observation behind the upsurge of World Christianity lies in the changed demographic composition of Christianity.[134] Walter Bühlmann predicted the rise of the 'Third Church' as early as 1977.[135] In addition, Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh have been trailblazers in the popularization of the emergence of World Christianity.[136]

Although the contours of an emerging consensus on World Christianity are becoming increasingly clear, the presuppositions from which World Christianity is studied differ considerably. This section will help to clarify the issues at stake and will explain the angle from which World Christianity will be viewed in this dissertation.[137] I will explain my perspective on World Christianity by discussing three paradigms of the study of World Christianity in order to locate the current scholarly debate within the development of the discipline. The necessity to engage at a deeper level with World Christianity becomes clear when considering the 'World' of World Christianity. As Namsoon Kang has clarified with her helpful analogy of world travelling, one's own positionality determines to a large extent what is considered the 'World' and what part of the world is just 'domestic.' If one was to travel from the United States to South Korea, this would most certainly be world travel. But if one were to travel only within South Korea itself, this would not be considered an act of world travel. Thus one's positionality enables one to see the 'World' of World Christianity differently. A second reason to engage in a critical scrutiny of the ideas behind World Christianity is the discursive potential of this concept. The notion of World Christianity could be propagated for a variety of goals. Dorottya Nagy, for example, has pointed to the pivotal role China plays in the construct of World Christianity. By essentializing China as an extraordinary country with an extraordinary growth of Christianity, China's Christianity can come to the rescue of a withering and dying Western Christianity. Nagy points out that those rhetorical constructs are obscuring the transnational reality of World

[134] David B. Barrett, George Thomas Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project, 'The Global Religious Landscape: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Major Religious Groups as of 2010', 2012, http://www.pewforum.org/files/2014/01/global-religion-full.pdf.

[135] Walter Bühlmann, *The Coming of the Third Church: An Analysis of the Present and Future of the Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1977).

[136] William R. Burrows, Mark R. Gornik, and Janice A. McLean, *Understanding World Christianity: The Work and Vision of Andrew F. Walls* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011); Andrew F. Walls and Akintunde E. Akinade, *A New Day: Essays on World Christianity in Honor of Lamin Sanneh* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010).

[137] The interpretation of World Christianity is more closely debated in two other articles from my hand. Hof, 'Het gewicht van het zwaartepunt: Recht doen aan het wereldchristendom'; Eleonora Dorothea Hof, 'Re-Imagining World Christianity: Challenging Territorial Essentialism', in *Resistance and Visions - Postcolonial, Post-Secular and Queer Contributions To Theology and the Study of Religions*, ed. U. Auga et al., Journal of the European Society of Women in Theological Research 22 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 173–86.

Christianity: a reality in which essentializing ideas should be traded in for an emphasis on heterogeneity and super-diversity.[138]

After outlining the development of World Christianity paradigms, I will continue by examining the debate between Philip Jenkins and Robert Wuthnow.[139] I interpret this debate as a struggle for the most useful paradigm from which to interpret World Christianity. The scrutiny of this debate will hopefully yield insights for my own interpretation of World Christianity. Finally, I examine the interplay between World Christianity and the continuation of missionary witness and presence. A continued relationship between World Christianity and mission is not self-evident because of the questions the emergence of World Christianity poses to agency and transnationality in missionary contexts. I will therefore review at the end of the World Christianity section the proposals of Peter Phan[140] and Sathianathan Clarke[141] regarding the possibilities and problems of mission and World Christianity. The goal of this review is to suggest a reconciliation of mission and World Christianity.

1.6.2. *Interpreting World Christianity: Paradigms*

The term World Christianity denotes both a field of inquiry and a term used colloquially to refer to the state of affairs in worldwide Christianity. It is therefore not surprising that the term acquires distinctive meanings dependent on the standpoints of the interpreters. I follow the approach of Charles Farhadian, who has distinguished three paradigms of World Christianity, each associated with its own epoch.[142] The first paradigm focused on the expansion of Christianity through the agencies of missionaries. The goal of mission was determined by the progressive coloring in of Christianity on the map. This paradigm is associated with Kenneth Scott Latourette, who wrote an extensive, seven-volume history of Christianity.[143] Following Farhadian, I note that the first paradigm of World Christianity feels easily at home in a colonial ordering of the word, in which expansion of empire and expansion of Christianity go hand in hand.

Farhadian dates the emergence of the second paradigm in the final decades of

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[138] Dorottya Nagy, ‘Where Is China in World Christianity?’, *Diversities* 12, no. 1 (2010): 70–83.

[139] Robert Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[140] Peter C. Phan, ‘World Christianity and Christian Mission: Are They Compatible? Insights from the Asian Churches’, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32, no. 4 (2008): 193–98.

[141] Sathianathan Clarke, ‘World Christianity and Postcolonial Mission: A Path Forward for the Twenty-First Century’, *Theology Today* 71, no. 2 (2014): 192–206.

[142] Charles E. Farhadian, ‘Introduction’, in *Introducing World Christianity*, ed. Charles E. Farhadian and Robert W. Hefner (Malden: John Wiley, 2012), 1–4.

[143] Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol. 1–7 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937-1945).

the twentieth century. The stress on the polycentric nature of Christianity fostered an awareness of the diminishing importance of the West in World Christianity. This paradigm is characterized by a reaction to the perceived problems with the former paradigm. Its emphasis on local agency corrected the one-sided accent on missionary endeavors of the preceding paradigm.[144] Expanding on the work of Farhadian, one could argue that this second paradigm enabled an ordering of World Christianity which made each of the various continents a main focus of the paradigm. Christianity in each continent is correspondingly seen as having equal value to other continents; Europe is treated as one of the continents and not allotted a special place as the heartland of Christianity. The implicit Westcentrism of the earlier paradigm is countered through an emphasis on the development of Christianity according to each geographic region. A classic text book outline of this approach would therefore be a description of Christianity by its various continents. However, Europe and Northern America would not be discussed first, but would be on equal footing with the other continents. The second paradigm tries to subvert the logic of the colonial approach to Christianity. Yet, it runs the risk of essentializing Christianity on each continent. Furthermore, the continental division in and of itself is not a natural given, but is actively constructed.[145] A failure to recognize the role of empire in the construction of the continents is a failure to take an explicitly postcolonial stance.

Farhadian himself hopes to contribute to an emerging third paradigm, which takes the gains of the former paradigms into account. This paradigm is concerned with the study of global distribution of power and influence in the development and change of World Christianity. Instead of adopting a historical perspective, the third paradigm aims at analyzing and describing the transformation of Christian actors in light of a multitude of influencing factors. As Akintunde Akinade has argued, the multiple trajectories of faith in World Christianity signal a deep plurality. The stories of Christianity are not reducible to one single master narrative, but need to be taken seriously in their particularity.[146]

This three-fold division proposed by Farhadian is helpful insofar as this proposal affirms the existence of multiple interpretations of World Christianity. However, the first and second imaginaries seem to be relegated to the past in his work. But, as Bosch has observed, paradigms of the past do not disappear overnight, but continue their lingering presence for an unpredictable amount of time.[147] I would

[144] Charles E. Farhadian and Robert W. Hefner, eds., *Introducing World Christianity* (Malden: John Wiley, 2012), 1.
[145] Ali A. Mazrui, 'The Re-Invention of Africa: Edward Said, V. Y. Mudimbe, and Beyond', *Research in African Literatures* 36, no. 3 (2005): 75.
[146] Akintunde E. Akinade, 'Introduction: The Grandeur of Faith: Exploring World Christianity's Multiple Trajectories', in *A New Day: Essays on World Christianity in Honor of Lamin Sanneh*, ed. Akintunde E. Akinade (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 1–16.
[147] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 186.

therefore suggest that the current division of paradigms is not as clear cut as seems at first sight, and therefore that intense negotiation between all three paradigms needs to take place. A sign of this debate is that some authors question whether other authors really belong in the paradigm to which they ascribe. For example, Kang questions whether Mark Noll, in his book *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith*[148] reduces World Christianity to a code word for non-Western Christianity. This has the effect that the binary of Western Christianity versus non-Western Christianity is not questioned but implicitly confirmed.[149] However, I run into a problem here because the criticism of Noll by Kang does not fit neatly into any of the three paradigms I have described. The main criticism of Kang is that Noll reduces World Christianity to exotic, 'other' forms of Christianity. The normativity of traditional Western Christianity seems therefore to be unquestioned. I would consider this position a variant of the second paradigm, since it explicitly strives to overcome the legacy of the colonial period, but falls into the trap of exoticism.

The critique by Kang of the work of Noll is not the only instance of criticism that I found. Nagy considers the textbook by Sebastian Kim and Kirsteen Kim[150] to be informed by territorial essentialism since the textbook employs a geographical ordering of the continents.[151] The continental division as a primary ordering principle of World Christianity stands in the way of a truly transnational approach to World Christianity. Interestingly, by the same standard, the textbook of Farhadian himself could be considered as being squarely in the second paradigm rather than being a trailblazer of the third paradigm. I think that a continental division of textbooks on World Christianity is inherently problematic given the legacy of the ideas of European hegemony that went into the construction of the continents. A partial solution might be to adopt a mixed textbook approach that features both a continental ordering and a denominationally ordered structure. Examples of this approach are the textbooks by Douglas Jacobsen[152] and Noel Davies and Martin Conway.[153] Other possible approaches might be an ordering according to theological loci or practices of faith. However, I am not aware of a recent textbook that dares to abandon a continental structure in its entirety and adopts new and

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[148] Mark A. Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

[149] Namsoon Kang, 'Whose/Which World in World Christianity?: Toward World Christianity as Christianity of Worldly-Responsibility', in *A New Day: Essays on World Christianity in Honor of Lamin Sanneh*, ed. Andrew F. Walls and Akintunde E. Akinade (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 37–38.

[150] Sebastian Kim and Kirsteen Kim, *Christianity as a World Religion* (London: Continuum, 2008).

[151] Nagy, 'Where Is China in World Christianity?', 74.

[152] Douglas Jacobsen, *The World's Christians: Who They Are, Where They Are, and How They Got There* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

[153] Noel Davies and Martin Conway, *World Christianity in the 20th Century: A Reader* (London: SCM, 2008).

fresh methods for structuring World Christianity. The problems of an area approach of World Christianity will be taken up further in the next chapter, since literature from the discipline of postcolonial geography alerts us to further problems with this way of structuring World Christianity.

1.6.3. *The Weight of the Center of Gravity*

The discussion between the second and third paradigms is also present in the dispute between Wuthnow and Jenkins showing up what is at stake in the field of World Christianity Through reviewing their debate I will clarify the following issues: a) the multiple trajectories of World Christianity, resulting in a super-diversity of Christian expressions and theologies; and, b) the possibility of acknowledging the continued presence of transnational missionaries within the story of World Christianity.

Jenkins has popularized the phrase ‘the shift of the center of gravity.’[154] He argues that there has been an emergence of a new kind of Christianity which will, in its current Southern phase, be more conservative, more oriented toward the supernatural, more attuned to the Biblical narratives and likely more violent. Jenkins interprets the available data on the nature of global Christianity in favor of a new normative, Southern Christendom which is notably different from its former, Northern counterpart.[155] Yet, Jenkins maintains that the brand of Southern Christianity is still in the majority of cases distinctively Christian. Many churches in the global South ‘preach a strong and even pristine Christian message.’[156] Jenkins imagines therefore the possibility that the new Christianity might spread to the metropolitan centers of the global North, since the new Christianity is not too ethnocentric to be transferred across cultural boundaries. Yet Jenkins speaks about a ‘North-South cultural schism.’[157] The schism plays itself out between traditionalists and liberals, even while the traditionalists have a distinct numerical advantage: ‘It is the so-called traditionalist, rather than the liberals, who are playing the political game.’[158]

Jenkins is therefore a prime representative of the second paradigm since he maintains an almost ontological distinction between the Western and the non-Western world. He maximizes this distinction through his insistence that the Southern form of Christianity is qualitatively different from its Northern counterpart. He considers the distinction between North and South to be primarily politi-

[154] Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 1.
[155] Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
[156] Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 126.
[157] Ibid., 226.
[158] Ibid., 230–31.

cal in nature. For him, the distinction is as much a numbers game as it is a theological clash. The 'political game' to which he refers is played out through the numerical dominance of Southern Christianity. Given the provocative positions taken by Jenkins, it is no surprise that his dichotomy between a progressive, Northern form of Christianity in opposition to a conservative, Southern form of Christianity is heavily criticized.[159]

The sharpest criticism has been leveled by Wuthnow, an American scholar of religion, who has dismissed the view of Jenkins as 'a huge conceptual obstacle' for understanding global Christianity.[160] However, the debate between Wuthnow and Jenkins is complicated by the fact that Jenkins does not recognize himself in how he is portrayed by Wuthnow. A second complicating factor is the discrepancy between academic debates and grassroots descriptions of World Christianity. If these two discourses are confused with each other, it becomes increasingly difficult to speak with precision about the way World Christianity is generally understood.[161]

The pinnacle of Wuthnow's argument is the problematization of the demographic base on which the emergence of World Christianity rests. He discerns a pernicious short-cut that underlies Jenkins' narrative of World Christianity: a failure to engage with the large influx of foreign missionaries and their effects.[162] Wuthnow's original data bring to the forefront the extensive financial and personal involvement of US congregations in the shaping of World Christianity through forging and maintaining a myriad of transnational ties. His figures suggest that the expenditure on foreign mission, interchurch and humanitarian work is currently at a peak and outweighs even the expenditure at the height of the modern missionary movement. As a result, the emergence of World Christianity as put forth by Jenkins as an interpretative paradigm impedes the perception of these transnational ties and their influence. Wuthnow supports his argument by outlining two background stories which lend credibility to the optimistic embrace of World Christianity by both American scholars and the general public. With background story, Wuthnow means theories which are employed to make sense of the emergence of World Christianity. In the first place, the narrative of secularization is often used in tandem with an argument for the rapid advancement of World Christianity. Both

[159] Frans Jozef Servaas Wijsen and Robert Schreiter, eds., *Global Christianity: Contested Claims* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007). Please note that the dichotomy between progressive and conservative is used differently in Jenkins than in my own proposal. As I have outlined, I use the word to indicate progressive to indicate an espousal of decolonial theory without abandoning mission altogether. So it is very well possible to find conservatism in the Two-Third World and progressive ideas on mission in the One-Third World.
[160] Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith*, 32.
[161] Mark Shaw, 'Robert Wuthnow and World Christianity: A Response to Boundless Faith', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 36, no. 4 (2012): 178.
[162] Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith*.

the adherents and the critics of secularization theory can be appeased by the emergence of World Christianity. By creating a strong dichotomy between the West and the rest, the weakening and loss of influence of Christianity in the West can be accounted for through the secularization thesis. In the same fashion, the growth of Christianity in the non-Western world can be presented as a negation of the secularization theory.[163] This particular framing can be maintained only by a particular description of World Christianity that is mainly concerned with the exotic, non-West manifestations of Christianity and largely ignores the presence of sizable immigrant communities present in the North American continent. The second background story consists of an appeal to the postcolonial constellation of the world. In a postcolonial interpretation, it seems reasonable to assume that non-Western Christianity is coming to its own and is flourishing on its own terms.[164] The time period after the formal end of colonialism marks the transition to independent churches with their own independent, local forms of theology. The contribution of American resources and personnel will likely be perceived as harmful and intrusive and their presence is correspondingly difficult to account for.[165]

Jenkins himself has reacted to the criticism by Wuthnow by claiming that a scholarly paradigm that downplays the role of contemporary transnational missionaries does not exist. Jenkins claims that Wuthnow's criticism: '[…] represents a gallant attempt to overthrow some rival scholarly paradigm that, as far as I can see, scarcely exists. He is at daggers drawn with an army of straw men.'[166] Consequently, his own contribution to the advancement of this paradigm is a logical impossibility. In Jenkins version it is 'a pernicious myth that claims that the upsurge of the faith in the Global South coincided with its decline or death in Europe and America.'[167] Yet, Jenkins has expressed himself in terms that come extremely close to exactly that claim: 'The era of Western Christianity has passed within our lifetimes, and the day of Southern Christianity is dawning.'[168] Jenkins also charges Wuthnow with seriously downplaying the growth of non-Western Christianity.

[163] Ibid., 47–51.

[164] See regarding this issue the groundbreaking work of Kwame Bediako. Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995); Kwame Bediako, 'Five Theses on the Significance of Modern African Christianity: A Manifesto', in *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*, ed. Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig, American Society of Missiology Series, no. 43 (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009).

[165] The position of Wuthnow is by and large supported by the work Paul Gifford has carried out in Africa. Paul Gifford, *Christianity and Politics in Doe's Liberia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Politics and Public Life in Kenya* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

[166] Philip Jenkins, *Review of Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches.*, by Robert Wuthnow, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 3 (2010): 844.

[167] Ibid., 845.

[168] Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 3.

Wuthnow indeed maintains that the shift in the center of gravity occurred earlier than is commonly assumed. The contemporary demographic increase of Christianity is, in his account, merely a function of general population growth. Growth through conversion plays a less prominent role in the account of Wuthnow. Wuthnow maintains that most of the dramatic conversion growth in much of Africa and Latin America took place before 1970.[169] Wuthnow's account is derived mainly from the work of Barrett's *World Christian Encyclopedia*.[170] According to Wuthnow, Barrett himself operates from a more complex set of assumptions about the growth of Christianity than has become clear from popular appropriations of his work.

It is the merit of the work of Wuthnow that he draws attention to the continued presence of crosscultural missionaries originating from the United States, since this complicates the harmonizing approach of Jenkins. The analysis of Wuthnow ties in with the analysis of Akinade, who points to the fluidity of World Christianity: the constant movement of ebb and flow in World Christianity signals an inherent diffusion contained in these tidal movements.[171] Consequently, the models and paradigms to describe this complex interplay of streams and traditions need to be characterized by their fluid nature and their ability to work with a diversity of, sometimes contradictory, information. The scarcity of the reflection on the agency of contemporary missionaries originating from Western countries has been noticed from the perspective of geographical sciences. Some attempts have been made to study contemporary missionaries in light of the general interest in religion and spatiality, but resources are few and far between. One of the reasons for this oversight is the secularized research climate within academia. From a consideration of the relevant literature, the conclusion can be drawn that missionaries are influential and active both in a political and socio-economic sense. The influence of contemporary missionaries is therefore geographically significant and far-reaching.[172]

This dissertation proceeds therefore from a perspective on World Christianity that aims to hold multiple trajectories together. With Wuthnow, I recognize the pressing need to incorporate the continued presence of missionaries originating from the United States within World Christianity. The failure to incorporate this continued presence might be related to the failure to acknowledge the super-diversity of World Christianity. However, contra Wuthnow, this affirmation does not

[169] Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith*, 45.
[170] Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia*.
[171] Akinade, 'Introduction', 3–4.
[172] Brickell, 'Geographies of Contemporary Christian Mission(aries)', 726. See for a particular case study on contemporary missionaries and geography: Jason Dittmer and Tristan Sturm, eds., *Mapping the End Times: American Evangelical Geopolitics and Apocalyptic Visions* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012).

lessen my commitment to the affirmation of the complicated and multivocal appropriation through local agents.[173] With Wuthnow, I consider the work of Jenkins to be indeed a conceptual stumbling block, but for an additional reason: his work creates too sharp and monolithic a distinction between the global North and the global South. My assessment of the debate between Jenkins and Wuthnow, which I have interpreted as a debate between the second and third paradigm of World Christianity, is in favor of Wuthnow, albeit with one important critical side note. However, in the following paragraph I want to bring in a distinctively theological emphasis of World Christianity which is not discussed by either Wuthnow or Jenkins.

1.6.4. *An Option for Underrepresented Communities*

The third paradigm of World Christianity, which is characterized by both superdiversity and the emphasis on transnational ties, does not have to obscure the possibility of taking a stance for the underrepresented and marginalized expressions of faith. In the words of Dale Irvin:

> [The Study of World Christianity] is particularly concerned with under-represented and marginalized communities of faith, resulting in a greater degree of attention being paid to Asian, African and Latin American experiences; the experience of marginalized communities within the North Atlantic world; and the experiences of women throughout the world.'[174]

Yet, although I appreciate the gist of what Irvin expresses in this statement, he speaks still in rather monolithic terms about the experience of Asian, African and Latin American Christians. In addition, the experience of Christians in Oceania seems to be relegated even further to the margins of the discourse on World Christianity.[175] I consider it therefore pivotal to take the work of Irvin a step further, since this emphasis on Asian, African and Latin American Christians could easily be taken as a reference to the second paradigm of World Christianity, which was primarily geographically oriented. Yet, Irvin draws from the work of Walter Mignolo[176] through his insistence that it is most important for the study of World Christianity to question where Western forms of knowledge have been disguised

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[173] The editors of the volume *Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* propose to abandon the two-party model in which interaction primarily took place between the well-defined groups of missionaries and locals. Nielssen, Okkenhaug, and Skeie, *Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, 13.

[174] Dale T. Irvin, 'World Christianity: An Introduction', *The Journal of World Christianity* 1, no. 1 (2008): 1.

[175] Charles W. Forman, 'Finding Our Own Voice: The Reinterpreting of Christianity by Oceanian Theologians', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 29, no. 3 (2005): 115–22.

[176] Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

as universal knowledge. Most poignantly in the historiography of Christianity, the history of Christianity in Western Europe has been deemed the normative pattern for the unfolding of Christian history.[177] A productive method for breaking the dominant narrative is to tell the history of Christianity and the present unfolding of the Christian story from the perspective of the borderlands.[178] I will elaborate in the next chapter further on the role of the borderlands in dismantling the idea of a fixed and static homeland. The borderlands are shaping a decolonial imagination since the borderlands are the places where the insidious character of colonial stories and colonial realities are most poignantly experienced. Theologizing from the borderlands questions not only how the West became to be imagined as a separate entity compared to the ominous 'rest,' but also questions the omission of other critical analytical categories within the analysis of World Christianity. Primarily, the lack of attention to issues of race and gender are called into question.[179] The work of David Daniels helps us to discern how a monolithic concept of the West is accompanied by a questionable racial imaginary. The West is itself a figment of the imagination, since it strings together locations which are geographically far removed, such as the North Atlantic, Western Europe, South Africa and Australia. To bring the West to mind is often to consider a white West; a West inhabited by white Europeans and their descendants. According to Daniels however, this implicit image does gross injustice to both indigenous populations in these areas and to the African-Americans whose presence in the North Atlantic[180] is not self-evidently evoked in this imaginary.[181] The option for World Christianity is therefore, in my description of the concept, not only an attempt to analyze how the transnational connections and ties are forged, but includes as well a decolonial perspective on World Christianity. A decolonial perspective is informed by the borderlands and actively tries to dismantle the instances where the West is deemed normative for the study of World Christianity. From a Dutch perspective, this latter point means that Christianity in the Netherlands is purposely included within the analysis of World Christianity. Since World Christianity cannot be concerned with only the exotic expressions of the Christian religion, it requires an introspective look at Dutch ecclesial practices. The Netherlands needs to learn to reinscribe itself within the narrative of World Christianity, a narrative that is not outside or other, but

[177] See for an overview: Kollman, 'After Church History? Writing the History of Christianity from a Global Perspective'.

[178] Hjamil A. Martinez-Vazquez, 'The Postcolonizing Project: Constructing a Decolonial Imaginary from the Borderlands', *The Journal of World Christianity* 2, no. 1 (2009): 1–28.

[179] Ibid., 2.

[180] An interesting side note to this analysis is that in the influence of American theology and church practice in the Netherlands, reference to American Christianity is, in the majority of cases, a reference to white Christianity. The perspective of black American churches is hardly present in the Dutch discussion.

[181] David Daniels III, 'Reterritorizing the West in World Christianity: Black North Atlantic Christianity and the Edinburgh Conferences of 1910 and 2010', *The Journal of World Christianity* 5, no. 1 (2012): 102–23.

forms an integral part of Christian self-understanding in the Netherlands. In this respect, the following quote of Homi Bhabha is important in helping us to understand the position of Christianity in the Netherlands:

> The Western metropole must confront its postcolonial history, told by its influx of post-war migrants and refugees, as an indigenous or native narrative *internal to its national identity*.[182]

This means that the story of migrants and refugees, including their Christian practices, are an integral part of the history of the Netherlands. In the same way as the historical Dutch churches are part of World Christianity so are Christians with a migration background part of the indigenous or native narrative of the Netherlands.

However, the implementation of this critical agenda that advocates a perspective of World Christianity from the borderlands is complicated for various reasons. In the first place, as Benno van den Toren has pointed out, one problem stems from the expectations and reality of intercultural theology within World Christianity. Van den Toren discerns a lack of explicit theological engagement with theological positions that are qualitatively different from one's own. Even within intercultural theology, it often seems difficult to theologize together instead of studying the theology of the other for the sake of studying a yet-unknown form of theology. Another problem for an in-depth engagement with the deep plurality of World Christianity is the standardization of sources to draw from. In the academic world, written sources are preferred over oral sources; books published by well-respected publishers are preferred over lesser-known publishers within the Two-Thirds World. In addition, the work of theologians from the Two-Thirds world is often mediated through their work at academic institutions in the One-Third world. As a result, their knowledge of the grassroots theologies being developed into praxis in their country of origin might be limited.[183] The consequence of van den Torens point is that World Christianity as a field of inquiry has a destabilizing effect within established academic traditions. In order to take the deep plurality of World Christianity seriously, one should therefore be willing to take into account a broader variety of sources, which are able to function as an adequate reflection of this plurality.[184]

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[182] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 9. Emphasis in original.

[183] Benno van den Toren, 'Intercultural Theology as a Three-Way Conversation', *Exchange* 44, no. 2 (2015): 123–143.

[184] See also: Peter C. Phan, 'Doing Theology in World Christianity: Different Resources and New Methods', *The Journal of World Christianity* 1, no. 1 (2008): 27–53.

1.6.5. *Terminology*

The question of what terminology should be used to describe the various vectors of influence within World Christianity is a difficult one. The terminology one uses not only has the power to describe and analyze World Christianity, but at the same time, functions as a lens through which World Christianity is interpreted. Authors like Kang are highly aware of the imaginative power of discourse and have devoted their research to unearthing how the discourse of World Christianity can be employed to assert the continued dominance of the Western world. Yet, it is precisely this vague and imprecise language of the West that poses a problem. We have seen in the work of Daniels that the language of the West conjures up a racial image: the West is often imagined as a white territory. As a consequence, gross epistemic injustice is done to the story of African Americans in North America. The other problem with this imprecise term 'the West' is that the indigenous and often marginalized populations in the perceived West are further marginalized because they do not adhere to the neat binary in which the West is credited to be a global source of power and influence. It is precisely the oversight of the plight of indigenous populations that forced Chandra Talpade Mohanty to reconsider her usage of the term Western / Third World. In her 2003 article 'Under Western Eyes Revisited,'[185] she recounts the influence of and critique on her previous, 1988 article, 'Under Western Eyes.'[186] One of the criticisms of her work focuses precisely on the oversight of the struggle of indigenous people in the so-called West. Yet, Mohanty maintains that the designator of Western / Third World retains an explanatory and political power given the commodification and assimilation of the resources of the people in the global South.[187] Yet, with Mohanty, I would argue that in my dissertation, which strives not only to explain but also to transcend problematic terms, we need more than just the explanatory and political clout that these terms can bring. Because of the history of Western / Third World, we are in need of a more constructive engagement with terminology that is in itself not fraught with this historical baggage. It is exactly for these reasons that Mohanty choses to embrace the terminology of the One-Third and the Two-Third Worlds.[188] She does so through an appropriation of the work of Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakesh.[189] The advantage of this terminology is that it draws attention to the materiality of social minorities and social majorities. Contrary to what might be

[185] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, '"Under Western Eyes" Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles', *Signs* 28, no. 2 (2003): 499–535.
[186] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Feminist Review*, 1988, 61–88.
[187] Mohanty, '"Under Western Eyes" Revisited', 505.
[188] Ibid., 506.
[189] Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash, *Grassroots Post-Modernism: Remaking the Soil of Cultures* (London: Zed Books, 1998).

expected from a Dutch perspective in which the language of minorities is often used to frame those who are materially and socially marginalized, I am using the language of social minority instead to depict those with a disproportional amount of material resources and influence globally. The language of minorities and majorities reflects therefore the unequal global distribution of wealth and power. The adoption of the distinction between the One-Third World of social minorities and the Two-Thirds World of social majorities makes good sense in the context of World Christianity. In the first place, this terminology is at home with the third paradigm, which foregrounds the transnational vectors of World Christianity. The distinction between One-Third World and Two-Thirds World draws attention to the profound differences and fault-lines within countries. In addition, this terminology is able to draw parallels between the plights of marginalized communities around the globe.

1.6.6. *Mission and World Christianity*

Having clarified how my World Christian research agenda is shaped, I now outline the implication for the question of the compatibility between World Christianity and mission, a question that has become increasingly complicated. In the first place, the usage of the term mission has shifted from a primary emphasis on mission abroad to domestic mission. Kim shows how this shift took place within Great Britain and Ireland.[190] In the Dutch context, the same shift seems to have taken place, as I have explained in the section about the Dutch context. The link between mission and World Christianity is therefore not self-evident, at least within grassroots accounts of World Christianity in which the West seems to be tacitly excluded from this term. Secondly, Peter Phan has questioned whether the worldwide spread of Christianity has not invalidated the need for explicit Christian mission. The underlying assumption to this question is that when Christian mission has resulted in the worldwide spread of Christianity, the need for Christian mission is over. Phan answers that, although Christianity has witnessed a stormy growth, it has not penetrated into Asia to such an extent that it is there perceived as a World Religion.[191] Another complicating factor is that Christianity in Asia has a long history of being considered a foreign influence, despite many attempts at indigenization and enculturation.[192] I would add that Phan's argument is still incomplete and that Christian mission is not characterized by its continuous expansion but

[190] Kirsteen Kim, 'Mission Studies as Evangelization and Theology for World Christianity: Reflections on Mission Studies in Britain and Ireland, 2000-2015', 2015, http://schd.ws/hosted_files/2015asmannualmeeting/01/APM_Track%202_Kim_Tremper.pdf.
[191] Phan, 'World Christianity and Christian Mission'.
[192] Ibid., 197.

rests on the vulnerability of the vernacular expressions and remains therefore without a permanent heartland.[193] As a consequence, the extent to which Christianity is a world religion is not primarily a function of its expansive nature. In the end, Phan calls not for an abandonment of Christian mission, but instead for a renewed mission spirituality which is attuned to a dialogical presence within cultures in Asia. World Christianity therefore does not invalidate the necessity for Christian mission.[194]

Kollman lists some other reasons for an uneasy relationship between World Christianity and Christian mission, reasons of a different order than the account given by Phan. Kollman focuses on the arguments of authors or groups who are in favor of mission but have been reluctant to embrace the turn to World Christianity. For example, for many Pentecostals and Evangelicals, a zeal for mission does not necessarily coincide with an embrace of the dialogical program connected to World Christianity. The same reluctance can be observed from a Catholic perspective. Pope Benedict XVI stressed the importance of the missionary vocation of the church and opposed those who were softening the missionary mandate of the church.[195] Although Benedict strongly emphasized the centrality of mission in the life of the church, his appreciation for the World Christian turn was lagging behind. The underlying cause for the difficulty to come to terms with the agenda of World Christianity is the accompanying emphasis on the contextual nature of all theological endeavors. A 'singular approach' to the central theological dogmas is difficult to reconcile with the turn to World Christianity, since World Christianity as an interpretive concept stresses the contextual nature of theology and the presence of multiple, interlocking histories of Christianity.[196] In other words, appreciation for World Christianity is mediated by an appreciation for the fluidity of expression of classical doctrines resulting from their articulation in various contexts.

World Christianity and mission, in the accounts of Phan and Kollman, can be allowed to sit next to each other and can mutually influence each other if a) mission is understood dialogically and not co-opted by empire and b) World Christianity is understood as having a transnational, polyvalent character. Yet, if one of these conditions is not met, it is understandable that some authors have argued for the emergence of a postmissionary time period, i.e. a period which is characterized by the move beyond the necessity for (foreign) mission. In order to construct my argument for the case that mission and World Christianity are compatible, I will critically review the proposals of two authors who have argued that the current

[193] Andrew F. Walls, 'Christianity in the Non-Western World: A Study in the Serial Nature of Christian Expansion', in *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 29.
[194] Phan, 'World Christianity and Christian Mission', 197.
[195] Unfortunately, Kollman does not comment on the stance of Pope Francis.
[196] Kollman, 'Understanding the World-Christian Turn in the History of Christianity and Theology', 174–75.

(theological) constellation equals the emergence of a post-missionary time, namely, Werner Ustorf and Bert Hoedemaker.

According to Ustorf, writing in 1998, '(…) missionary activity has been and still is, one of the major agents of global transformation in the twentieth century.'[197] This statement needs to be interpreted against the backdrop of his view that the period of Christian foreign mission has terminated: 'The period of foreign mission in the life of the Christian religion is over because it is now abundantly clear that today's context is so very different from that of the 18th and 19th centuries when the modern idea of foreign mission was conceived. We are dealing today much more with the theological and practical issues that exist among the churches of the world; that is to say, with ecumenical matters.'[198] As a result, Ustorf interprets the world from the perspective of the 'new post-foreign mission situation.'[199] In the analysis of Roland Löffler, who has introduced the work of Ustorf in a volume of his collected writings, Ustorf proceeds from 'the assumption that the concept of foreign mission is anachronistic.'[200] The position of Ustorf is therefore characterized by a dual evaluation of the current situation in global Christianity: on the one hand, the influence of foreign mission is significant; on the other hand, the epoch of foreign mission is completed and substituted by the ecumenical era.

Hoedemaker has argued that there has been an emergence of a post-missionary time, although on slightly different grounds compared to Ustorf. The title of his book, which is written in Dutch, displays the programmatic nature of his work: 'With Others towards Christ: Mission in Post-missionary times.'[201] For Hoedemaker, the meaning of the postmissionary time lies in the invalidity of the assumptions from which mission proceeded in the past. These assumptions are no longer warranted and can therefore no longer function as a basis on which mission work rests and signals thus the transition into a new epoch in the history of Christianity. This new epoch however does not lead to the reduction of mission to ecumenical contacts and assistance. A postmissionary time therefore does not equal an anti-missionary time. He considers it ironical that the postwar reorganization of missionary work along the lines of partnership and assistance did not result in mutual responsibility for interchurch work. Instead, it resulted often in the solidifying of interchurch relationships. In light of the priority of an eschatological perspective,

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[197] Werner Ustorf, 'Global Topographies: The Spiritual, the Social and the Geographical in the Missionary Movement from the West', *Social Policy & Administration* 32, no. 5 (1998): 592.

[198] Roland Löffler, 'Introduction. Robinson Crusoe Tries Again or: Werner Ustorf's Way of Developing Missiology into a Research Concept of Global and Pluralistic Christianity', in *Robinson Crusoe Tries Again: Missiology and European Constructions of 'Self' and 'Other' in a Global World 1789-2010*, by Werner Ustorf, ed. Roland Löffler, Research in Contemporary Religion 9 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 7–20.

[199] Ibid., 9.

[200] Ibid.

[201] Bert Hoedemaker, *Met anderen tot Christus: Zending in een postmissionair Tijdperk* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2000).

the reduction of mission to the ecumenical sphere is an impoverishment. The eschatological perspective is foundational for Hoedemaker, because it is possible from an eschatological perspective to unearth the tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet.' The constructive proposal of Hoedemaker is therefore characterized by an eschatological focus. A chastened form of missionary work should focus on the tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet' and should accompany people in their ability to recognize and interpret this tension.

Ustorf makes a distinction between a programmatic postmissionary time, which should be inaugurated, and a factual postmissionary time,[202] which is belied by the immensity of actual missionary endeavors. Hoedemaker, on the other hand, seems not to reckon with the distinction between a programmatic and a factual postmissionary time and claims that there has been a commencement of a postmissionary time. I conclude, with Ustorf, that a factual postmissionary time is not dawning: the present constellation in mission is characterized by a plurality of paradigms of mission, and in some of these paradigms there is ample room for the sending out of foreign missionaries, as the review of the work of Wuthnow has shown us. A programmatic postmissionary time is necessary in so far as a postmissionary time shuns all geographically expansive associations from which mission proceeded in the past. The prefix 'post' of the postmissionary time is as ambiguous as the prefix 'post' in postcolonial. In the postcolonial constellation, it designates both the temporality of the end of the colonial period and the active movement beyond the former situation.[203] Postmissionary differs from the postcolonial however, in the sense that the missionary era has only partly withered away. Vibrant and thriving branches of Christianity have not espoused a postmissionary time.

If a factual postmissionary time is not dawning, should a programmatic postmissionary time be inaugurated? I answer this question in the affirmative, in so far as postmissionary signals a break away from the toxic combination of mission and empire.

It is important to note now that Ustorf speaks emphatically about a postmissionary time connected to the phenomenon of foreign mission. Ustorf's analysis ties in with the gist of postcolonial theory which argues for the constructed nature of the categories of the metropolitan centers and the colonial territories. The possibility of imagining foreign mission as a category is tied invariably to the colonial thought world with its continuous structuring of center and periphery.[204] I agree

[202] The terminology of "factual" and "programmatic" is my own way of interpreting the work of Ustorf and Hoedemaker.

[203] Wietske de Jong-Kumru, *Postcolonial Feminist Theology* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2013), 4–5.

[204] Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). See for a discussion and literature: Isabel Hofmeyr, 'Inventing the World: Transnationalism, Transmission and Christian Textualities', in *Mixed*

with Ustorf's desire to overcome the era of foreign mission, since the era of foreign mission was inevitably bound up with colonial patterns of thought. However, the very nature of empire means that empire will always meet its own resistance, and this is the case in the history of mission too. A case in point is the history of the Anabaptist and the Pietistic movement. As Bosch writes: 'Mission work could in no circumstances be regarded as the obligation of the ruler (…). Heralds of the gospel should go out under the direction of Christ and the Spirit, and non-Christians should be won to faith in Christ irrespective of any colonial or political interests.'[205] This means that by virtue of their theology and social location, their involvement in mission had an anti-empire bent. Another pitfall of discussing mission in a postcolonial key is that it is harder to perceive which mission praxis in history operated totally outside the empires of the West. Although it falls outside the scope of my research, the work of Irvin and Sunquist is worth mentioning because they show the history of mission outside the West.[206]

Yet, as I have indicated in the discussion of mission in the context of the Netherlands, I still maintain strongly that Christian mission is not totally subsumed under the heading of ecumenical dialogue and assistance, nor is it made parochial through confining mission to the borders of the nation state, which is itself a problematic concept.[207] I am therefore influenced by the former generation mission theologians such as Walls and Bosch, and a new generation of thinkers such as John Flett[208] and Marion Grau.[209] Whereas Flett anchors mission in the heart of the Trinity, Grau argues that if mission is left out of the equation, the more problematic category of 'development' is left. This means that the emergence of World Christianity opens up the possibility of mission that is not a) limited to the foreign, or b) limited to the domestic, or c) limited to ecumenical contacts and assistance.[210] I am instead suggesting that the emergence of World Christianity with its emphasis

Messages: Materiality, Textuality, Missions, ed. Jamie S. Scott and Gareth Griffiths (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 20.

[205] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 254.

[206] Dale T. Irvin and Scott Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement: Earliest Christianity to 1453*, vol. 1, 2 vols (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001).

[207] I will elaborate on this topic in the second chapter under the heading "homeland."

[208] Flett, *The Witness of God*.

[209] Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*.

[210] Unfortunately, the recent book by Stefan Paas on mission in a postchristian environment appeared too late to structurally bear upon the outline of this chapter. Paas's book garnered much attention, and two separate study days were devoted to this publication. Paas main thesis is that the church should attend to its priestly role while experiencing the captivity in a postchristian environment. In their priestly role, the church is actively involved in the life of the world and represents in the liturgy the world (of which the church is a part!) by God. Stefan Paas, *Vreemdelingen en priesters: Christelijke missie in een postchristelijke omgeving* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2015). See for the two events organized around this book: http://www.theoblogie.nl/een-symposium-over-vreemdelingen-en-priesters/ (accessed September 28, 2016) and http://zendingsraad.nl/agenda/309/studiedag-met-stefan-paas (accessed September 28, 2016).

on transnationality provides a worthwhile tool for re-imagining mission beyond the tired binary of the domestic and the foreign. In the next chapter I begin this task by questioning some frequently used terms, such as the mission field and the homeland, which are instrumental in upholding this binary.

An actively decolonizing stance on mission in World Christianity is called for. How can the intersection between mission, World Christianity and the postcolonial be imagined? I take here inspiration from the work of Clarke, who distinguishes four marks for identifying postcolonial mission in World Christianity: if mission organizations draw their resources from the Two-Thirds worlds; if they criticize the entanglement of mission and the colonial; if they embrace the preferential option for the marginalized; and, finally, postcolonial mission does not only entail a denouncement of imperial and colonial forms of mission but also engages critically with present neocolonial continuations of unequal power relationships. Two global consortiums, according to Clarke, embody the new postcolonial reality of World Christianity: the Lausanne Movement and the World Commission on World Mission and Evangelism.[211] World Christianity will provide an outlet to overcome the harmful binaries that originated in the One-Third World. One of those entrenched binaries is the distinction between conservatives and liberals, a distinction which might prove to be more parochial than previously thought in light of a continued re-appreciation of the value of World Christianity. In the end, Clarke hopes that contemporary fore-runners, such as the missional church movement, can be seen as '(…) paving the way for a more generous, courageous, conciliatory, mission-shaped, and evangelism-embracing face of world Christianity.'[212] Yet, his optimistic tone does not do justice to the persistent legacies of the colonial and its virulent neocolonial mutations.[213] I see therefore a pressing need to supplement his opinion with a more elaborate expansion of the postcolonial condition, which will be the subject of the following section.

[211] I am discussing here the work of Clarke in order to show how the postcolonial criteria in mission can be applied. I am wary though in regard to the actual application of these criteria on both the Lausanne Movement and the World Council of Churches, since a significant amount of their resources are amassed in the West. Moreover, the WCC is criticized because of its language policy, which reflects a colonial constellation of the world. See Namsoon Kang, 'God in Your Grace, Transform Our Churches', *The Ecumenical Review*, 2006, 137–38.
[212] Clarke, 'World Christianity and Postcolonial Mission', 206.
[213] Ibid., 197–99.

1.7. THE POSTCOLONIAL CONDITION

1.7.1. *Postcolonial Theory*

Postcolonial theory focuses on researching, analyzing and critiquing the "hegemonic systems of thought, textual codes, and symbolic practices which the West constructed in its domination of colonial subjects."[214] Catherine Keller, who has coined this definition, focuses on the three components of thought, text and symbols in order to highlight how these elements are deployed together in the construction of a hegemonic system. Postcolonial analysis will therefore result in multifold perspectives which aid in the deconstruction of shallow binaries. Postcolonial theory scrutinizes history from the perspective of the subaltern and brings to the equation new terms of analysis, such as hybridity and subalternity. The term hybridity has been inserted in the postcolonial discourse by Homi Bhabha, in which hybridity becomes a survival mechanism of the colonial regime.[215] Subalternity has been coined by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and derives from the observation that those who are subaltern – outside history and outside representation – cannot speak as long as hegemonic ways of thinking and being in the world are not overcome.[216] It is precisely this concern for subalternity that connects with my dissertation: as I have shown in the section on World Christianity, that one cannot rest content any more with an account on mission history that is focused only on missionaries, but tries to retrieve the perspective and the (oral) histories of what transpired in the contact zone between missionaries and local agency.

Edward Said' foundational text *Orientalism*, appeared in 1978 and provided a wealth of material showing the construct of the Orient as the opposite of the European continent. This quote by a British official during the British colonial era is possibly the clearest example of how the Orient was constructed: 'I content myself with noting the fact that somehow or other the Oriental generally acts, speaks, and thinks in a manner exactly opposite to the European.'[217] *Orientalism* provides us therefore with the foundational text of understanding the mechanisms of othering, essentializing, exoticizing ánd eroticizing inherent in the colonial endeavor. Said's work is rightly criticized though for not providing enough emphasis on the material side of the colonial enterprise, in addition to not gendering the construction of the orient enough. Less rightly so, Said's work has been controversial for transcending disciplinary boundaries and for explicitly bringing the category of empire

[214] Catherine Keller, 'Introduction: Alien/Nation, Liberation, and the Postcolonial Underground', in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera Rivera (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 8.

[215] Homi K. Bhabha, *Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse*, 2008.

[216] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, '"Can the Subaltern Speak?" [revised Edition]', in *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2010), 21–78.

[217] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 25th Anniversary Edition (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 39.

into literary studies.[218] The work of Said has recently been put to good use by those authors who need to come to terms with the legacy of Christian mission in the Middle East.[219] Behind Edward Said's thought lies an appraisal of Michel Foucault. Following Foucault, Said is interested in '*the relationality* between knowledge production - the truth discourse of the Enlightenment épistémè - and the social institutions of power and discipline that had emerged in the wake of the French revolution (...)'[220] In other words, Said discerns in the construction of the Orient the same mechanisms at play of knowledge production as a function of power. In this dissertation, I do not engage the work of Foucault directly, but his influence shines through in the work of postcolonial thinkers.

Although Said, Bhabha and Spivak are oftentimes considered to be the foundational figures of the discipline, one should by no means overlook the contribution of other scholars. In this context I want to mention the work of Achille Mbembe[221] and Frantz Fanon. The writings of Fanon, of which his two seminal works are *The Wretched of the Earth*[222] and *Black Skin, White Masks*[223] delve deep into the psychological trauma of colonialism. They prove to be especially helpful in discussions of racial oppression, as they are featured throughout my dissertation. In addition, the writings of Fanon are resounding in the racially fraught context of South Africa, as is evidenced in the works of Reggie Nel.[224]

An anthology of feminist postcolonial theory reveals that the postcolonial theory is profoundly influenced by the work of feminist thinkers and employed from the beginning onward insights from feminist theory.[225] Since the very beginning, postcolonial thought has been interdisciplinary. This has caused some controversy, since the ordering of academia into separate disciplines is in and of itself a way of exercising power. Postcolonialism is concerned with empire and its aftermath, and aims for multi-dimensional analyses that are not contained within disciplinary limits.[226] A definite methodology for *doing* postcolonialism does therefore not exist,

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[218] Conor McCarthy, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edward Said* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3.

[219] Herb Swanson, 'Said's Orientalism and the Study of Christian Missions', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28, no. 3 (2004): 107–12; Eric N. Newberg, 'Said's Orientalism and Pentecostal Views of Islam in Palestine', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 36, no. 4 (October 2012): 196–99; Deanna Ferree Womack, 'Edward Said and the Orientalised Body: A Call for Missiological Engagement', *Svensk Missionstidskrift* 99, no. 4 (2011): 441–61.

[220] William V. Spanos, *The Legacy of Edward W. Said* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 70. Italics in original.

[221] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[222] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2007) [1963].

[223] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

[224] Reginald Nel, 'Postcolonial Missiology in the Face of Empire: In Dialogue with Frantz Fanon and Steve Bantu Biko', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 37, no. Supplement (2011): 157–70.

[225] Reina Lewis and Sara Mills, eds., *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[226] Ibid., 1–2.

one could as easily speak about *being*, or rather, striving to be, postcolonial. It shares with feminist theory the insistence that the personal is political and the political is personal. With its concern for representation and the subaltern, postcolonial thought questions the production of center and periphery within the academic world itself. Postcolonial theory gains its strength when it is written from the periphery, by and for those who have experienced the debilitating effects of the aftermath of colonialism. In addition, colonialism is in and of itself a multivalent term, with wildly different historical referents. The early colonialism of the Americas consisted of a different dynamic than the scramble for Africa after the Berlin 1884-1885 conference.

The interconnectivity between metropolis and colony has been expounded upon in the works of Hall, Nash and McClintock.[227] McClintock writes about how time and space are becoming intertwined in the colonial logic. In her words: "(…) imperial progress across the space of empire is figured as a journey backward in time to an anachronistic moment of prehistory."[228] This means that those "natives" who were encountered were not only far off in terms of space, at the other side of the globe, but also far removed in time, believed to live atavistic lives without the same progress as in the metropolis. This logic however did not only extend to the far-flung corners of the globe, but also was applied within the metropolis. The so-called "degenerate classes," consisting of beggars, prostitutes, alcoholics, criminals and the like, were also thought to be left behind in the grand sweep of progress.[229] The metropolitan center constitutes therefore the periphery both within the metropolis and without, in a twin movement of defining progress.

In light of these concerns, being a postcolonial academic extends, therefore, further than the research process itself: it is manifested through choice of speakers, location of conferences, engagement with non-canonical voices, and one's own activism outside academia. Being postcolonial, if one has been socialized within the Two-Third world, requires constant work on the self in order to critically challenge the ideas one has grown up with. This critical introspection is aided by vulnerability, as an openness to allow various perspectives on the self, and to be able to move beyond white guilt and white fragility towards white responsibility.

[227] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Catherine Nash, 'Cultural Geography: Postcolonial Cultural Geographies', *Progress in Human Geography* 26, no. 2 (2002): 219–230; Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
[228] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 40.
[229] Ibid., 43.

1.7.2. *Postcolonialism in the Netherlands*

The insights of postcolonial theory bear upon the interpretation of the Netherlands as a postcolonial country. Bhabha has argued for the necessity of the Western metropolis scrutinizing its own history from a postcolonial perspective. The history of migrancy is an indispensable part of the narrative of the Western metropolis.[230] Including the history of migrants in the narrative of postcolonial history will show that the distinction between the national history of a nation state on the one hand, and the more or less disjointed tale of migrancy in that particular nation state, is spurious. For missiology, this perception of history signifies that the distinction between national and migrant churches becomes problematized.[231]

One example from the contemporary Dutch situation might help to clarify this point. The former colony Surinam became independent from the Netherlands in 1975. After independence, a considerable number of Surinam people migrated to the Netherlands. Their church communities are generally considered to be "migrant churches." By designating them as "migrant churches,"[232] they are being separated from the history of national churches. The problematization of the distinction between "migrant churches" and national churches results in a more inclusive basis for practicing missiology in the Netherlands. Furthermore, overcoming the separation of "migrant churches" and national churches is a critical tool for analyzing and challenging a latent colonial mindset and attitude in the Netherlands.

If World Christianity favors the perspective of underrepresented Christian communities,[233] and if postcolonial theory aims at challenging the mechanisms of domination from the West, one's own standpoint matters in one's entitlement as a suitable purveyor of postcolonial theory. This dissertation has been written in the cities of Utrecht and Amsterdam, cities which both carry historical significance with regard to colonialism and mission as well as the multiple entanglements of the two. Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676) formulated the first Protestant theology of mission in the city of Utrecht.[234] The city of Amsterdam played a prominent role

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[230] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 9.

[231] From a theological perspective, the separation between migrant churches and national churches has long been recognized and considered harmful. Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Loca*l (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997).

[232] I am mainly concerned with the general mechanism of placing the history of "migrant churches" outside the history of the national churches. With regard to actual church polity, this does not hold true, given that the Surinam community in the Lutheran church in Amsterdam is an integral part of the history of 425-year Lutheranism in Amsterdam. See for more information: www.luthersamsterdam.nl.

[233] Irvin, 'World Christianity'.

[234] In Utrecht, Gisbertus Voetius become the first rector of Utrecht University. He was the first protestant to formulate a theology of mission. He worked out a threefold goal of mission which consisted of *conversio gentilium*, *plantatio ecclesiae* and ultimately the *gloria et manifestation gratiae divinae*. Cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 256–57.

in the transatlantic slave trade and is closely connected with Dutch colonial history.[235] Acknowledgment of the historical situation one writes in and its results in the present are a first step in the dissolution of the privilege to develop theory from nowhere. The question of entitlement to occupy oneself with postcolonial analysis has similarities to the question of whether feminists originating from the West are entitled to partake in a postcolonial feminist project. The question of entitlement feeds directly into the topic of biography and the biographical constraints and possibilities that every research project takes with it. I have therefore included at the end of this chapter a brief glimpse on my own biography with the aim that the reader can better situate my dissertation. I will discuss at the end of this chapter elements of my own biography pertaining to this research. Postcolonial theory is not only concerned with representation of the past, or engaging contemporary authors, but also attempts to pave ways for sustainable co-existence in the future. Seen in that light, postcolonial thinkers need to exercise caution with regard to the future, since, in tandem with discussing the past, the future is no neutral conceptual terrain. A preoccupation with the future can easily succumb to a colonization of the future, and this is the reason why I will engage this topic further at the end of this chapter.

1.7.3. *Postcolonialism in Theology*

The appraisal of postcolonial thought within theology reveals an uneasy relationship between the two disciplines. Edward Said, for example, has been known for his anti-religion stance. One of the reasons for his profoundly secular viewpoint is connected with his idea of the intellectual: for Said, the task of the intellectual is to reveal the Eurocentric character of many scientific endeavors and to fight against hegemonic systems of thought.[236] Not surprisingly, Christianity is, in the eyes of Said, one of these hegemonic systems. Another reason for Said's disregard for religion might be more prosaic. It might well be that Said associated religion with low culture, and he himself was the epitome of the intellectual. In spite of this religion critique, Said voiced his concern for the churches in the Middle East and advocated for their continued presence.[237]

In spite of the uneasy relationship between postcolonial thought and theology, many theologians have critically and fruitfully engaged writers in postcolonial theory. The emergence of an explicit systematic-theological engagement with postcolonial theory is traced back by Mayra Rivera and Stephen D. Moore[238] to the

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[235] James A. Rawley, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 70–71.

[236] Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

[237] Jong-Kumru, *Postcolonial Feminist Theology*, 37.

[238] Mayra Rivera Rivera and Stephen D. Moore, 'A Tentative Topography of Postcolonial Theology', in *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera Rivera (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 3–14.

appearance in 2004 of the edited volume by Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra Rivera, *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*[239] and the appearance in 2005 by the seminal work of Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theory*.[240] Rivera and Moore appreciate the foundational work of Pui-lan as follows: "Arguably, Kwok has contributed more to the emergence and development of postcolonial theology than any other single figure."[241] One of the first foundational works in postcolonial theology made feminist theory an invaluable conversation partner, primarily because of the double marginalization of colonized women. They were marginalized both as subjects of colonial rule and through the intrinsically patriarchal character of the colonial enterprise. Pui-lan writes about this approach as follows: "Doing postcolonial feminist theology, it can be argued, is akin to the 'writing back' process in postcolonial literature - only that this time, the writing subjects are the formerly colonized Christian women, and the matter to be discussed is theology."[242] The phrase 'to write back' is taken from Salman Rushdie's saying: "the empire writes back to the center" and is the title of a seminal volume in postcolonial literary criticism.[243] At my own faculty, the Protestant Theological University, Wietske de Jong-Kumru has advanced postcolonial feminist theory in a systematic-theological framework. Like Pui-lan, one of her main interlocutors, she voices the concern for a systematic-theological appraisal of postcolonial thought, while explicitly seeking a feminist-liberative perspective and questioning the anti-religious bias in much of postcolonial theory.[244]

Kwok Pui-lan engages the work of Spivak, where she claims that "Spivak's work provides some provocative insights into love in postcolonial feminist theology."[245] Although Spivak might be surprised to find her work used in this way by virtue of her disdain for ontotheology, Pui-lan claims that her work on planetary love opens up new and necessary vistas in a postcolonial feminist theology that claims to engage the marginal and interstitial places. Especially in light of a feminist theology that critiques the very structures of center and periphery, a planetary love is much needed as a correction against the explicit hierarchy encapsulated within the colonial mindset. The idea of planetary love, with its encompassing love for human and non-human existence, opens therefore new vantage points and is needed for a constructive theological proposal. In the second chapter, I will elaborate further upon the necessity of planetarity within my own theological proposal.

239 Keller, Nausner, and Rivera, *Postcolonial Theologies*.
240 Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005).
241 Rivera and Moore, 'A Tentative Topography of Postcolonial Theology', 5.
242 Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 126.
243 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989).
244 Jong-Kumru, *Postcolonial Feminist Theology*.
245 Kwok Pui-lan, 'What Has Love to Do with It? Planetarity, Feminism, and Theology', in *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera Rivera (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 32.

Throughout the dissertation I will make use of the edited volume *Postcolonial Theologies*, but in this introduction I will highlight the contribution from Mark Lewis Taylor in this volume. Taylor elaborates upon the necessity of communities of postcolonial praxis.[246] It is his opening statement that "Postcolonial theology becomes possible, thinkable – and then achievable – when and if it lives from communities of social practice that embody its viewpoint and values."[247] However, Taylor is less optimistic about the possibility to find these communities of social practice in the contemporary United States. In light of the review of the current situation in the Netherlands, these communities are as well a rare find. As I have put forth in the section on World Christianity, it is a pivotal practice to resist the othering of Christians with a background of migration, but instead to understand how this othering is part and parcel of an unprocessed colonial past. However, I do, for example, consider the Amsterdam parish of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands to a large extent postcolonial, since they explicitly acknowledge that their diaconal buildings were built with money that was a direct profit of the slave trade. They use some of these buildings now to host an organization that provides free medical care to undocumented migrants, who are exactly the people who are the victims of the colonial system. The emphasis on communities of praxis, as put forth by Taylor, will be confirmed in the second chapter, where I provide a scrutiny of the ideas of home(land) and mission field. Postcolonial theory acknowledges the profound interdependence, and the mutual shaping of both the (former) colonies and the (former) colonizers.

One of the results of postcolonial research is the insight that the colonial enterprise is thoroughly influenced by the colonizing nations 'at home.' Part and parcel of postcolonial theory is the acknowledgement that history is not separated in a neat binary between the homeland and the 'foreign.' The colonial history did not only take place overseas, but shaped and impacted decisively the social structure and imagination of the colonial powers at home. These insights bring me to the next section, in which I explain more fully the ramifications of postcolonialism within the discipline of missiology.

1.7.4. *Postcolonialism in Missiology*

In light of the preceding section on World Christianity, it has become clear that how I locate myself within the discipline of missiology should be in line with the insights gained from that section. The turn to World Christianity in the study of Christianity is marked by a careful analysis of the interplay of the transnational and the local in the various streams of Christian presence and witness. World

[246] Mark Lewis Taylor, 'Spirit and Liberation: Achieving Postcolonial Theology in the United States', in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera Rivera (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 39–57.
[247] Ibid., 39.

Christianity as a field of inquiry is thereby characterized by an unambiguous rejection of the discursive and material project of colonialism. The discursive field of postcolonialism reveals the instances of neocolonialism that permeate the current manifestations of global Christianity. It is therefore in the complex interplay between colonialism, postcolonialism and neocolonialism that a missiology that locates itself in the World Christian-turn needs to be interpreted.

Postcolonialism within the field of missiology has proliferated during the time of my research. There is a high degree of congruency between the projects of missiologists working with these theories and my own project, when it comes to their outspoken affirmation of the need for a truly postcolonial and thereby decolonial missiology. One of the main resources appeared during the starting point of my dissertation, the seminal work of Marion Grau.[248] Two other seminal resources are the work of Amos Yong[249] and a new edited volume on postcolonial theory in the evangelical world.[250]

Another contributions has been made by Letty Russell, who focuses on the reclaiming of difference as a liberating practice.[251] Furthermore, Jørgen Skov Sørensen employs critical discourse analysis (in the technical sense of the term) in order to unearth power structures in the work of some mainline missiologists.[252]

Working from the context of South Africa, Reggie Nel uses the work of Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko in order to argue for a creative remixing of missiology in which subaltern voices are included without merely being a continuation of the older tunes of entanglement of empire and mission.[253] Postcolonial missiology seems to be particularly well-developed within the context of South Africa, for example, in the work of Stuart C. Bate,[254] Gerrie Snyman,[255] Desmond Van der

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[248] Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*.

[249] Amos Yong, *The Missiological Spirit: Christian Mission Theology in the Third Millennium Global Context* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2014).

[250] Kay Higuera Smith, Jayachitra Lalitha, and L. Daniel Hawk, eds., *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations: Global Awakenings in Theology and Praxis* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014).

[251] Letty M. Russell, 'God, Gold, Glory and Gender: A Postcolonial View of Mission', *International Review of Missio*n 93, no. 368 (2004): 39–49.

[252] Jørgen Skov Sørensen, *Missiological Mutilations - Prospective Paralogies: Language and Power in Contemporary Mission Theor*y (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007).

[253] Nel, 'Postcolonial Missiology in the Face of Empire: In Dialogue with Frantz Fanon and Steve Bantu Biko'; Reginald Nel, 'Remixing a Postcolonial Missiology to the Beat of Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko', *Svensk Missionstidskrift* 99, no. 4 (2011): 425–39.

[254] Stuart C. Bate, 'Between Empire and Anti-Empire: African Mission in the 21st Century', *Missionalia* 41, no. 3 (2013): 307–334.

[255] Gerrie Snyman, 'Empire and a Hermeneutics of Vulnerability', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 37, no. Supplement (2011): 1–20; Gerrie Snyman, 'Responding to the Decolonial Turn: Epistemic Vulnerability', *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 43, no. 3 (2015): 266–291.

Water,[256] and Tinyiko Maluleke.[257] As Bate states succinctly, "theologies of empire are theologies of power."[258] This means that for contemporary theology in a postcolonial key it is necessary to acknowledge the legacy of empire, while simultaneously expressing the decolonial potentiality of one's theology. A difference with my own work is that many of these recent articulations appear in the form of articles, laying an important groundwork in, for example, the South African context, while my research has the possibility to further develop the thesis that a decolonial missiology can be developed along the lines of a vocational and vulnerable presence in the margins of society.

The appraisal of postcolonial theory within missiology inevitably asks the question to the definition of the discipline of missiology itself. If missiology is primarily a discipline at home within the practical theology, the role of postcolonial theory will be to interpret the findings in light of this theory. For example, postcolonial theory in a primarily practical vein can research the mission organizations that in the United States carry out mission work within prison. One can study how they engage with the prisoners, what kind of literature they provide and how they help prisoners once they are released. From a postcolonial perspective, these questions will be supplemented by others, for example: why do they focus on personal repentance without addressing issues of structural injustice? Why do they make such a rigid distinction between the church outside prison and the need for conversion inside the prison? Why are re-integration programs oftentimes only available for those who are converted? Such questions show the influence of postcolonial theory, because they search to explain the dichotomy between outside and inside prison. In addition, these questions probe the reasons why faith has become individualized and consequently why the racism and slavery-like conditions of the prison industrial complex are not explicitly addressed.

If missiology is primarily a systematic discipline, it follows that postcolonial theory has its bearings upon the very fabric, the very design itself, of the theological views that are espoused. Postcolonial theory provides as it were a substratum, a foundational layer that guides the way in which theology is practiced. Postcolonial theory guides the selection of sources and the conversation partners which are taken into account. In light of the ever persistent question "can the subaltern speak?" one cannot be content any more with only taking resources into account that come from the One-Third World, but one need to actively engage resources with a different provenance. To take this example above a step further, a systematic-theological approach of imprisonment would start with the acknowledgment that the church is within prison, and that a prison theology cannot be generated only from the outside in. A systematic-theological approach to imprisonment in

[256] Desmond Van der Water, 'Social Struggle and Faith-Based Activism in "Black Empowerment" Times. An Agenda for Postcolonial Mission-Sounding the Horn on Some African Perspectives', *Missionalia* 43, no. 1 (2015): 7–22.
[257] Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, 'Postcolonial Mission: Oxymoron or New Paradigm?', *Swedish Missiological Themes* 95, no. 4 (2007): 503–28.
[258] Bate, 'Between Empire and Anti-Empire', 315.

the current neocolonial context of the United States will be intersectional and attend to questions of race, class and the othering of Muslims, reflecting on the question where justice, wholeness and reconciliation can be found.

Both the practical and the systematic approach to missiology are needed, and both the approaches can mutually inform each other. In the examples above, the practical approach not only provides a thick description of mission in the context of prison, but also informs the questions which need to be posed in order for a prison missiology/theology to be postcolonial. The systematic approach searches for resources within the life of prisoners, but also within the wealth of resources from the history of Christianity that are written while imprisoned (the prison letters of Paul or Bonhoeffer's prison letters come to mind).

In my dissertation, I have espoused the systematic-theological approach. One reason for this approach is the desire to formulate a systematic-theological response which goes beyond the much needed assessment of the postcolonial condition, but functions as an exercise in formulating theological themes in a postcolonial key. Marginality and vulnerability are relative newcomers to the discourse of mission, but vocation has been firmly established within both theology and missiology.[259] I show in the discussion of marginality and vulnerability that postcolonial theory has a decisive bearing upon my work here.

One important ramification of the insight of the mutual influence and interdependency of the metropolis and colony is the interdependency of mission practitioners abroad and the worldview as well as ideas that they have imbued before they move away on a mission assignment. In the context of the Netherlands, they are socialized in a context that is oftentimes not very aware of its own colonial legacy. Mission organizations do not operate in a vacuum, but are constituted by members of churches and faith communities, who bring with them their own background and worldview. In the chapter on vocation, I will elaborate further upon the necessity to ground vocation in a diverse community that is made up of both the former colonizers and the former colonized. Especially when cross-cultural mission is at stake, it remains important to realize that a firm basis in a diverse, reconciling church provides a huge benefit for encountering otherness during mission assignments. The postcolonial character of the faith community in which mission practitioners find their spiritual nourishment is therefore a salient factor to consider to move towards a genuine postcolonial mission praxis.

These remarks above provide an insight in how I engage postcolonial theory in the thematic chapters, and lead me to a more detailed discussion in the other thematic chapters. In the first thematic chapter, on marginality, I pair the theological insights to Jesus as the marginal missionary to Jesus-Christ the hybrid. The language of hybridity is derived from the seminal work of Homi Bhabha, whose work on hybridity[260] has been influential in theorizing about hybridity in the so-

[259] William Carl Placher, *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).
[260] Bhabha, *Of Mimicry and Man*.

called contact zones, the meeting places where identities (often under struggle and oppression) are formed and lived out.[261] The seminal insights of postcolonial theory regarding the active production of the periphery, of the margins, show how foundational the production of the periphery was for the project of modernity itself. As shown by Enrique Dussel[262] and Walter Mignolo,[263] the center-periphery structure was not just a by-product of the colonial era, but provided at the heart of it an "other" to define oneself against. In the section on the frontier in the second chapter, I will elaborate more upon this mechanism. Questioning the center/periphery structure of the colonial enterprise means therefore to search for alternatives. In my chapter on marginality, I have chosen to enter the search for alternatives through Christology in order to explain how Jesus as the marginal person par excellence transforms the existing center-periphery structure through his engagement with Galilee and the borderland of Israel.

The second thematic chapter, the chapter on vulnerability, takes into account how vulnerability is not only a characteristic of the human condition, but can also be actively produced through power dynamics, such as we currently witness in the war on terror. To keep the window of vulnerability open means to actively engage in practices of existential openness, instead of fruitlessly and mercilessly constructing walls and barriers against the outside world. It is precisely this invulnerability that is a characteristic of the colonial condition, and might in a sense even be more prevalent in the Netherlands than in other countries with a colonial history. Amsterdam was, during the height of the slave trade, a slave trade capital, but the disastrous effects of the slave trade were mainly outside of the Netherlands, while the country itself acquired richness through the profit of the trade. As Erin Gilson's work makes clear, there is a strong link between invulnerability and ignorance; both reinforce and constitute each other.[264] Ignorance and invulnerability are both important factors that contribute to the lack of engagement with the colonial history in mission: ignorance is oftentimes willfully produced in the light of readily available information regarding the colonial history and its aftermath. Ignorance leads to invulnerability: the refusal to open up towards one's own fault and towards one's own history, to rather choose detachment than an honesty and forgiveness. Borrowed from postcolonial theory is also the assumption of profound interrelationality: "every identity whatsoever must be read as an event of relationship: A subject *takes place* amidst a dense ecology of interdependence."[265] This dense ecology is in this dissertation read as an ecology in myriad ways fraught with the remnants and mutilations of the colonial mindset. In light of these concerns, I propose a new theology of vulnerability that aims to go beyond a shallow

[261] Jon Stratton and Vijay Devadas, 'Identities in the Contact Zone', *Borderlands* 9, no. 1 (2010): 1–7.
[262] Enrique D. Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse Of 'the Other' and the Myth of Modernity* (New York: Continuum, 1995).
[263] Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*.
[264] Erinn Gilson, 'Vulnerability, Ignorance, and Oppression', *Hypatia* 26, no. 2 (2011): 308–332.
[265] Keller, Nausner, and Rivera, *Postcolonial Theologies*, 14.

vulnerability; it rather probes to the root of the human condition and argues for the potential of healing that comes through the openness to the presence of God. In order to carry out this argument, I first scrutinize the contribution of David Bosch, who has introduced the concept of the vulnerable missionary within missiology. I focus my attention on whether the emphasis on the person of the missionary can be sustained in a postcolonial framework.

The third thematic chapter, on vocation, takes the classic doctrine of vocation and analyzes the ramifications of lived vocation in an expansionist framework of mission. As I will show through the work of Eskilt[266] and my own analysis, in the modern missionary era, there was a close connection between the individual missionary call and an endorsement of an expansionist perspective on mission. The connection of this spiritual call which eclipses normal feedback mechanisms (such as one's suitability to live in another climate or culture) and provides a legitimizing narrative for one's missionary presence. Another element of vocation that I will scrutinize is the gendered nature of vocation. Through the accounts of women in the Two-Thirds world, I attempt to show that narratives of vocation have often privileged men, especially in church contexts where it is more difficult or downright impossible for women to obtain ordination. In order to move towards a postcolonial theology of vocation, I first of all apply the insights gained from the chapters on marginality and vulnerability: a vocation cannot be disembodied, but needs to be processed and interpreted in community. The insights from the chapter on marginality will bear upon the theology of vocation: vocation from the margins, in vulnerability and openness, without retreating into invulnerability.

1.7.5. *Towards a Postcolonial Methodology*

To recapitulate, this section has served to outline postcolonial *methodology* which I use in my dissertation. Postcolonial theory is concerned with deconstruction of the hegemonic idea of empire, and its concomitant center-periphery structure. Postcolonial theory thereby problematizes ingrained binaries such as national/international, autonomy/dependence, center/periphery. In what follows, I make clear the various elements of a postcolonial methodology. They assume each other. Since they are interwoven, these elements do not provide a clear order in which a postcolonial methodology needs to be carried out.

1) Postcolonial theory *problematizes* many ingrained binaries and concepts. I will undertake the task of scrutinizing some of these concepts in the second chapter, by focusing my attention upon the mission field, the homeland, the frontier and the border.

[266] Ingrid Eskilt, 'Are You Called or Just Personally Motivated? Recruiting for Mission', in *Mission to the World: Communicating the Gospel in the 21st Century. Essays in Honour of Knud Jorgensen*, ed. Tormod Engelsviken et al. (Oxford: OCMS, 2008), 391–404.

2) Furthermore, it *challenges* the mechanism of domination by bringing to light the mutual shaping of (former) colonies and (former) colonizing nations. I have explained this mechanism in my section on World Christianity. World Christianity questions the historiography of Christianity, by no longer assuming a distinction between church history and mission history, but rather explain how what was formerly called 'mission history' profoundly influenced the self-understanding of the missionizing church.
3) It raises *awareness* and urges *acknowledgment* of the historical context and position of all theories and authors' positions, pertaining to writing about the past, the present, and the future. This means that the question needs to be answered who can do postcolonial theology. Only the former colonized, or also the former colonizers? Pui-lan argues that, precisely because the colonization process profoundly affected the metropolitan centers, "the postcolonial process must involve both the colonizers and the colonized. This means that not only do the colonized need to disengage from the colonial syndrome, the colonizers have to decolonize their minds and practices as well."[267] Taking the lead of Pui-lan here, it is necessary to raise awareness and, as a member of a former colonizing nation, to engage in this critical work on the self.
4) For theology, the integration of the postcolonial has been coupled with feminist *intersectionality* theory. Feminist theory when not intersectional is not necessarily taking a decolonial stance. Feminist theory should not universalize the experience of white middle class women, and needs to understand that feminism without intersectionality does not automatically result in a liberative position for formerly colonized women. Again, Pui-lan leads the way here: "History has repeatedly shown that white feminism does not automatically challenge, and may even camouflage, racial prejudice, class division, compulsory heterosexism, and Western colonialism."[268]
5) Postcolonial theology needs *imagination* to not only deconstruct, but also open up the possibility for *construction*. Pui-lan distinguishes between projects that are using established theological categories and infuse them with postcolonial meaning. This has the advantage of locating oneself into traditional theology while subverting its Eurocentric bent from the inside out. I take this approach with my chapter on vocation. Another approach is to set the theological agenda oneself and directly work from categories at home in a postcolonial discourse. I have taken this approach with the first two chapters, using marginality and vulnerability as relative newcomers in systematic theology.[269]

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[267] Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 127.
[268] Ibid., 130.
[269] Ibid., 147.

1.8. BIOGRAPHY

It is self-evident that theologians are influenced by their own biography. Their courses of life press upon the projects, themes and convictions they research.[270] Yet the biographical influence has not always been acknowledged nor been brought explicitly to the fore. It seems however that a significant number of theologians, including those whose work will be discussed below, intentionally bring up the subject of biography and do not hesitate to recount relevant items in their own life story. It becomes clear that this conscious effort is much more than just 'telling tales' or a mere acknowledgment of relevant influences on one's work. For example, Anne E. Patrick aims 'to expand our methodological borders across the artificial divide of supposed objectivity.'[271] As a consequence, bringing in one's biography is an important methodological decision in that it explicitly denounces objectivity and a 'view from nowhere.' Patrick has been inspired by Ada María Isasi-Díaz, who argues for self-disclosure in one's theological projects.[272] In an article in *Shaping a Global Theological Mind*, Isasi-Díaz recounts her theological journey and narrates decisive influences on her thought.[273] The volume 'Shaping a Global Theological Mind' is a logical consequence of the earlier volume 'Shaping a Theological Mind'[274] which had been criticized because of its English language bias. Context and autobiography are closely connected to the emergence of World Christianity as an area of inquiry because of the contextual nature of knowledge. It is therefore not surprising that some theologians who find themselves in the zone of interaction between various traditions and locations of practicing theology are disclosing the influence of biography upon their theological projects. Jung Young Lee devotes the first chapter of his 1995 book *Margin-*

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[270] This section deals primarily with the researcher's biography, and does not take into account the academic study of biography and narrative of mission practitioners, as is advocated by these articles: Frances S. Adeney, 'Why Biography? Contributions of Narrative Studies to Mission Theology and Mission Theory', *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* 26, no. 2 (2009): 153–72; Kajsa Ahlstrand, 'Biographies in Mission Studies', *Svensk Missionstidskrift* 97, no. 4 (2009): 483–90.

[271] Anne E. Patrick, 'Markers, Barriers, and Frontiers: Theology in the Borderlands', in *Theology: Expanding the Borders*, ed. Maria Pilar Aquino and Roberto S. Goizueta (Mystic: Twenty Third Publishers, 1998), 7.

[272] Patrick, "Markers, Barriers, and Frontiers", 6–7.

[273] Ada María Isasi-Díaz, 'Mujerista Theology: A Praxis of Liberation - My Story', in *Shaping a Global Theological Mind*, ed. Darren C. Marks (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008). See for an assessment of the role of autobiography in the writings of Isasi-Díaz: Michelle A. Gonzalez, 'Keeping It Real: The Theological Contribution of Ada María Isasi-Díaz', *Feminist Theology* 20, no. 1 (2011): 28–32.

[274] Darren C. Marks, *Shaping a Theological Mind: Theological Context and Methodology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

ality: The Key to Multicultural Theology arguing that theology is autobiographical.[275] He directly links the autobiographical character of theology and its contextual nature. Lee narrates the history of various Asian groups in the United States, comments upon their marginality and pleads for a nuanced distinction between a variety of Asian ethnic groups.[276] Similarly, Paul Yonggap Jeong brings in his own life story in his book on mission and weakness.[277] Kosuke Koyama boldly states that theology is biographical and describes the influence of the fateful events of the Second World War on his theology.[278]

An autobiographical turn in theology should not be limited to those who by virtue of their standpoint are already inclined to acknowledge the influence of their life stories upon their theology. It could also serve to recognize the felt need for identification of those who do not belong to dominant theological arenas. Kang considers it problematic that the 'people who belong to the dominant culture hardly speak about their own "name," whereas the marginalized must constantly identify their 'name' to enter the mainstream.'[279] It should not be the case that those who are involved in specific theological programmes, whether feminist / liberation / *mujerista* / postcolonial, feel more acutely the need to explicate their specific background than those involved in theology written from Western metropolitan centers, which has a long tradition of claiming universality and objectivity. The appearance of a personal narrative should be scrutinized to determine whether it is driven by someone who wishes to identify her/himself for the wrong reasons.

My own biography leaves its marks upon this research project since my particular background has provided me with a unique admixture of assumptions, fears, joys and deep-seated convictions. When recounting my background to an observant listener, she remarked that I was indeed one of those 'bricolage' people who navigate between various ecclesial traditions. Raised in an evangelical family, in my early teens my parents switched - albeit never wholeheartedly - to a conservative reformed church. Moving to Belgium to pursue my bachelor of theology, I made acquaintance with transnational evangelicalism and was introduced to Anglican theology. I experienced the uneasy and, at times, hostile relationship between progressive and conservative approaches to theology. Moving back to Amsterdam to pursue my Masters in Theology, I lived in one of the most ill-reputed neighborhoods of the Netherlands. Coming from a comfortable middle-class background, living in this neighborhood introduced me for the first time in my life

[275] Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 7–28.
[276] Lee, *Marginality*.
[277] Paul Yonggap Jeong, *Mission from a Position of Weakness* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).
[278] Kosuke Koyama, "'Not Even in Israel Have I Found such Faith': Missiology from the Periphery", in *World Christianity Reconsidered: Questioning the Questions of Ecumenism and Missiology: Contributions for Bert Hoedemake*r, ed. L. A. Hoedemaker, Anton W. J. Houtepen and Albert Ploeger (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2001), 48.
[279] Kang, 'Whose/Which World in World Christianity?', 35.

directly to the issues of class, migrancy and structural poverty. It made me aware of the deep-seated prejudices between the center of Amsterdam and the periphery. This period in Amsterdam did more than just spark reflection on these themes: it made me live them in an existential way. I was ill-prepared for the loss of social standing and the condescension that I encountered by virtue of living in an area that was considered by many as a no-go area. These experiences sparked my interests in the exploration of the issues of marginality and the relationship between center and margins. Revisiting this neighborhood again after two years of absence, while navigating the novel experience of interracial dating, made me intensely aware of my own whiteness. The question 'what does it mean to be white?,' evoked through the bodily experiences of whiteness, generated inquiry into the field of whiteness studies and led consequently to the further reflection on vulnerability and strategies of invulnerability aided by whiteness. Although concerns about racism have been voiced time and again in the Netherlands, in 2015 and 2016 particularly, upsurges of racist rhetoric and actions have been forcefully pushed to the forefront of public attention. This has led me to take a more active stand in protesting racism. In addition, during the years of writing this dissertation, I have become involved in the intersection between church practice, theology and feminism, arising out of the very real gender disparity I have witnessed both within my own life and within church settings in general.

I am currently a member of a local PCN church and continue to have ecumenical connections across a broad spectrum of denominations. It is my sincere hope that my dissertation will be read within the generous, ecumenical tradition of mission which transcends denominational boundaries.

1.9. FUTURE-DIRECTED WRITING

This dissertation aims at contributing to the task of the ongoing reflection on the theology of mission. A postcolonial sensitivity leads to the awareness that the future is no neutral conceptual terrain, since a preoccupation with the description and prediction of the future has been connected with a colonial mind set. Preoccupation with the future can be described as a discursive occupation of 'conceptual territory.'[280] Claiming to know the future of mission is therefore an example of discursive colonization because it aims at dominating a conceptual terrain. Whose voices are heard in discussions of the future? Who holds the power to decide which voices are entering the discussion? Who benefits from a particular description of a particular course of events? These questions point to the power dimensions which are present when discussing the future of mission.

[280] Darrell Jackson, "The Futures of Missiology: Imaginative Practices and the Transformation of Rupture", (2011): 5, http://redcliffe.academia.edu/DarrellJackson/Papers/623544/The_futures_of_missiology_imaginative_practices_and_the_transformation_of_rupture_2011_.

This means that it is possible to draw parallels between the engagement of history and the engagement of the future. As I have indicated in the section on World Christianity, a different appraisal of mission history interrupts the previously dominant narrative of mission "from the West to the rest." Just as it is of pivotal importance to apply critical analysis to the construction of the history, it is important to carry out the same analysis towards theologies of mission that claim to provide new vistas for the future. Since this dissertation indeed attempts to contribute to conversations in the future about the foundations of mission, it follows from my methodology that I critically examine in which ways one is eligible to carry out these conversations.

For example, as I wrote in a response to the 2011 conference of the World Evangelical Alliance convening in Germany, their theme 'disturbing mission' as a new paradigm for future mission is ill-conceived. This idea of disturbance of the old ways of mission might be a helpful reminder for those who need to update their mission theology. But hailing disturbance as an end is difficult to reconcile with act of reading the times, since these times are in need of peace and reconciliation.[281] This means therefore that proposals for the future of mission that are not inclusive, but are still only relevant for those who have historically possessed power to determine the future, are not in line with the overall postcolonial bend of this dissertation. As the overarching consensus in mission theology seems to move towards peace, reconciliation and healing as necessary themes for a mission theology, the outlier disturbance seems to be ill at home in a subaltern missiology.[282]

An additional reason to exercise caution with discussions about the future of mission is the increasingly fragmented nature of Christian presence and witness, as becomes evident from the work of Robert Schreiter, Ogbu Kalu and Kirsteen Kim. Schreiter focuses on the multitude of competing interests in Christianity, leading to pressure upon the discipline of missiology due to the gestation of these diverse interests.[283] Kalu, leaving aside the language of the 'global village,' focuses on the ebb and flood of Christian tides, emphasizing movement and diversity in a future Christianity that will firmly be located in the poorer regions of the world.[284] Kim notices that Christians worldwide experience reduced communality due to the increasing diversification of global Christianity.[285] The centenary of

[281] Eleonora Dorothea Hof, 'Disturbance as a New Paradigm for Mission: A Critical Assessment of the Global Consultation of the World Evangelical Alliance', *Global Missiology* 3, no. 10 (2013): 1–13.

[282] Robert J. Schreiter, 'Reconciliation as a Model of Mission', *New Theology Review* 10, no. 2 (2013), http://www.newtheologyreview.com/index.php/ntr/article/download/397/574.

[283] Robert J. Schreiter, ed., *Mission in the Third Millennium* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001).

[284] Ogbu U. Kalu, 'Changing Tides: Some Currents in World Christianity at the Opening of the Twenty-First Century', in *Interpreting Contemporary Christianity: Global Processes and Local Identities*, ed. Ogbu U. Kalu and Alaine M. Low (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

[285] Kirsteen Kim, 'Mission's Changing Landscape: Global Flows and Christian Movements', *International Review of Mission* 100, no. 2 (2011): 244–67.

Edinburgh 1910 saw an upsurge in reflection on the path forward in mission and provided a *Common Call* which features markers along the way in order to carry the theory and praxis of mission further.[286] In a similar fashion, the third Lausanne conference in 2010 in Cape Town sparked, from an evangelical perspective, reflections on the path forward in global mission.[287] However, in these documents the language in which theological themes are identified and possibilities for the future are outlined is characterized by its modesty. This is in contrast to the studies on the future of mission that seem to have blossomed in the late 1980s. In 1987, the *International Review of Mission* dedicated its January issue to the 'Future of Mission.' Likewise, an entire issue of *Missiology* was devoted in 1987 to the discussion of the future of mission.[288] In one of the articles in this edition of *International Review of Mission*, Frans Verstraelen sounded a warning about the colonization of the future, which he saw as a possibility if presuppositions and interests in the future of mission are not specified.[289] A sober awareness of the plurality in trajectories of Christianity could lead to a more reserved standpoint regarding the future perspectives of Christian mission.

In line with the emergence of World Christianity as an interpretive paradigm for the multifaceted reality of planetary Christianity, the development of future-directed theology needs to be characterized by modesty and an awareness of the deep seated plurality accompanying contemporary manifestations of Christian faith. Sources for a theology of mission will consequently be diverse, originating from a multitude of standpoints. Explicitly inviting a diversity of voices to contribute to the discussion on theology of mission will preclude a canonized perspective with regard to suitable missiological literature. Although there certainly benefits in researching a definite collection of writings, in order to do justice to the fluctuating circumstances and uncertainties characteristic of the current state of affairs, a fluid and flexible engagement with contemporary sources is a necessity. In line with the discussion on sources in World Christianity, I therefore intend in this dissertation to not only engage with the household names of missiology, but

[286] Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson, eds., *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2011); Stephen B. Bevans, 'From Edinburgh to Edinburgh: Toward a Missiology for a World Church', in *Mission After Christendom: Emergent Themes in Contemporary Mission*, ed. Ogbu U. Kalu and Peter Vethanayagamony (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010); David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross, *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now* (Oxford: Regnum, 2009); Matthey, 'From 1910 to 2010'. Coorilos Geevarghese, 'Towards and Beyond Edinburgh 2010: A Historical Survey of Ecumenical Missiological Developments since 1910', *International Review of Mission* 99, no. 1 (2010): 6–20.

[287] Schreiter, 'From the Lausanne Covenant to the Cape Town Commitment'; Stanley Green, 'Report on Cape Town 2010', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35, no. 1 (2011): 7–10; 'Cape Town Commitment: A Declaration of Belief and a Call to Action'.

[288] David B. Barrett, 'Forecasting the Future in World Mission: Some Future Faces of Missions', *Missiology: An International Review* 15, no. 4 (1987): 433–450.

[289] Frans J. Verstraelen, 'The Future of Mission: A Western Perspective', *International Review of Mission* 76, no. 301 (1987): 42.

to explicitly find dialogue partners among lesser-known missiologists. I have therefore frequently made use of journal articles, since for many time-pressed authors who are mission practitioners at the same time it is a near impossibility to write monographs. I have therefore mined many missiological journals in order to engage a diversity of authors, benefiting from a diversity of epistemological locations.

2. Spatial Metaphors

2.1. POSTCOLONIAL GEOGRAPHY

In this chapter, I proceed from the assumption that the task of a postcolonial missiology is to critically scrutinize the spatial concepts which have been operative and are still operative in various paradigms of mission.[1] The task of a postcolonial missiology is consequently to bring analytical instruments to the table in order to outline how various spatial categories have been contributing to creating and maintaining colonial ways of perceiving and ordering the world. I am following the lead here of Tracy Leavelle, who has studied the 'geographies of encounter' between Jesuit missionaries and the native inhabitants of the Great Lakes region in the United States during the 17th and 18th centuries. She argues that

> [s]patial metaphors that describe social differences and cultural encounters – concepts such as frontier, middle ground, center and margin, borders and borderlands – achieve their explanatory power in part from the strong link between colonialism and geography.[2]

The work of Leavelle serves as a reminder that the usage of spatial categories such as the frontier and borders that have been actively used in colonial geographies are not neutral spatial categories. This chapter provides an in-depth scrutiny of these spatial categories since they have played, and to a certain extent, still continue to play, a role in mission practices. In the respective sections, these concepts will be examined in order to consider to what extent they are capable of functioning in a postcolonial design of mission.

2.1.1. *Research Agenda*

In this chapter, my analysis of the spatial ideas of mission field, homeland, frontier, borders and planetarity borrows from the discipline of postcolonial geography. Geography which is infused by a postcolonial research agenda is concerned with criticizing the Eurocentric stance that the discipline historically has taken and actively works to deconstruct Eurocentric binaries. The recent development of postcolonial geography has been advanced by James Sidaway. Sidaway argues for

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[1] This assumption is inspired by the insistence on the inclusion of geography in postcolonial analysis by Tinyiko Maluleke and the edited volume by Jamie Scott and Gareth Griffiths. Maluleke, 'Postcolonial Mission: Oxymoron or New Paradigm?'; Jamie S. Scott and Gareth Griffiths, *Mixed Messages: Materiality, Textuality, Missions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[2] Tracy Neal Leavelle, 'Geographies of Encounter: Religion and Contested Spaces in Colonial North America', *American Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2004): 915.

the near impossibility of practicing postcolonial geography within the parameters of the discipline of geography given its deep investment in ordering the world according to a Eurocentric ratio and its preoccupation with order and intelligibility. Another complication of practicing postcolonial geography arises from the complexity of the signification 'post' in postcolonial. Close engagement with this 'post' shows equally the enduring conceptual presence of neocolonial, imperialist and internal colonialist constellations.[3] In light of these difficulties, the promise of a postcolonial geography lies therefore in the analysis of the construction of metropolis and colony and how the 'gap' between the two became a primary signifier of difference.[4] The 'gap' between the metropolis and the colony delineates how difference was geographically distributed and evaluated, for example, in images portraying civilization and savagery, Christianity and superstition.

The postcolonial analysis that follows works on two levels. On the one hand, the study of the construction of an ontological difference between metropolis and colonial periphery helps us to understand how colonial hierarchies were structured and enacted. The hierarchical nature of the center and periphery structure is, on the other hand, dismantled as a powerful fiction. Careful study of the daily and mundane interactions between metropolis and colony shows how colony and metropolis are mutually inscribed and constituted. The idea of a metropolis fundamentally rests upon the periphery as the ontological other to function as a contrast to the metropolis. In other words, the periphery necessarily takes the inverse qualities of the metropolis. The perennial other located in the periphery functions as a ploy to establish this hierarchy.[5] Geography as a discipline has been deeply invested in the construction of these hierarchies through the mapping of colonial areas and thus opening them up for scrutiny and exploitation. The discipline of geography has, however, currently been making great strides in dismantling these problematic aspects of its legacy including its Eurocentric bias in order to develop new practices. It is my contention that the discipline of missiology would benefit from a sustained interaction with postcolonial geography.

Missiology as a discipline is decidedly at home in a multidisciplinary setting. Missiology borrows from other disciplinary approaches whatever it finds useful in its critique and reconstruction of mission theology and practices.[6] The program of postcolonial missiology overlaps with postcolonial geography because of the necessity in both disciplines to decenter the Euro-American narrative in favor of localized knowledge. The Euro-American narrative fundamentally rests on the idea

[3] James D. Sidaway, 'Postcolonial Geographies: An Exploratory Essay', *Progress in Human Geography* 24, no. 4 (2000): 593.
[4] Alan Lester, 'Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies', *Journal of Historical Geography* 29, no. 2 (2003): 278.
[5] Catherine Hall, *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A Reader* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
[6] Skreslet, *Comprehending Mission*.

that its perspective on the world has universal value, and as such is not considered localized, although the knowledge most certainly has provincial characteristics.[7] As I explained in the first chapter, the mutual constituency of the metropolis and the colony calls into question the shallow distinction between local and global found in both disciplines. A final, but on first sight surprising, similarity between my project and postcolonial geography is in favoring planetarity over globalization, a distinction which I will explain later in this section.

The connection between mission studies and postcolonial geography can be established both from the side of geography by taking an interest in the geographical repercussions of mission past and present, and from the side of missiology itself. One of the seminal publications connecting the two with each other is an article by Claire Brickell, who helpfully connects contemporary mission practices and spatial imagery.[8] She argues that the interest in mission should not be restricted to historical inquiry, but should extend to the present day.

Some missiological case studies make use of postcolonial geography, for example, producing research regarding the transnational ties of Irish missionaries and the representations of the African continent among those missionaries.[9] These studies are helpful in their demonstration of how missionary discourse shaped their own and others' geographical imagination of the African continent. While this detailed research on the links between missionary discourse and geographical imagination is important, the present study will take a more theoretical approach. I will focus in this chapter on the analysis of a handful of key concepts that have been influential in shaping and producing the missionary equivalent of metropolis and colony. The spatial distribution of missionizers and missionized will be investigated especially through a discussion of mission field and homeland.

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[7] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[8] Brickell, 'Geographies of Contemporary Christian Mission(aries)'. The volume edited by Jason Dittmer and Tristan Sturm provides an insight in the result of the agenda she proposes. Dittmer and Sturm, *Mapping the End Times*. See in particular: J.H.J. Han, 'Reaching the Unreached in the 10/40 Window: The Missionary Geoscience of Race, Difference and Distance.', in *Mapping the End Times: American Evangelical Geopolitics and Apocalyptic Visions*, ed. J. Dittmer and T. Sturm (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 183–209.

[9] Fiona Bateman, 'Ireland's Spiritual Empire: Territory and Landscape in Irish Catholic Missionary Discourse', in *Empires of Religion*, ed. Hilary M. Carey, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series, 2008, 267–87, http://do.rulitru.ru/v22942/?download=1#page=280; Denis Linehan, 'Irish Empire: Assembling the Geographical Imagination of Irish Missionaries in Africa', *Cultural Geographies* 21, no. 3 (2014): 429–447.

2.1.2. *Materiality*

Another benefit of engaging with postcolonial geography is the attention to materiality in this discipline, thereby overcoming the persistent criticism of postcolonial studies' lack of worldliness.[10] The worldliness of spatial concepts has a double meaning. The usage of worldliness here is reminiscent of the work of Edward Said, who tirelessly argued that the worldliness of the critic and the intellectual means that intellectual positions are not defended from a disengaged position, but are instead profoundly characterized by positionality.[11] The double meaning of worldliness – both the disavowal of the disengaged critic and the recognition of the material, worldly ramifications of patterns of thought – are captured in the argument in favor of an engagement with material disseminations of those positions. From the perspective of missiology, this argument has been articulated by Tinyiko Maluleke. He writes that 'postcolonial theory cannot proceed from an a-geographical and neutral space somewhere in the skies between Europe and Africa.[12] There is no better place to locate and test postcolonial theory than in the streets of the postcolony.'[13] Maluleke is in this criticism inspired by the work of Achille Mbembe,[14] who levels critique on the lack of materiality in much of postcolonial theory. This methodological weakness of postcolonial studies as a whole can be overcome both by geography and mission studies, since both have a specific subject matter to engage with. One of the areas in which geography might benefit from mission studies is attention to materiality in its engagement with nature and wilderness.[15] In missionary sources it is not uncommon to attach spiritual meaning to natural features of the landscape. One primary example is the development of frontier rhetoric, which I will critically survey in this chapter.

2.1.3. *Planetarity*

Another impetus of postcolonial geography is the geographic arguments that are leveled by James D. Sidaway, Chih Yuan Woon, and Jane M. Jacobs against a global worldview in favor of a planetary worldview.[16] In this section, I will primarily explain how postcolonial geography brings us to consider planetarity, while

[10] Nash, 'Cultural Geography', 221.

[11] Abdul JanMohamed, 'Worldliness-without-World, Homelessness-as-Home: Toward a Definition of the Specular Border Intellectual', in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michael Sprinker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 96–120.

[12] I find it a reduction that Maluleke limits his discussion of the postcolony to Africa. Apparently, for him, the focus on Africa is self-evident, since he does not explain his focus in the article.

[13] Maluleke, 'Postcolonial Mission: Oxymoron or New Paradigm?', 511.

[14] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*.

[15] Nash, 'Cultural Geography', 223.

[16] James D. Sidaway, Chih Yuan Woon, and Jane M. Jacobs, 'Planetary Postcolonialism', *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 35, no. 1 (2014): 4–21.

in the extended section on planetarity in the closing section of this chapter, I will present a full-fledged argument in favor of planetarity. The emphasis on planetarity is an extension of the ideas on World Christianity developed in the first chapter, since planetarity can be considered as the final problematization of the dichotomy between the local and the global. This argument helps us to move beyond the world of either area studies, as a common approach in geography, as well as beyond the study of the dissemination of Christianity in according to clearly delineated areas, as is oftentimes the case within the discipline of missiology.[17] The work of Arjan Appadurai provides us with the argument that is needed to move beyond area studies. He writes:

> Much traditional thinking about "areas" has been driven by conceptions of geographical, civilizational, and cultural coherence that rely on some sort of trait list—of values, languages, material practices, ecological adaptations, marriage patterns, and the like. However sophisticated these approaches, they all tend to see "areas" as relatively immobile aggregates of traits, with more or less durable historical boundaries and with a unity composed of more or less enduring properties.[18]

The problem with areas as the primary ordering principles relates therefore both to the immobility and the prioritizing of contingent historical circumstances. Appadurai proposes therefore to speak about process geographies instead of trait geographies.[19] Trait geographies essentialized certain characteristics of certain regions or areas and on the basis of these traits, areas were demarcated. Furthermore, the emergence of area studies fell squarely in line with the 'colonial imperative' that functioned through discovery and conquest to open up areas by categorizing and ordering.[20]

The study of the transnational flows and their unequal, morphing and jumbled character reveals 'relations of disjuncture.'[21] Those relations of disjuncture thoroughly deflate what might remain of the idea of regions to be studied separately and independently. Appadurai's argument bears upon the practice of separating mission in the Netherlands from mission abroad. The clearly demarcated area of the Netherlands as a primary ordering principle for mission activity becomes destabilized. As a result, it becomes untenable for contemporary mission efforts to solely focus on the Netherlands, since the Netherlands as a stable region to be engaged with separately and largely independent from transnational activity turns

[17] See for explanation and sources the section in the first chapter: Interpreting World Christianity: Paradigms.
[18] Arjun Appadurai, 'Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination', *Public Culture* 12, no. 1 (2000): 7.
[19] See also the work of Kris Olds, who has detailed how process geographies could like like from the perspective of the periphery. Kris Olds, 'Practices for "Process Geographies": A View from within and Outside the Periphery', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 19, no. 2 (2001): 127–36.
[20] Sidaway, Woon, and Jacobs, 'Planetary Postcolonialism', 11.
[21] Appadurai, 'Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination', 5.

out to be rooted in a contested idea of territoriality. This insight from geography helps us to take an even firmer stance against the tendency to relegate mission abroad to a different realm from domestic mission.

Another consequence of Appadurai's argument is that globalization as an explanatory category to interpret the contemporary world becomes questionable. The reason lies in the fact that 'globalization is inextricably linked to the current workings of capital on a global basis; in this regard it extends the earlier logics of empire, trade, and political dominion in many parts of the world.'[22] This is not to say that the machinations of globalization are imagined; instead, they are a very real driving force. However, the emphasis on globalization has a limited potential for re-imagining the world in a fashion that is not dominated by the 'earlier logics of empire,' as Appadurai writes.

One attractive solution therefore is to focus on the potential that planetarity offers as a way of imagining the unity of the world in a way that is discontinuous with the legacy of empire. I turn therefore again to the work of Sidaway, in an article written together with Chih Yuan Woon and Jane Jacobs.[23] These writers agree with Appadurai that the global is intertwined with imperial logic. They argue therefore for the necessity to engage in a genealogy of the global, which will reveal the intimate connection between the Western epistemology, the logic of empire and imaging the world as global. An extension of this logic is the idea of the world as a divisible space: available for consummation and understanding in separate parts. The planetary is the radical opposite of the divisible global: the planetary imagines the planet first and foremost as an irreducible whole. Planetarity points to irreducible alterity and in consequence questions the spirit of manageability inherent in the global.[24] For now, I rest content with outlining how questioning trait geographies leads to a critique of the global, which leads to an espousal of planetarity. Postcolonial geography has proven in this respect to be a close ally to my own missiological way of thinking, since tracing the genealogy of the global results in the espousal of process geographies, which are an essential part of questioning the predominance of area geographies. The problematization of area geographies proves to be especially significant for my argument since it directly bears upon the tendency I observed in the first chapter to isolate the Netherlands as the sole locus for missionary engagement.[25]

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[22] Ibid., 3.

[23] Sidaway, Woon, and Jacobs, 'Planetary Postcolonialism', 17.

[24] Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera Rivera, eds., *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011).

[25] See section: Relationship between National and International Mission in the first chapter.

2.1.4. *Tropicality*

Another insight from postcolonial geography that I borrow for usage is an analysis of the discourse of tropicality. In short, tropicality can be considered a twin discourse of Orientalism focused on constructing the tropics as a place essentially different from the West. In that process, the tropics are either assumed to be endlessly inferior to the West or exalted to the status of paradise lost. I consider the discovery of the discourse of tropicality to be quintessentially important for missiology because it explains instances of othering in missiological discourse that cannot be explained by only employing the tool-set of Orientalism without stretching the particularity of Orientalism dangerously thin.

Daniel Clayton and Gavin Bowd build on the work of Arnold David and Edward Said to argue for the construction of tropicality as a means of dramatizing the distinction between 'us' and 'them.' Tropicality is described as identifying a place as separate from the West and consequently judging this place against the West. A moderate and temperate climate zone is contrasted with a hot and unrelenting climate zone. The tropical discourse is characterized by ambivalence, since the tropical other is either depicted as living in an Edenic environment or the tropical environment is derided as the white man's grave. Like Eastern peoples within the discourse of Orientalism, here tropical peoples do not represent themselves. They are instead mediated through the Western scholar and interpreter. Tropicality can be considered as a form of environmental Eurocentrism and a form of environmental othering.[26] Significantly for this study, Clayton and Bowd mention in passing the possibility of a Dutch tropicality, but they admit that not enough work has been carried out yet to distinguish the various tropical discourses from each other.[27]

Earlier significant work on the inner logic of the discourse of tropicality was carried out by David Livingstone, who focused on the hermeneutical character of tropicality. Livingstone proceeds from the assumption that tropicality is an interpretation of a constructed location, and is therefore to be classified as a hermeneutical activity.[28] He cites both Hegel and Kant, who made clear that nothing of historical significance could ever take place in tropic areas and that the inhabitants of these regions had fallen prey to an incurable indolence.

The work of Livingstone is significant for my project because he considers the

[26] Daniel Clayton and Gavin Bowd, 'Geography, Tropicality and Postcolonialism: Anglophone and Francophone Readings of the Work of Pierre Gourou', *L'Espace Géographique* 35, no. 3 (2006): 208–21.

[27] Ibid. HTML version of this article consulted online, paragraph 5. (accessed February 8, 2016).

[28] David N. Livingstone, 'Tropical Hermeneutics: Fragments for a Historical Narrative: An Afterword', *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 21, no. 1 (2000): 76–91. David Livingstone, comtemporary scholar, has interestingly enough the same name as the famous missionary and pioneer David Livingstone (1813-1873).

tropical imagination to be primarily hermeneutical: the activities of interpretation, sense making and assigning value. This hermeneutical direction has been taking place as well in studies of the history of tropical missions. Tropicality can be detected in the manner that missionaries infused particular landscapes with ideas of either redemption or desolation.[29]

Tropicality, however, is both a discourse of the past and the present, and at this moment, I have not been able to discover work that has been carried out within mission studies that addresses the issue of contemporary tropicality. My hypothesis is that the study of both literature and visual material produced by contemporary missionary agencies might turn up rich evidence that the tropics are considered a special site for missionary presence. The dense sensory character of the tropics, embodied in tropes about humid heat, the presence of tropical diseases, impenetrable and dense vegetation and a colorful locale could prove to be fertile ground for a tropical hermeneutics.

Tropicality has a close cognate in exoticism, which can be defined as 'material (art) products representing cultural otherness, and [...] as the yearning for this kind of otherness.'[30] Tropicality and exoticism therefore have the possibility to mutually constitute and influence each other. The yearning for exoticism can be expressed in collecting and redistributing objects from the tropics in order to act as signifiers of the exotic other. The material reality in which geographical difference was enacted is perhaps best exemplified by missionary exhibitions in the United States in the beginning of the 20th century. The displayed objects served as brokers of engagement with the oftentimes exotic and tropical other.

In 2014, I encountered such a missionary exhibition in one of the Protestant Churches in my home town Amersfoort, in which the celebration of ties with an Indonesian province was represented. This missionary exhibition featured a reconstructed traditional Indonesian house made of reed leaves. The construction of this traditional Indonesian house is both a display of tropicality and exoticism: the display of a building style vastly different from houses in the Netherlands signifies the 'social asymmetry'[31] inherent in the construction of a village house within the confines of a Dutch church building. Tropicality is displayed through the explicit display of the qualitatively different life in the tropics: a life lived in circumstances of heat that lead to the construction of flimsy residential structures. The exoticism of the structure is signified by the spectacle that is erected: an aesthetically pleasing structure very different from traditional Dutch buildings.

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[29] Jane Samson, 'Landscapes of Faith: British Missionary Tourism in the South Pacific', in *Mixed Messages: Materiality, Textuality, Missions*, ed. Jamie S. Scott and Gareth Griffiths (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 89–110.

[30] Paul Van Der Grijp, *Art and Exoticism: An Anthropology of the Yearning for Authenticity* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2009), 36.

[31] Ibid., 11.

The contribution of postcolonial geography in this instance is to direct the interpreter to the dense layers of meanings that can be contained within a specific missionary exhibition: the colonial relationship of the Netherlands with Indonesia and the representation a vastly geographic region through the display of various artifacts from this region.[32] I therefore bring the idea of tropicality to the table because it sheds light on a frequently used discourse, both within mission theology and within geography, which is unique to regions with a tropical climate. Tropicality can therefore be used as a supplement to Orientalism, allowing us to avoid the mistake of using Orientalism as a catch-all container for all forms of geographically distributed difference.[33]

2.1.5. *Postcolonial Geography and Theology*

In the previous section, I have drawn attention to reasons we should engage with postcolonial geography: attention to materiality, planetarity and tropicality are already generating themes that will prove beneficial for the analysis I will carry out in the second part of this chapter. This does not yet, however, address the question of whether postcolonial geography might be open to such a borrowing of concepts, or whether postcolonial geography and theology are strange bedfellows. It is therefore important to note that there is at least one instance where the discipline has shown itself open to consider the benefit of theological approaches within geography.[34] This is not surprising given the acknowledgment of multiple forms of colonialism, each with their own character and a unique form of postcolonialism that they require.[35] An engagement with theology is one of the possible approaches that can provide postcolonial geography with an insider's perspective on how religious ideas have contributed to the conquest and mapping of colonial lands. The inverse is also true: postcolonial theology also helps to understand anticolonial movements of resistance fueled by Christian concerns for equality and liberation. The mutual borrowing of ideas and approaches between postcolonial theology and postcolonial geography is therefore expected to yield fruitful results.

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to in-depth scrutiny of various ideas which have exercised considerable influence on the spatial imagination of mission praxis. The goal of this discussion is to untangle the interplay between colonial, spatial ideas and their incorporation into missionary discourse. I will then discuss whether I see possibilities for salvaging each idea in a modified form, or

[32] See for more information about missionary expositions, Erin L. Hasinoff, *Faith in Objects: American Missionary Expositions in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
[33] This is not to say that tropicality and orientalism are the only two discourse that are concerned with ways of othering based on, among others, geographical features. One could make the case that the arctic regions of the earth are home to a form of "arcticity."
[34] Sidaway, Woon, and Jacobs, 'Planetary Postcolonialism', 7.
[35] Sidaway, 'Postcolonial Geographies', 595–602.

whether I consider the concept to be too tainted by its legacy to be useful in the present. I end the discussion of these spatial ideas with an embrace of planetarity as an especially fruitful lens for the work I will carry out in the following chapters.

The next chapter will focus on a constructive theological proposal in which I will argue for a sustained interaction with a theology of mission from the margins. A plea for mission from the margins can be conceived as a constructive way of engaging the spatial element of mission by providing a clear alternative to expansive expressions of mission, while at the same time leaving room for the multidimensional elements of marginality, which are not confined to spatiality alone.

2.2. MISSION FIELD

2.2.1. *Definition, History and Usage*

In this section, I will scrutinize the construction of the 'mission field' as a problematic concept for the practice of mission.[36] Unfortunately, the origins of the term mission field are shrouded in uncertainty. This means that it is difficult to make grand claims about when the term was first used during the modern missionary movement. In any case, mission field was in use in 1898, when the Nederlands Zendelinggenootschap (Dutch Missionary Society) opened the Karo mission field at Sumatra. Rita Smith Kipp summarizes the beginning stages of the work of the Nederlands Zendelinggenootschap as follows: 'the first fifteen years of the Karo field coincided, too, with a period of rapid capitalistic expansion in the Indies, as in other colonial territories. This field's beginning, then, occurred during the period when modern imperialistic colonialism was emerging in the Dutch East Indies, in Africa, and elsewhere.'[37] In this example from the Dutch missions, the opening of this particular mission field coincided with the height of imperial expansion. The verb 'to open' suggest a particular performative quality of the mission field. The mission field can officially be opened by declaring a field open and by sending missionaries into this field.

Research on how the term became applied to Europe shows that the concept enjoys a long and varied history. Gerhard Hilbert might have been in 1916 the first to apply the term mission field to Europe, since he recognized that in Germany active adherence to Christianity was minimal in many areas.[38] The dwindling of

[36] An earlier version of this section has been published in Eleonora Dorothea Hof, '"Called to the Mission Field": A Critical Examination on the Role of Vocation in the Construction of the "mission Field"', *Swedish Missiological Themes* 101 (2014): 257–77.

[37] Rita Smith Kipp, *The Early Years of a Dutch Colonial Mission: The Karo Field* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 1.

[38] Stefan Paas, 'The Making of a Mission Field: Paradigms of Evangelistic Mission in Europe', *Exchange* 41, no. 1 (2012): 60–61.

Christianity in Germany led him to consider his home country as a mission field. Similarly, in a reflection on the 1928 World Mission Conference in Jerusalem, Basil Mathews remarked that Europe had to enter a learning process in order to consider itself as a mission field.[39] In 1938, in preparation for the World Missionary Conference in Tambaram, Hendrik Kraemer wrote on this topic:

> Nothing can demonstrate more clearly that *the Christian Church, religiously speaking, in the West as well as in the East is standing in a pagan, non-Christian world, and has again to consider the whole world its mission field, not in the rhetorical but in the literal sense of the word.*[40]

For Kraemer, the primary distinction in the world is between Christianity and the non-Christian world, and this distinction is not geographically bound, but manifests itself instead in a variety of social locations.[41] The century-old affirmation that Europe should be regarded as a mission field means that the distinction between 'mission field' and 'home base' is more complex than hereto has been assumed. Stefan Paas draws the conclusion that, although Europe was formally considered Christian until deep in the twentieth century, materially the status of Europe as a mission field has been articulated time and again. The status of Europe as a mission field predates the sweeping impact of secularization of the continent.

Although the occurrence of the term mission field is well-documented in Paas's research, his article seems to be the only full-length treatment of the application of the idea of the mission field within missiological literature. Paas provides the following definition for the mission field: 'From a pragmatic point of view we might say that an area is a mission field as soon as others decide to send missionaries into it.'[42] A mission field is therefore a concrete locality in which missionaries carry out their work. Given the scarcity of material on this topic, other definitions are hard to obtain. With reference to the Edinburgh 1910 conference, the following definition can be gleaned: 'a geographic or ethnolinguistic space where Christianity is absent.'[43] Smith Kipp defines mission field as follows: 'The term *field* [Dutch *zendingsveld*, or *terrein*] denotes the administrative unit encompassing the missionaries who work within the same linguistic group or region.'[44] From these definitions, it becomes clear that the mission field is either connected to a concrete geographical location or to a specific ethnolinguistic group. Both aspects of the mission field are problematic in a postcolonial articulation of mission. As I

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[39] Ibid., 63.

[40] Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (London: The Edinburgh House Press, 1938), 16–17. Italics in original.

[41] Ibid., 27–28.

[42] Paas, 'The Making of a Mission Field', 52.

[43] Robert Priest, 'A New Era of Mission Is Upon Us', in *Evangelical and Frontier Mission: Perspectives on the Global Progress of the Gospel*, ed. Beth Snodderly and A. Scott Moreau (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2011), 296.

[44] Kipp, *The Early Years of a Dutch Colonial Mission*, 8.

have outlined in the introduction, this dissertation seeks to anchor mission in the context of World Christianity. The proposed interpretation of World Christianity highlights the fragmented but interconnected and transnational character of Christianity, instead of favoring a static, geographical, area-determined focus of World Christianity. The turn to World Christianity in mission suggests a turn to the currently marginalized and under-represented segments of World Christianity. The focus of the history of mission shifts therefore away from the agency of missionaries to the agency of those who are appropriating, processing, interpreting and transmitting Christianity.[45] In light of these concerns, the idea of a mission field is too geographically colored and too much tied to static conceptions of culture to be able to secure a prominent place in the framework of mission after the World Christian turn. In order to aid the evaluation of the concept of the mission field as it is used in practice, these questions will be helpful to determine the ramifications of the usage of the mission field: Whose mission field are we discussing? Who has the agency and power to denote certain geographical or ethnolinguistic groups as a mission field? Who benefits from designating a certain area as a mission field? The answers to these questions are still to be determined in ever specific case, but these questions provide tools to assess the impact of the usage of the mission field.

2.2.2. *Field in Anthropology*

These questions bring us to another aspect of the mission field that warrants closer scrutiny. Up till now, I have mainly discussed and critiqued the content associated with the mission field. A second layer of analysis probes deeper and engages with the connotations and meanings attached to the word *field*. What does it mean to discuss a mission field *as* field? In order to scrutinize the layers of meaning attached to the word field, I will draw upon parallels within the discipline of anthropology. The usage of field is not restricted to the discourse on mission and is a defining term within anthropological discourse since the practice of fieldwork characterizes an important methodological approach of the discipline. The practice of fieldwork distinguishes anthropology from other disciplines which share to a certain extent their subject matter with anthropology, such as cultural studies. As Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson have noticed in their poignant self-criticism of their discipline, the absence of sustained debate over the colonial connotations of fieldwork is remarkable. In general however, the discipline is overall actively moving away from previously propagated ideas, such as that cultures are stable identities connected to clearly demarcated territories.[46] They come to the conclu-

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[45] Paul V. Kollman, ‘Remembering Evangelization: The Option for the Poor and Mission History’, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33, no. 2 (2009): 59–65; Kollman, ‘After Church History? Writing the History of Christianity from a Global Perspective’.

[46] Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, eds., *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a*

sion that one of the unfortunate by-effects of the emphasis on the field is the association of fieldwork with rural and oftentimes agrarian settings. In the developmental stages of the discipline of anthropology, it was a common practice to inveigh against the artificial character of the city and life in the city as an estrangement from natural ways of living. Even though contemporary anthropologists study the landscapes of cities, the connotations of the field signify the close connection of the field with the natural world in which humans make their living. In the words of Gupta and Ferguson: 'Going to the "field" suggests a trip to a place that is agrarian, pastoral, or maybe even "wild"; it implies a place that is perhaps cultivated (a site of culture), but that certainly does not stray too far from nature.'[47] Going to the field implied also the need to travel to that field, as an actual geographic location to be reached in order to study the natural world in which humans live. In fieldwork, conceptualized this way, the field functions as a demarcation of differences, allocating each culture and ethnic group their own field.[48] Contemporary mission theory should therefore answer the question to which extent the usage of the mission fields aids in the construction and maintaining of geographically distributed difference. The emphasis on Europe as a mission field, as we have seen, in certain cases negates the necessity to travel in order to reach a site of difference. Yet, the emphasis on the mission field within contemporary evangelical theology, which connects the mission field as the site where unreached people groups are reached, results in the evocation of an agrarian, pastoral and perhaps even 'wild' location to carry out mission work.[49]

The history of anthropology, including its usage of fieldwork, should therefore be put in its proper historical context in order to research how anthropology is coopted by colonial ideas. This is the thesis of Peter Pels, who takes the work of Gupta and Ferguson one step further. Fieldwork oftentimes served as a way of exoticizing the other and turning the other into the object of inquiry.[50] To take matters further from the observation of Pels, it seems that through the construction of a field, the other becomes instantly othered, if only by the virtue of being located *in the field*. As such, an 'imaginary juxtaposition of home and field' takes place, as Pels has observed.[51] This juxtaposition results from the distinctions between the field as the site where knowledge is gathered through observation and informants, and between the home as a site of processing and interpretation of what has been studied in the field. The distinction between home and field as two separate entities

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Field Science (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 2–8.
47 Ibid., 8.
48 Ibid., 2–8.
49 Sources will be discussed in the chapter on vocation, since I will develop the argument more closely on how the constellation of vocation and mission fields is aiding expansive perspectives on mission.
50 Peter Pels, 'The Anthropology of Colonialism: Culture, History, and the Emergence of Western Governmentality', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997): 167.
51 Pels, 'The Anthropology of Colonialism'.

fails to consider the intermediate state of travelling from home to the field and vice versa. Through the extensive process of travelling, these two sites become connected to each other and are no longer two completely separate domains. Connecting the work of Pels to the construction of the mission field, it becomes clear that similar features also played a role in the mission field, where the juxtaposition of the field and the home base have had their own inflections. Especially the usage of the term *thuisfront* [home front] in Dutch, denoting the committee which takes care of practical and spiritual issues the missionary abroad might face, helps in popular vernacular to reinforce the distinction between mission field and home base.

In the same vein as the discipline of anthropology is coming to terms with their history and the colonial currents in their tradition, the discipline of missiology should also carefully scrutinize its legacy and consider whether it is possible that biblical material has been co-opted in a thoroughly modern scheme of culture and intervention. As Michael Rynkiewich and Jonas Jørgensen argue, the history of anthropology and mission is varied and characterized by multiple phases of both mutual dependence and estrangement.[52] For example, the idea of cultures as bounded, stable wholes which are open to scrutiny by a knowledgeable outsider is a legacy of both anthropology and the practice of mission. One of the tasks of postcolonial missiology is therefore, in tandem with the discipline of anthropology, to critically scrutinize this discourse and to purge it of the idea of stable, localized and territorially bound communities which are evoked by the mission field. A postcolonial missiology instead adopts a framework of an interconnected worldwide landscape in flux.[53]

2.2.3. *The Sayings of Jesus in the Colonial Condition*

It would however be incomplete to explain the usage of field in the praxis of mission solely through the comparison with the discipline of anthropology. Another layer of influence that needs to be discussed in order to receive a clear grasp upon the usage of the field is the biblical material in which the term field is used in connection to the communication of the message of Christ by Christ's disciples. Especially the agricultural metaphors employed in the sayings of Jesus in the gospels warrant further scrutiny. Three passages are specifically important for our purposes.

First, in Matthew 9:37-38, Jesus remarks that the harvest is plentiful, but only few workers are available. Jesus then urges the disciples to pray to the 'Lord of the harvest' to send out workers into 'his harvest field.' Luke 10:2 can be considered the synoptic parallel of the passage in Matthew, and in the context of sending

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[52] Jørgensen, 'Anthropology of Christianity and Missiology'; Rynkiewich, 'Do We Need a Postmodern Anthropology for Mission in a Postcolonial World?'
[53] Gupta and Ferguson, *Anthropological Locations*, 4.

out the 70, the same instruction is given: 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.' Lastly, in John 4, Jesus expands upon the relationship between the workers of the harvest. 'I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe [other translations: white, EDH] for harvest!'[54]

As we are uncovering the layers of meaning that the idea of field has acquired, it is important to note that the agricultural metaphors in the sayings of Jesus are uttered in a context that differed considerably from the imperial context and its aftermath to which they were applied many centuries later. First and foremost, Jesus himself was living on the fringes of the Roman Empire and subject to colonial rule himself. As such he was not speaking from a position of superiority but rather in conflict with both the religious and political powers of the time.[55] The New Testament context differs of course considerably from the situation of those who find themselves entangled in the mechanisms of empire or under neocolonial influence. Failure to recognize the different contexts, but rather collapsing them into each other, results in an uncritical appropriation of the sayings of Jesus. This uncritical stance opens up the possibility that the terminology derived from the gospels becomes infused with ideas that reinforce territorial notions of mission. An additional point to consider is that the sayings of Jesus are not referring to empty fields, but rather to fields which are already full and ready for the harvest. Arguably, the full fields of the gospel sayings are therefore in contrast with an image of empty fields in need of cultivation.

The image of the empty land that awaits cultivation by the missionaries is explained by Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, in their 1988 article about initial missionary encounter in the nineteenth century with Tswana people in Southern African. They point out that African land was considered during that time period to be a virgin land that awaited cultivation. Africa, in the form of an empty stage, was lying bare in order to be cultivated, watered and ploughed through the twin acts of evangelization and civilization.[56] The layer of meaning that indicates that a field lies bare and is therefore ready for cultivation has parallels with the myth of the virgin land. The myth of the virgin land accompanied fantasies of conquest during the colonial period. The virginity of the land indicates the readiness and willingness to be marked and defined by the gaze and the agency of the colonizer. Yet, as Anne McClintock points out, although this myth added a rationale for conquest and cultivation, the 'discovered' land in reality was not empty as one had previously imagined. The fantasy of a virgin land was falsified by the presence of

[54] Biblical quotations are taken from the New International Version.

[55] Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Powers: Conflict, Covenant, and the Hope of the Poor* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

[56] Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, 'Through the Looking-Glass: Colonial Encounters of the First Kind', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, no. 1 (1988): 6–32.

the people who inhabited the land. The visible traces of their past histories invalidate therefore the myth of the virgin land. This realization makes the act of 'discovery' also deeply problematic and ridden with ambiguities, since the fantasized discovery of characteristics of the land, such as landmark sites, were most often mediated by the help of the native inhabitants of the land. Simple logic dictates then that those native inhabitants were the ones who had attached meaning to their environment before the spatial reordering and symbolic arrangement of the land through colonization. The colonial explorer marks the discovered site as his discovery, but at the same time, the land is neither empty nor undiscovered.[57]

In the same vein as the trope of the virgin land is a geographic metaphor that symbolically orders the perceived reality of colonialism, the mission field is a geographic metaphor that adds symbolic meaning to a specific locality. In analogy to the myth of the virgin land, the mission field is never just a field which lies bare and empty in order to be cultivated for the sake of the gospel by ploughing, sowing and reaping. The missionary doesn't find an empty field, just as the colonial explorer doesn't find a virgin land. The geographical meaning making on the part of the missionaries actively distilled places and landscapes with biblical imagery in order to outline their role and function as missionaries.[58] In this respect, the wilderness metaphor is a particularly poignant metaphor. The wilderness metaphor enabled a spiritual interpretation of the land as a site of spiritual deprivation which awaits cultivation and blessing.[59] The geographic metaphor of the mission field therefore conjures up images of lying bare and being ready for cultivation, and as such, is distinct from the gospel-sayings of fields that are already full.

Although the agricultural dimension of the mission field metaphor has received the forefront of the attention in this overview, I briefly want to consider the possibility that the mission field has the character of a military metaphor too. This idea comes from Nicholas Thomas, who remarks in passing about the militaristic character in an article about evangelicals and mission in the early 20th century. The possibility of the 'agricultural-cum-military metaphor'[60] lies in the meaning of field as the place where a battle is fought. The metaphor of a spiritual battle on the mission field is not out of line with the prevalence of militaristic language in the

[57] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 30–31. See for the "myth of the pristine land" the influential and controversial article of Donovan who argues that the Americas in 1492 were highly populated and that the human modification of the landscape by the native inhabitants was considerable. William M. Denevan, 'The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82, no. 3 (1992): 369–385. See for an overview of the discussion and influence of the original article: William M. Denevan, 'The "Pristine Myth" Revisited', *Geographical Review* 101, no. 4 (2011): 576–91.

[58] Amy DeRogatis, *Moral Geography: Maps, Missionaries, and the American Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

[59] Samson, 'Landscapes of Faith: British Missionary Tourism in the South Pacific', 93.

[60] Nicholas Thomas, 'Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy, and History in Early Twentieth-Century Evangelical Propaganda', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34, no. 2 (1992): 371.

history of mission. In particular, at the Edinburgh 1910 mission conference, investment in the mission field and outspoken ideas about the conquest of Christianity went hand in hand.[61] In any case, the possible overlap in symbolic meaning between mission field and battle field should not be easily dismissed. Although it is outside the scope of the present study, I suggest that further study of the conflation between mission field and (spiritual) battle field might yield interesting results.

In light of this overview of the meanings attached to the geographic metaphor of the mission field, I am taking heed to the call of Gupta and Ferguson 'to decenter and defetishize the concept of "the field".'[62] This section has indeed sought to destabilize the meaning of the field by outlining how its history of usage is intricately connected with the construction of the other in concrete and fixed localities. In a postcolonial world, the attraction of the field as geographic metaphor should therefore give way to articulations of the mission encounter which undo the harm of the objectification of the religious and cultural other.

2.3. HOMELAND

2.3.1. *Usage and History*

In this section, I introduce and discuss the idea of homeland, and engage with resources from cultural studies and anthropology to discuss why the notion of homeland as a principle of geographical ordering in mission is particularly prone to essentialist reductions. I will explain how essentialist readings of homeland lead to a dichotomy between the homeland and the foreign other as primary ordering principles for mission.

The homeland, or the home base, or sending country, proves to be a resilient concept, although missiological reflection has long been keen to emphasize the multidirectional flow of missionary activities, which are no longer tied to traditional sending and receiving countries.[63] Yet, the idea of the sending country, which is consequently the homeland of the missionaries who are sent out, proves to appear in new forms, as the upsurge of the idea of South Korea as a sending country suggests.[64] In addition, resources from the area of so-called member care

[61] Bevans, 'From Edinburgh to Edinburgh', 7–8.
[62] Gupta and Ferguson, *Anthropological Locations*, 5.
[63] Orchard, Ronald K. *Witness in Six Continents: Records of the Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches Held in Mexico City December 8th to 19th, 1963*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh House Press, 1964.
[64] Park, Joon-Sik. 'Korean Protestant Christianity: A Missiological Reflection'. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 36, no. 2 (2012).

seem to reinforce the dichotomy between mission field and one's home country.[65] Furthermore, the idea of a missionary as a mediator of global theologizing works implicitly with the dyad between homeland and mission field. The missionary manifests her/himself as someone who is mediating between two distinct cultures.[66] In the Dutch context, the frequent usage of *thuisfront* [home front], as in the composite term *thuisfrontcommissie* [home front committee], indicates the awareness of the element of 'home' in mission. The Dutch Evangelische Zendings Alliantie (EZA) [Evangelical Missions Alliance] organizes every year a study day which supports those who are members of these home front committees.[67] Although it is by no means my intention to downplay the work carried out in those committees, I want to direct attention to the way these home front committees are actively involved in producing difference between the home country on the one hand, and the foreign country as the location of missionary activity on the other hand.

The home base of missions surfaced prominently in the documents produced by the Edinburgh 1910 conference on World Mission. Those documents are reprinted on the occasion of the centenary commemoration conference in 2010 and commented upon by Samuel Escobar.[68] Edinburgh 1910 reckoned with a distinction between home base and mission field. The home base received ample attention, since the home base needed to be characterized by spiritual vigilance in order to effectively carry out the mission abroad. The distinction between home base and mission field is deemed obsolete by Escobar, whose earlier work helped to popularize the slogan: 'the gospel from everywhere to everyone.'[69] According to Escobar, the work of the Holy Spirit is primarily to be found in social peripheries around the world, where currently a great upsurge of missionary zeal is taking

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[65] Schwandt, Joanne R., and Glendon Moriarty. 'What Have the Past 25 Years of Member Care Research Taught Us? An Overview of Missionary Mental Health and Member Care Services'. *Missiology* 36, no. 3 (2008): 317–26. The resources gathered by Kelly O'Donnell signify the development of a worldwide perspective in member care. The simple binary of home base and mission field still shines through in a worldwide perspective, even though the home base can be located around the globe and is not fixed to the old sending countries. O'Donnell, Kelly, ed. *Doing Member Care Well: Perspectives and Practices from around the World*. Globalization of Mission Series. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2002.

[66] Hiebert, Paul G. 'The Missionary as Mediator of Global Theologizing'. In *Globalizing Theology. Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, edited by C. Ott and H.A. Netland. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2007.

[67] This webpage provides numerous resources regarding the managing of home front committees and the care they supply for mission workers. http://eza.nl/wat-doet-de-eza/thuisfrontcommissies-tfc. Since 2015 the EZA merged with the EA and formed Missie Nederland.

[68] Samuel Escobar, 'Mission from Everywhere to Everyone', in *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now*, ed. David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross, Regnum Studies in Mission (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 185–98.

[69] Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone*, Christian Doctrine in Global Perspective (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

place.[70] Escobar doesn't explicitly question the distinction between home base and mission field that functioned during the Edinburgh 1910 conference, but instead proposes the paradigm of multidirectional mission without a clear center or home base. Even though Escobar doesn't explicitly engage with the dichotomy created between home base and mission field, I consider it necessary in this chapter not only to assess the mission field, but also the construction of home. The reason for the necessity to research both constructs separately is that the active involvement and production of home operates under a set of partly different preconceived ideas and notions as opposed to the mission field.

Recently, cultural studies and anthropology have turned their attention to the dismantling of essentialist reductions of the meaning of home. Alison Blunt and Robyn Downling for example consider home a 'spatial imaginary' and a 'complex and multi-layered geographical concept.'[71] Stef Jansen and Staffan Löfving are also questioning essentialist ideas of belonging and seek to understand the constructed nature of the homeland.[72] Ironically enough, especially within migrant studies, the essentialization of home easily takes place because an almost mythical value can be attached to the meaning of home for those who are involuntarily displaced. The deconstruction of the idea of home occurs therefore in the context of a broader conceptual agenda which is also concerned with interrogation of ideas such as the nation state and national belonging. For mission studies, following the lead of cultural studies and anthropology means that the perspective of theologizing / doing mission from the perspective of home is challenged. An alternative for the emphasis on the homeland is to shift to theologizing from the borderland. I take the insistence on theologizing from the borderland from Namsoon Kang, who considers it a significant and urgent task for mission to work with the perspective of uprootedness, in all its forms, including homelessness.[73] Behind the work of Kang is the influence of Edward Said, who famously carried out his analysis from the perspective of being in-between multiple worlds.[74] I consider it therefore necessary to latch onto the perspective of those who are uprooted and who are forced to live in the borderlands. As a result, the perspective of home as a stable locality to which one can return at will is destabilized. The homeland, and therefore also the *thuisfrontcommitees*, can never be the primary organizing principle of mission.

In order to take the questioning of home as an ordering principle for mission a step further, I turn to the work of Michael Nausner, who provides resources to

[70] Escobar, 'Mission from Everywhere to Everyone', 194.
[71] Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
[72] Stef Jansen and Staffan Löfving, *Struggles for Home: Violence, Hope and the Movement of People* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009).
[73] Namsoon Kang, 'Out of Places: Asian Feminist Theology of Dislocation', in *Out of Place: Doing Theology on the Crosscultural Brink*, ed. Jione Havea and Clive Pearson (London: Equinox, 2011), 111.
[74] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*.

scrutinize the meaning the homeland has acquired. A fundamental presupposition in the work of Nausner is that the homeland is not a natural place. The very nature of the homeland dictates that the concept is constructed.[75] Especially after the fateful events of 9/11, the idea of the homeland rose to prominence within public awareness and political discussions. The 9/11 attacks showed that the homeland was not nearly as safe as previously imagined. These catastrophic events scattered a sense of security which was previously attached to the US territory. The borders between the homeland and foreign territories proved to be fundamentally unstable. Yet the response of the US government to these attacks was an ever tightening regime of border control.[76]

2.3.2. *Homeland as Borderland*

Nausner borrows from the work of Homi K. Bhabha, who takes the instability at the borders between the homeland and the foreign territory one step further and argues for the messy characters of borders. The messy character is produced by the presence of fear on both sides of the border. The agency of fear prohibits neat categorizations and clean and clear-cut demarcation lines. As a result, the boundary becomes 'thick,' as an extensive field where negotiation takes place. 'Thick' stands in contrast to 'thin,' which denotes a simple and clear demarcation line between inside and outside. If the dividing line between inside and outside, foreign and home, safe and dangerous is thus fundamentally unstable, identities can no longer be established inside a clear and unambiguous space.[77]

Nausner makes here an important step by applying Bhabha's analysis of the instability of borders to his plea for the borderland as the homeland. The borderland becomes the homeland, i.e., the place to dwell permanently, because one cannot escape the continuous forging and negotiating of identities that take place in the borderland. The homeland is no longer infused with ideas about safety and stability, but rather denotes the conceptual dwelling place where identities are negotiated. Consequently, the meaning of the homeland shifts from a literal meaning to a more metaphorical meaning. The borderland becomes a place to permanently inhabit, although it is by no means a stable, or even a safe place. As a result, the borderland is the conceptual dwelling place that we can call our home.

Interrogating the stability of the homeland is not only mediated by a careful observation of the instability of the boundaries that separate the homeland from

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[75] Michael Nausner, 'Homeland as Borderland: Territories of Christian Subjectivity', in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera Rivera (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 118–33.

[76] See also on this topic: Zygmunt Bauman, 'Living and Dying in the Planetary Frontier-Land', *Tikkun* 17, no. 2 (2002).

[77] Homi K. Bhabha, 'By Bread Alone: Signs of Violence in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', in *The Location of Culture*, Routledge Classics (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 283–302.

foreign places, but could be mediated through theological sources. Especially the interpretation of Jesus as someone who rejects and transforms conventional ideas of family and home contributes to the destabilization of the homeland. Nausner draws for this argument on the work of Gloria Anzaldúa,[78] who points to the tensions and traumas in the borderland. If the homeland is the borderland, and if the borderland is the homeland, the idea of territory needs to be altered. The life of Jesus subverts the idea that territories have a stable character. The travels of Jesus to the edges of Israel, to the other side of the Sea of Galilee and to the other side of the river Jordan indicate that Jesus was not primarily concerned with maintaining the conventional boundaries of the land. Inspired by the way Jesus inhabited the land, Nausner proposes the idea of nomadic living. A nomadic way of living does not signify that territoriality is obsolete and that living in connection to a certain location is harmful. Instead, it means that a nomadic lifestyle considers each land as fundamentally open. This radical openness means that nomadic living is in opposition to the conflation of peoples and territories, which results in the sanctification of the nation state. A nomadic lifestyle makes room for inhabiting the world together, without artificially closing certain areas off for certain people. This openness leads to an awareness of the world as planetary, which I will further describe in the final section of this chapter.

However, the affirmation of a nomadic lifestyle and the incorporation of the pilgrim principle, both of which rightly challenge static conceptions of homeland and a conflation of peoples and territories, should be balanced by a recognition of the real attachments that people have to their environment. The lived attachment to real and perceived homelands should not be dismissed too easily in favor of a nomadic lifestyle. Travelling as a lifestyle could easily become co-opted in a capitalist and neo-colonial scheme, favoring those who have the opportunities to travel the world as they like.[79] Especially for people who experience marginalization, for example through a threat to their way of life through forces such as deforestation, climate change and land grab, affirming theologically the importance of their place of origin could spark resistance against threats that destroy their living situation. This section has instead primarily been directed towards the idea of homeland as imagined in nation-states with a history of empire. My critique is not primarily directed at those people who could face increasing marginalization by the scrutiny of the meaning of homeland. For this dissertation, it means concretely that 'home' can never be the primary ordering principle from which mission work is launched. The destabilization of the distinction between home / foreign opens new perspectives in search for a postcolonial imagination of mission. Especially

[78] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

[79] Emma Wild-Wood, 'Mission, Ecclesiology and Migration', in *Mission on the Road to Emmaus: Constants, Context, and Prophetic Dialogue*, ed. Cathy Ross and Steve Bevans (London: SCM Press, 2015), 51–66.

the idea of a nomadic living, in conjunction with a planetary idea of the world, will be fruitful in countering static ideas of the homeland.

2.4. FRONTIER

2.4.1. *Definition and Usage*

The frontier, both in its conception as the dividing line between faith and unbelief, and in its geographically conceived form as the demarcation between Christianity and non-Christianity, continues to exercise its influence on popular imaginations in the discourse of mission. The definition of frontier missions as given by the *World Christian Encyclopedia* affirms this geographical demarcation line. Frontier missions is in this definition: 'Missionary work among the unreached or unevangelized peoples of the world, i.e. World A.'[80] A frontier missionary is accordingly: 'A full-time foreign or cross-cultural missionary who works among an *unreached people*, an *unevangelized* population *segment* or in *world A*.[81] For the Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions, frontier mission work is interchangeable with pioneer mission work. Similarly, the lemma of frontier peoples refers to 'peoples; people groups and unreached peoples.'[82] Frontier mission is, with a reference to Ralph Winter, 'pioneer work in which the missionary crosses significant cultural boundaries.'[83]

Various mission organizations use the word the frontier in their name.[84] In addition, the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, issued by the International Society for Frontier Missiology, suggests that when the frontier is considered as a central category for mission praxis, this results in a specific type of missiology, namely frontier missiology.[85] These mission organizations and the *International Journal of Frontier Missions* consider the frontier primarily as geographically expansive in character. In 1980, a worldwide conference was held in Edinburgh under the name 'World Consultation on Frontier Missions,' in which the influence of Ralph Winter's theology was strongly present.[86] In 2010, a similar

[80] Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 28.
[81] Ibid. Italics in original.
[82] A. Scott Moreau et al., eds., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 377.
[83] A. Scott Moreau, 'Pioneer Mission Work', in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau et al. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 759.
[84] Frontiers, www.frontiers.nl (consulted on October 28, 2014); Global Frontiers Missions, www.globalfrontiermissions.org (consulted on October 28, 2014); Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship, www.pff.net (consulted on January 29, 2016); Anglican Frontier Missions, www.anglicanfrontiers.com (consulted on January 29, 2016).
[85] http://www.ijfm.org (consulted on October 28, 2014)
[86] Ralph D. Winter, 'Mission Frontiers - World Consultation on Frontier Missions', 1980,

conference was held in Tokyo, during which the necessity of frontier missions was once again emphasized.[87] The *International Society of Frontier Missions* was established 40 years ago as an explicit attempt to offer a counterweight against the ecumenical perspective in mission, which propagated ecumenical assistance and proposed terminating evangelization work in favor of delegating the task of evangelism to the younger churches themselves. In the words of Brad Gill, who provides an overview of the history of frontier missions:

> The term "frontier" was lifted from general missionary discourse and applied to this particular challenge of reaching into the "unreached peoples" of the world. While we can always suggest other mission frontiers, "frontier mission" took on a singular meaning: it identified with Paul's apostolic mission to see the gospel enter and transform the remaining unreached peoples. After four decades it remains the flag under which we cooperate as societies for frontier mission.[88]

This quote shows that the frontier mission is clearly geographically expansive in its scope and has as its specific goal to reach the 'unreached peoples' of the world. This usage is similar to the proposal by Roger Greenway and Timothy Monsma to regard contemporary cities as the largest 'unclaimed frontier' of the mission of the church.[89] This proposal makes it possible to draw the frontier visibly on a world map. The usage of the word 'unclaimed' signifies a thoroughly expansive outlook on the nature of the frontier.

2.4.2. *Postwar Reworking of the Frontier*

The usage of frontier language within those societies and organizations that use the frontier as an identity marker differs from other proposals that are using the word frontier while infusing it with meanings distinct from the expansive meaning. The non-geographic frontier is found in post-war missiology, such as in the work by Damayanthi Niles, *Upon the Earth*.[90] Furthermore, Bengt Sundkler propagated the usage of frontier in a non-expansive sense.[91] The influence of Sundkler can be

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http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/world-consultation-on-frontier-missions.

[87] David Taylor, 'The Progress of the Frontier Mission Movement: A Thirty-Year Glance from Edinburgh 1980 through Tokyo 2010', in *Evangelical and Frontier Mission: Perspectives on the Global Progress of the Gospel*, ed. Beth Snodderly and A. Scott Moreau, Regnum Edinburgh 2010 Series (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 53–54.

[88] Brad Gill, 'Global Cooperation and the Dynamic of Frontier Missiology', *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 31, no. 2 (2014): 89–98.

[89] Roger S. Greenway and Timothy M. Monsma, *Cities: Missions' New Frontier*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 68.

[90] Damayanthi T. Niles, *Upon the Earth; the Mission of God and the Missionary Enterprise of the Churches.* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962).

[91] Bengt Sundkler, Peter Beyerhaus, and Carl F. Hallencreutz, *The Church Crossing Frontiers. Essays on the Nature of Mission. In Honour of Bengt Sundkler*, Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia 11 (Lund: Gleerup, 1969).

detected in the early work of David Bosch.[92] In *Witness to the World*, Bosch provides the following definition of mission, centered upon the crossing of frontiers.

> Mission has to do with the crossing of frontiers. It describes the total task which God has set the Church for the salvation of the world. It is the task of the Church in movement, the Church that lives for others, the Church that is not only concerned about herself, [the Church] that turns herself "inside out" (Hoekendijk), towards the world.[93]

The influence of Hoekendijk, who insisted upon affirming that the world is the horizon of mission, is taken up in the work of Bosch through the affirmation of border crossing as a focal point for mission.[94] The frontier loses its geographical character but the frontier remains the dividing line between faith and unbelief.[95] The abandonment of the geographical frontier is emphatically affirmed by the statement that '(…) the missionary frontier is everywhere.'[96] The act of frontier-crossing in mission encounters is thoroughly Trinitarian in character and is accompanied by a frontier-crossing ethic associated with this Trinitarian character. In the words of Livingston, in his insightful description of the early work of Bosch: 'The church crosses frontiers in the name of the compassionate Father, in the manner of Jesus the servant, and in the power and hope of the Spirit.'[97] In light of the emphasis on frontier crossing in the relatively early work of Bosch, it is surprising that the theme hardly comes to the foreground in *Transforming Mission*. The word frontier appears four times in *Transforming Mission*, in which three times the term is used in a historical way.[98] Only in the description of the theology of Matthew, the frontier appears as a marker of intense negotiation.[99]

Roughly around the same time that Bosch published *Witness to the World* (1980), Orlando Costas published the ground-breaking study *Christ outside the Gate*.[100] In this book, Costas advances the thesis that mission should take place, and already is taking place, outside the gate, in connection to those who are currently marginalized and suffer, metaphorically speaking, outside the gate. This perspective on mission is Christocentrically oriented, since it connects mission with the Christ who, as the writer of Hebrews remarked, suffered outside the gate

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[92] J. Kevin Livingston, *A Missiology of the Road: Early Perspectives in David Bosch's Theology of Mission and Evangelism* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 72.
[93] David J. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 17. Cited in: Livingston, *A Missiology of the Road*, 72.
[94] Hoekendijk, *The Church inside out*; Petter, *Profanum et Promissio*.
[95] David J. Bosch, 'Towards True Mutuality: Exchanging the Same Commodities or Supplementing Each Others' Needs?', *Missiology: An International Review* 6, no. 3 (1978): 294.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Livingston, *A Missiology of the Road*, 73.
[98] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 287, 282, 429.
[99] Ibid., 77.
[100] Orlando E. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982). See the third chapter for a further discussion of the work of Costas.

(Hebrews 13:12). For Costas, the new and emerging frontier in mission is primarily the delineation between Christian faith and other faiths in the non-Western world. The emergence of these frontiers is contrasted with the earlier frontier that needed to be expanded in the United States. The expansion of the frontier was made possible through the indebtedness of the pioneer to Western traditions of thought which stressed the priority of spreading civilization.[101] Costa's 1980 work builds forth on work from 1977, where he had already defined mission as a 'frontier-crossing event' because 'the Gospel crosses the frontiers of the world.' [102] However, Costas doesn't explain this definition further.

Although it is difficult to account for the lack of interest in the frontier in *Transforming Mission*, a couple of years after *Transforming Mission* was published, interest in the frontier was expressed by Wilbert Shenk. He considered the concept of frontier significant enough to structure his book entirely around this concept.[103] Shenk abandoned the concept of a geographical frontier because he discerned new frontiers that presented themselves with urgency. Consequently, the critique of the geographical frontier is not ideologically driven but rather pragmatically. Shenk distinguishes between two meanings of the frontier: Firstly, the frontier is the location where significant decisions are made. The critical decisions are described in military terms, namely as the place where 'the battle is joined.'[104] The usage of explicit military terminology is surprising since Shenk identifies as Anabaptist.[105] The Anabaptist tradition is characterized by its longstanding investment in pacifism.[106] One should be careful in ascribing too much meaning to an isolated instance of military language, but given the legacy of framing Christian mission in language of conquest, the use of military language is problematic.[107] The second meaning of the frontier is the challenging of the status quo, which results in a dynamic type of frontier.[108] The remainder of the book continues to describe and

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[101] "It used to be that – apart from Native American religions, New England Transcendentalism, and other rather small "harmonious" religious movements- the overwhelming majority that United States Christians had to cross in the evangelization of their fellow Americans were rooted in the Western tradition." From the perspective of the mid-2010's, it is difficult to understand how easily Costas omits the native American heritage as integral to the American experience. Ibid., 75.

[102] Orlando E. Costas, 'Missiology in Contemporary Latin America: A Survey', *Missiology* 5, no. 1 (1977): 90.

[103] Wilbert R. Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999).

[104] Ibid., 2.

[105] James R. Krabill, Walter Sawatsky, and Charles Edward van Engen, eds., *Evangelical, Ecumenical, and Anabaptist Missiologies in Conversation: Essays in Honor of Wilbert R. Shenk* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006).

[106] Ted Grimsrud, *Embodying the Way of Jesus: Anabaptist Convictions for the Twenty-First Century* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007), 127.

[107] Stephen B. Bevans, 'Issues in Mission Today: Challenges for Reflection at Edinburgh 2010', 2005, 2, http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/mission-articles/doc_download/667-issues-in-mission-today-challenges-for-reflection-at-edinburgh-2010.

[108] Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, 2.

analyze various other frontiers, both theological and located in contemporary culture.

The approach of Shenk has similarities with the approach of Gert Noort, who writes from a Dutch perspective. In his article, *Emerging Migrant Churches in the Netherlands: Missiological Challenges and Mission Frontiers*,[109] he states: 'The word "frontiers" is not to be understood in a geographical or ethno-linguistic sense, but as a reference to shifting priorities in the changing context of mission.'[110] In the Dutch context, these frontiers are: 'true dialogue with migrants' theologies,' 'providing space for theological education of migrant pastors,' 'need for a theology of connectedness' and 'integrity and common witness.'[111] Unfortunately, the reason for the shifting meaning of the frontier is not explained further, meaning that the exact considerations which have produced the transition from geographical to theological frontier remain unclear. Noort considers the frontier primary as the location where the priorities of mission are determined: this concept of the frontier is incompatible with the possibility of an expansive perspective on the frontier. The same theology of mission is also present in the article 'Mission as Frontier Crossing,' in which Xolile Simon elaborates upon the necessity to understand the frontier as a defining concept in contemporary mission.[112]

The examination of the writings of Bosch, Costas, Shenk and Noort reveals that they interpret the frontier as the location where decisive actions and confrontations takes place. The frontier is therefore considered a dynamic concept: movement is stressed over stability. Frontiers are both shifting and inherently unstable. Yet, these authors have not taken up a more fundamental examination of the associations and historical meanings of the frontier, and are thereby not taking into account the colonial and geographically expansive history of the frontier. The need is therefore present to uncover the various layers of meaning attached the concept. I consider the work of the authors such as Bosch, Costas, Shenk and Noort to be important and timely within their context. Especially the frontier-crossing ethic founded on Trinitarian theology, as put forth by Bosch, is helpful in the accompaniment of crossing borders. Yet, I consider the task that these authors have begun, i.e. the purging of the concept of the frontier from its expansive sensitivities, only half-finished. The second, necessary step is an examination of the colonial associations in the usage of the frontier. Only if the legacy of the frontier is acknowledged can the resulting theology be truly postcolonial.[113]

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[109] Gerrit Noort, 'Emerging Migrant Churches in the Netherlands: Missiological Challenges and Mission Frontiers', *International Review of Mission* 100, no. 1 (2011): 4–16.
[110] Ibid., 13.
[111] Ibid., 14–16.
[112] Xolile Simon, 'Mission as Frontier-Crossing and Identity Formation: An Integrating Contextual Missiology', *Scriptura* 100 (2013): 89–103.
[113] A recent presentation I gave for mission organizations which are part of the Dutch Mission Council, and in which I argued for abandoning the language of the frontier altogether, was met with resistance. The experience of misunderstanding shows that the debate on decolonizing mission is, in some mission

2.4.3. *Subverting the Expansive Logic of the Frontier*

In order to perform this analysis, I turn to two types of sources. In the first place, I will elaborate upon the work of Roberto Goizueta, who identifies as a liberation theologian, and who aims to show how Jesus-Christ[114] can be imagined as someone who dwelled in the borderland of society.[115] Through the analysis of the oppressive character of the frontier, Goizueta paves the way for the borderland as a site of redemptive presence. The borderland as a location is fundamentally ambiguous and lacks the moral purity of the religious heartland. The analysis of the frontier is aided by drawing upon the foundational work of Enrique Dussel, who outlines the inner logic of borders. Goizueta applies the work of Dussel to describe the logic of the frontier.[116] According to Dussel, borders have as their main function the delineation between center and periphery. The distinction between center and periphery is a defining feature of modernity, since in modernity the autonomous, rational subject needed an 'other' to define himself[117] against. The savage 'other' inhabited consequently the periphery, while the rational, enlightened subject of the Enlightenment inhabited the center. In other words: 'The Cartesian individualism and rationalism so often identified as the origins of modernity are, conversely, merely derivative, legitimating consequences of this center-periphery global structure.'[118] Modernity is characterized by a center / periphery structure, which consequently secures the development of individualism and rationalism.[119] The delineation between center and periphery consequently feeds into the construction of the frontier, which might be considered as the intensification of the border. The intensification of the border means that the frontier is the delineating line *pur sang* of center / periphery and civilization / savagery. According to Frederick Jackson Turner, the architect of the frontier thesis, the frontier is 'the meeting point between savagery and civilization.'[120] If the frontier is where the savage and

organizations, currently not being developed. The idea of the inherent expansiveness of the frontier, as is commonly recognized in some academic discourses, has not found its way to at least a segment of Dutch mission organizations. "Uitzending: het geografische paradigma voorbij?" [Sending out people: beyond the geographical paradigm?] Presentation during expert meeting of Dutch Mission Council, September 19, 2014.

114 See the third chapter for a discussion of the hybrid nature of Jesus-Christ.

115 Roberto S. Goizueta, "Christ of the Borderlands", in *Religion, Economics, and Culture in Conflict and Conversation*, ed. Laurie Cassidy and Maureen H. O'Connell, College Theology Society 56 (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2010), 177–195.

116 Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas*.

117 This dissertation uses inclusive pronouns wherever possible. However, when historical actions are described, which were at that time constitutive of masculinity, I use male pronouns.

118 Goizueta, "Christ of the Borderlands", 185.

119 The same argument is made in a different form by Walter Mignolo. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*.

120 Ibid., 187. In: Frederic Jackson Turner, *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner, with Commentary by John Mack Faragher* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1994), 96.

the civilian meet, and if civilization is supposed to push back, to replace the barbarian, it follows that the concept of the frontier is necessarily expansive. A frontier needs to be pushed further and needs to be conquered. The intrinsic logic of the frontier dictates that no viable alternative for pushing the frontier exists. In the words of Goizueta: 'Thus, implicit in the frontier myth is the assumption that the only alternative to expansion is decline, or degeneration (including moral degeneration).'[121] Goizueta calls this particular perception of the frontier a myth, presumably because the frontier myth has the ability to function as a foundational story to shape the consciousness and self-identity of a group of people.[122]

The logic of the frontier, when applied to the missionary movement, causes an intrinsic restlessness: a continuous moving forward, expanding, discovering, 'until the ends of the earth.' The restlessness signifies the need for the continued existence of frontiers, because the existence of the frontier lends legitimacy to the expansive missionary enterprise as a whole. Therefore, in a paradoxical way, frontiers need, on the one hand, to be pushed and conquered, but, on the other hand, are never allowed to disappear completely because of the supporting role of the frontier in expansive perspectives on mission. By describing the nature of the frontier as intrinsically expansive and by outlining how the only alternative for expansion in the logic of the frontier reaps (moral) degeneration, I hope to have showed a possible reason for the tenacity of the frontier in missiological discourse.

In the second place, I turn to the work of Amy DeRogatis, who shows how the construction of the frontier as part of a moral geography aided American missionaries to consider the wilderness of the land as a salvific landscape: a landscape that could either bring about redemption or signify moral degeneration.[123] The usage of wilderness metaphors aided the construction of both a literal and metaphorical moral map of the American landscape, more specifically the American frontier. The moral panic that resulted from the invocation of the wilderness caused multiple strategies of mapping, organizing and interfering with the frontier.

Combining both the perspectives of Goizueta and DeRogatis, it becomes clear that the frontier as a moral geographic category is ill at home in a postcolonial perspective that attempts to circumvent the subordinating othering structures of the colonial mind set. Consequently, I consider it a necessity to abandon the idea of the concept altogether. Authors such as Shenk, Bosch and Noort try to infuse the frontier with a meaning which is not yet tainted by a colonial and expansive paradigm. Yet, given the way that the frontier continues to function and even flourish in a variety of discourses and organizations, I would suggest to find alternatives for the usage of the word frontier. Border language, in the ways that I will outline in the next section, provides ample opportunity to affirm Christianity in its border-

[121] Goizueta, 'Christ of the Borderlands', 187.
[122] Unfortunately, Goizueta does not expand further upon the meaning of the "myth."
[123] DeRogatis, *Moral Geography*.

crossing nature without having to succumb to a concept that is tainted by its colonial past.

2.5. BORDER

Since mission is a border-crossing practice,[124] this section engages with the meaning of borders and searches for an articulation of borders that contains a postcolonial ethos.

Although mission in the context of empire was characterized by uncritically crossing geopolitical borders, a postcolonial missiology would have to ask hard questions about these practices. Namely, who is benefitting primarily from border crossing? Whose space is entered when crossing a border? Who gives permission to enter the space across the border, if permission is granted at all? How are spaces racialized and how is the permission or denial to enter certain spaces racially determined?

2.5.1. *Border Studies*

In order to engage the concept of border in missiology, a working definition of the border is called for, especially since the border can appear in both concrete and abstract forms. The *Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies* defines the field of border studies as follows: 'However, border scholars conceptualize borders not only as spatial or geographic phenomena that demarcate the sovereign territories of states but also as social, political or economic expressions either of belonging or of exclusion within state territories, for example, nations, religions, groups and individuals.'[125] Borders are therefore not just national borders which are separating countries from each other, but are also social markers of inclusion and exclusion on a broad terrain of difference. Borders can consequently be both material and non-material. The proliferation of borders after the 9/11 attacks has led many scholars to speak about a 'reterritorialization' rather than a 'deterritorialization' of the world.[126] Borders can be analyzed along multiple axes. Their multifold nature makes it plausible that the various dimensions interact with each other and mutually reinforce one another.

What are the consequences of a renewed study of borders for the discipline of missiology in general, and for my research in particular? In light of an ongoing reterritorialization of the world, missiology can be considered as the discipline that

[124] Peter C. Phan, 'Crossing the Borders: A Spirituality for Mission in Our Times from an Asian Perspective', SEDOS Bulletin 35, no. 1–2 (2003): 8–19.
[125] Doris Wastl-Walter, 'Introduction', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies*, ed. Doris Wastl-Walter (Surrey: Farnham, 2011), 2.
[126] Ibid.

seeks to accompany the border crossing practices of mission.[127] Missiology seeks to discern which practices of border crossing are leading to the flourishing of faith communities and which border crossing practices lead to the proliferation of neo-colonial attitudes.

2.5.2. *Lodging in the Border*

In order to understand the logic of the border more clearly, I turn to the work of Cláudio Carvalhaes, who has appropriated the work of Jacques Derrida in an argument for border-crossing as a Eucharistic spirituality.[128] The possibility of subverting borders when necessary needs to be taken into account in order to challenge the types of border policing that restrict human flourishing.

In his *Aporias*, Derrida describes two types of borders in addition to national ones. Derrida's other border categories are delineations between separate discourses, and separations between the demarcations of various concepts.[129] He considers it necessary to make a distinction between borders from the first category (borders between states) and borders from the second and third category (borders between discourses and concepts).

This distinction warrants a clearer understanding of borders, since the concrete and the abstract are not joined together in one catch-all category. By their very definition, borders function as a mechanism designed to determine what or who belongs to the inside and what or who belongs to the outside. Borders serve therefore as dividers by making clear to which category a persons or concepts belong.

Despite the robust description of borders as delineators of what or who is inside or outside, unexpected incidents can creep in and upset the status quo. Yet, borders are not impermeable but have a porous character. Unpredictable circumstances subvert and destabilize the very construction of inside and outside. As a result, border crossings are enabled by the porous and frail character of the borders themselves.[130] Engagement in the praxis of border crossing necessitates a familiarity with the inner logic of the border. In other words, one has to lodge within the border, i.e. within the established conception of inside and outside. Lodging inside the border with the goal to cross the border results in a transformed border logic.

[127] Mechteld Jansen, *God op de grens: Missiologie als theologische begeleiding bij grensoverschrijding* (Utrecht: Protestantse Theologische Universiteit, 2008).

[128] Cláudio Carvalhaes, 'Borders, Globalization and Eucharistic Hospitality', Dialog: A Journal of Theology 49, no. 1 (2010): 45–55.

[129] Ibid., 47; With reference to Jacques Derrida, *Aporias* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 23.

[130] Carvalhaes, 'Borders, Globalization and Eucharistic Hospitality', 48.

The word 'to lodge' is specific to the discourse of Derrida and is taken from *Writing and Difference*.[131] The act of lodging in the border points to a prolonged engagement with that border. Through the act of lodging in the border, the border itself becomes subverted. The lodging in the border can take various forms, but one contemporary form it might take is a sustained engagement with the border policing that takes place around the extremities of Europe in order to keep refugees and migrants from entering Europe. An analysis of the border, possibly through the practice of literal and metaphorical circumambulation will reveal the logic of the border. The logic of the border might in this case be derived from economic and xenophobic fears which are producing strict border control. Subversion arises therefore through an extensive engagement with the practices and inner logic that establish and maintain a border. The argument that fear proliferates on both sides of the border resembles the argument put forth by Bhabha, as I have discussed in the section on the homeland.

2.5.3. *Christ the Border Crosser Par Excellence*

The instability of borders and the possibility to subvert the dominant logic of the border, as we have seen in the work of Derrida, is good news for the praxis of mission. Mission is concerned with following Christ, who has broken down the dividing wall between Jews and gentiles in order to reconcile them into his body. The Ephesian moment, as this reconciliation is called by Andrew Walls, necessitates the continuous breaking down of dividing walls, in whatever way and form they surface in the present day.[132] The Ephesian moment can be understood as the joining together of various, previously unreconciled, cultures, ethnicities and groups in one body of Christ. The dispersed fragments come together in the body of Christ through the act of reconciliation.[133]

The Ephesian moment anchors the border crossing nature of Christianity and Christian mission within Christology, and more specifically within soteriology. Since this issue of reconciliation of previously estranged groups is at the heart of Christianity, multiple authors have reflected on this issue from their own various backgrounds. In the next chapter, I will elaborate further upon this topic when the topic of marginality is discussed. I will review various proposals that anchor the marginality of Christ in his border-crossing nature. In support of the theological necessity of border crossing in contemporary mission, I will discuss in this section two proposals that help to develop the argument with regard to border crossing as

[131] Ibid.; With reference to Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 111.
[132] Andrew F. Walls, 'The Ephesian Moment: At a Crossroads in Christian History', in *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 72–81.
[133] Ibid., 78.

missionary praxis further.

The first proposal originates from Peter Phan, who considers Jesus to be the border crosser par excellence.[134] In the next chapter, I will outline more closely the theology of Phan with regard to the consequences of border crossing for marginality, but in this section I want to highlight how border crossing and mission are intractably intertwined. Mission practices are grounded in the example of Jesus Christ, who crossed borders freely and removed the character of a border as a barrier. In other words, the all-inclusive nature of the ministry of Christ provides impetus for his followers in mission to remove the barriers that fence people off from each other. Resources for these border-crossings are found in a kenotic spirituality. With a reference to a poem written by Samuel Escobar, Christ is the 'Risen Lord, who therefore awaits us there, at every border that we have to cross with his Gospel.'[135] Christ is the one who has gone before us and is awaiting us at the other side of every border, and even awaits us at the other side of the border of death. Elaborating on Phan and Escobar, border crossing in mission becomes imbued with the promise of encounter of Christ. The encounter of Christ on the other side of the border is possible since Christ is the one who has gone before and has therefore both paved and shown the way.

Similarly to Phan, Virgilio Elizondo takes Christology as his starting point, but focuses on the recognition of the common humanity and a universal human family, which transcends divisive identity markers such as ethnicity and race. According to him, the transgression of borders is not a fearful event, but is a necessary occurrence in order to arrive at a new humanity in which the worth of every person is respected. Mission praxis has the ability to cross borders between humans that seem impenetrable because Christians follow the example of the hybrid Christ, who opened up in his body a new way of living and being (Hebrews 10:26). The new family that Christ constitutes is most profoundly characterized by the radical nature of the Christian meal: a meal that is radical precisely because it excludes no-one.[136] The contribution of the work of Elizondo lies primarily in his enthusiastic and daring re-imagination of a future in which a new humanity is inaugurated by Jesus, who is the new human par excellence. Elizondo's eschatological joy in the possibility of the new humanity should, however, not obscure the very real challenges that some groups presently face to maintain their identity in the midst of cruel and transgressive efforts to suppress their identity and to be forced into positions of assimilation and adaptation. I therefore consider it necessary to balance his opinion with the caution necessary in the aftermath of empire, when a sharp distinction should be made between forced assimilation and joyful hybridity.

[134] Phan, 'Crossing the Borders'.
[135] Ibid., 13.
[136] Virgilio P. Elizondo, 'Transformation of Borders: Border Separation or New Identity', in *Theology: Expanding the Borders*, ed. Maria Pilar Aquino and Roberto S. Goizueta (Mystic: Twenty Third Publishers, 1998), 23–29, 38.

2.5.4. *Border Transgressions*

Although I have made the case for border crossing and border subversion as an act of reconciliation through following the kenotic example of Christ, mission in a postcolonial setting negates any naïve proposal to consider border crossing a central metaphor in mission. The other side of the coin of border crossing is transgression, i.e. the uninvited and harmful trespassing of the treasured territory of the other. In the words of Anne Patrick:

> It would be a mistake, even a form of theological imperialism, for theologians, and especially for Anglo theologians from the United States, to aspire to "expand the borders" in the sense of denying the importance of difference or pushing toward all-inclusive control of what is presently "foreign" or beyond our reach.[137]

The expansion of borders is therefore not solely harmless and desirable, but should be couched in a contextual argument in order to determine for whom it is appropriate to cross which borders and for which purpose. I am inspired by the work of Shannon Sullivan, who works on the connection between space, place and race.[138] By employing her work we venture into the realm of critical race theory. Critical race theory works with the idea of whiteness, which denotes the unchecked privileges that arise from being white in a raced society structured around the ideal of whiteness.[139] I use this analysis of race relationships in order to research how the crossing of borders can easily turn into an expansive usurpation of space. Space and place are oftentimes not neutral, but racially determined. In other words, places that are seemingly neutral from the perspective of whiteness, such as a high end boutique shop, turn out to be raced upon closer scrutiny, as multiple stories attest the sanctioning of black bodies in these spaces.[140] Spaces are demarcated by sometimes subtle, sometimes stark borders. As a consequence, spaces are not neutral. One's racial privilege determines how easy or how difficult it becomes to move freely across spaces. It is therefore a racial privilege, the privilege of whiteness, which comes with the idea that all spaces should be freely inhabitable for them. In the words of Sullivan:

> As ontologically expansive, white people tend to act and think as if all spaces – whether geographical, physical, linguistic, economic, spiritual, bodily, or otherwise – are or should be available for them to move in and out of as they wish.[141]

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[137] Patrick, 'Markers, Barriers, and Frontiers', 8.

[138] Shannon Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

[139] Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

[140] Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness*, 144–46.

[141] Ibid., 10.

This quote suggests that the habitual forms of whiteness consider place as more neutral and devoid of racial connotation than most locations are in reality. A foundational feature of whiteness is to consider both geographical and symbolic spaces open to be entered at will. If white people nevertheless experience restriction in entering a concrete location, for example when considering entering a neighborhood that is perceived to be 'unsafe,' this limitation is oftentimes considered to be upsetting the 'natural' course of events. Yet, this privilege is oftentimes not granted equally to black people: to move freely across spaces and neighborhoods without being scrutinized as being out of place.[142]

2.5.5. *Contextual Border Crossing*

The emphasis on border crossing as an incentive for mission should therefore be contextually determined. Even though the evidence I have explored seems to point in the direction of the necessity of following Christ and the early church in border-crossing movements of reconciliation, one should carefully bear in mind that not all instances of border crossing in the past, nor in the present, are determined by the desire to follow Christ in acts of *kenosis*. Instead, the theological motif might easily be conflated with the expansive motif as described by Sullivan. The virtue of discernment is therefore needed in order to learn which borders to cross and which border crossings are in reality border transgressions. This dissertation is written from the perspective of someone who has benefited from undeserved white privilege in the Dutch society, since this society considers whiteness the default option for living and being Dutch. In addition, this dissertation has been written within a theological institution that, although in connection with the World Church, is characterized by a majority of staff and students who enjoy the subtle but profound benefits of white privilege. The warnings issued against border transgression are therefore primarily to be read as contextual: in the Dutch context, those who enjoy the privileges of whiteness, should be particularly careful not to conflate border transgression with border crossing in the way of Christ.

2.6. THE PLANETARY WORLD

This section reprises the idea of the planetary world, which within the discipline of missiology already has been proposed by Kraemer (1888-1965) in 1938. This section argues why it might be worthwhile to revisit Kraemer's idea of planetarity and bring his thought into conversation with recent articulations of planetarity, since these insights have not yet been made fruitful for missiology.

As has been argued in *Together towards Life*, the cosmological dimension of

[142] Ibid., 149.

mission praxis is a new focal point in missiological reflection.[143] Aided by a pneumatological framework, the locus of mission is the whole of creation. The general upsurge in pneumatological reflection spurs new reflections on how the Spirit is at work in the whole of creation, thereby focusing on the 'cosmic, creational, and global scope of the work of the Spirit.'[144] The fifth mark of mission, as formulated in the reflection process of the Anglican Church on the marks of contemporary mission, focuses explicitly on the dimension of creation care by affirming the need 'to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and renew the life of the earth.'[145] The focus on the whole of creation leads to the affirmation of the interrelatedness of all life and the abandonment of a solely anthropocentric viewpoint on mission.[146] As a consequence, as is affirmed by *Together towards Life*, expansive paradigms of mission are becoming obsolete.[147] In addition, the recent development of eco-theology, a contextual theology that takes into account the widespread ecological crisis,[148] leads to new and surprising reflections on the task of theology in the face of the interrelatedness of the natural and the non-natural world. The scope of theology has recently broadened considerably by virtue of these new developments, although important forerunners to this development can be identified. The overview of Dave Bookless shows that a shallow distinction between a former paradigm of anthropologic mission and a contemporary cosmologically focused mission, is untenable.[149] Consequently I engage the work of Kraemer with the purpose of showing how the idea of a planetary world surfaces in his *magnum opus* 'The Christian Message in a non-Christian World.'[150] Kraemer is not the first to put the idea of a planetary world forward, as it surfaces already in 1934 in the work of Archibald Baker.[151]

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[143] 'Together towards Life'.
[144] Amos Yong, "Primed for the Spirit: Creation, Redemption and the Missio Spiritus," *International Review of Mission* 100, no. 2 (2011): 356.
[145] Calvin B. DeWitt, 'To Strive to Safeguard the Integrity of Creation and Sustain and Renew the Life of the Earth (I)', in *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*, ed. Andrew F. Walls and Cathy Ross (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008), 84–93; Dave Bookless, 'To Strive to Safeguard the Integrity of Creation and Renew the Life of the Earth (II)', in *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*, ed. Andrew F. Walls and Cathy Ross (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008), 94–104.
[146] Yong, 'Primed for the Spirit', 363.
[147] 'Together towards Life', para. 5.
[148] Celia Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2008), x.
[149] Bookless, 'To Strive to Safeguard the Integrity of Creation and Renew the Life of the Earth (II)', 96–97.
[150] Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*. Reprinted with a introduction by Jan A. B. Jongeneel and revised appendixes in 2009. H. Kraemer with an introduction by J.A.B Jongeneel, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, Missiological Classics Series 6 (Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2009). References in the remainder of the text are to the original 1938 edition.
[151] Archibald Baker writes: "The former regional worlds are giving way to what we shall call a planetary world of interrelated activities, in which the aggression of Europe is being met by a new self-

2.6.1. *Hendrik Kraemer's Planetary World*

'The Christian Message in a non-Christian World' was intended as a study document for the 1938 conference of the International Missionary Council in Tambaram in India. Its primary focus is on a description of non-Christian religions and ideologies. Although the theology of Kraemer is in some aspects conservative, Jan Jongeneel argues for the progressive character of the book, because Kraemer prophetically engaged and denounced the rising ideologies in the period immediately preceding the Second World War.[152] The academic study of the work of Kraemer subsequently has primarily concentrated upon his theology of religions.[153] It is my intention however to search in the work of Kraemer for elements, in this case the idea of the planetary world, that can be critically and contextually applied to contemporary mission theology. Kraemer structures his elaborate work by first outlining the contemporary context, after which he discusses both the character of the Christian faith and the non-Christian faiths, leading to a discussion on the missionary approach of the church. In the first chapter, 'A world in transition,' Kraemer describes the world as thoroughly interconnected and interdependent. As a result of modern inventions in the area of communications, the world has become increasingly more connected. The result of this increasing connectedness is that approaches such as 'localism' or 'regionalism' are outdated. One single planetary world has manifested itself.[154] A certain kind of 'common world culture' seems to be emerging according to Kraemer, resulting from the 'unification of the world and the resultant process of world-wide interpenetration in its material and spiritual aspects.'[155] The emergence of a planetary world does not however mean that the whole world experiences unity. Rather, Kraemer notices a profound paradox. Although on the one hand, unity and interconnectedness are important characteristics of the world, on the other hand, the experience of disorder has also been

assertion in Asia or Africa which insists upon giving expression to its own life and making its own contribution to the future of mankind" "Archibald Gillies Baker, 'Christian Missions and a New World Culture.', 1934, http://dcommon.bu.edu/xmlui/handle/2144/630. See for more information on the context of Baker, Robert A. Wright, *A World Mission: Canadian Protestantism and the Quest for a New International Order, 1918-1939* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 172–74.

[152] Jan A. B. Jongeneel, 'Hendrik Kraemer's Christian Message in a Non-Christian World: A Magnum Opus after Seventy-Five Years', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 37, no. 4 (2013).

[153] Dirk Griffioen, *Christelijke zending en wereldgodsdiensten: De godsdienstheologie van Gustav Warneck, Hendrik Kraemer en J.E. Lesslie Newbigin in context*, MISSION 44 (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2007). See for a further bibliography on the reception history of *The Christian Message*: Jongeneel, 'Hendrik Kraemer's Christian Message in a Non-Christian World'. See for a theological appropriation the first chapter in the following book: Damayanthi T. Niles, *Worshipping at the Feet of Our Ancestors: Hendrik Kraemer and the Making of Contextual Theology in South Asia* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2012).

[154] Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, 3.

[155] Ibid., 37.

aggravated, leading to an unprecedented state of 'disconcordant disunity.'[156] Kraemer subsequently outlines the implications for the mission work of the church. One of the implications, as he describes it, is that the whole world should be considered to be a mission field. For Kraemer, considering the whole world as a mission field is not just a rhetorical feature, but is to be taken literally. As a result, the distinction between home base and mission field cannot be maintained.[157] Yet it is striking that Kraemer himself has not been able to totally overcome the tendency to speak about home base and mission field. When discovering the need to recover anew the motive and purpose of mission, Kraemer is still caught in the distinction between the two.[158] This occasional reference could either be caused by the failure to properly incorporate the consequences of his own thoughts, or by the insufficient possibilities to frame his ideas in innovative language. The plea to consider the whole world a mission field goes hand in hand with a sharp criticism of the state of current affairs in mission. Kraemer compares the proceedings of the church with those of the secular colonies, since a majority of Christians at that time were of the opinion that the work of missions bears a close resemblance to the colonial enterprise. In practice, mission efforts were seen at that time as a form of colonization with a religious perspective and goal. Many of Kraemer's contemporaries understood everything that happened outside their familiar home country to be fundamentally foreign, despite the impressive interconnectedness of the world Kraemer sketched earlier. Kraemer profoundly declares:

> So mission fields, although, of course, connected with a host of purer associations of religious and moral quality, involuntarily – this must be stressed, because it makes it all the more important – take on in the mind the aspect of religious colonies.[159]

The charge of constructing religious colonies is a serious accusation to the church at that time. I consider Kraemer's work therefore prophetic, since he critiques the disastrous influence of mission praxis with a colonial mind-set. Yet Kraemer levels the charge of constructing religious colonies mainly because constructing them fails to take into account the unified character of the world and the rapid spread of the gospel worldwide. Nevertheless, it is striking to notice that Kraemer does not condemn the conceptualization of religious colonies in and of itself. He merely denounces it because the circumstances have changed. According to him, it was natural that the thought of 'religious colonies' arose in the time frame when the results of missionary work were not as profound and when the world was not yet considered an interdependent whole. From the perspective of the 21st century, it is

[156] Ibid., 2.
[157] Ibid., 16–17.
[158] "Surveying the missionary problem at the home base and in the field all indications point in one direction: the call to consecrate ourselves anew to the great missionary task by fundamental re-thinking the missionary principles and methods (…)." Ibid., 59.
[159] Ibid., 37.

disappointing that Kraemer does not probe further towards the root causes of a colonizing mind set, but mainly attributes this mind-set to external circumstances. It remains worthwhile that Kraemer firmly rejects a territorial approach to mission. Another factor that feeds into his denouncement of territorial ideas of mission is his dismissal of the *Corpus Christianum* and the Protestant contribution in maintaining the *Corpus Christianum*. The fundamental problem with the idea of the *Corpus Christianium* is that its roots are essentially pagan. It proceeds from the idea that a religion, or a cult, as Kraemer calls it here, meets the validation of a specific community and becomes thereby obligatory for the whole of the community. As a result, the freedom of an individual to choose one's own religion of adherence is reduced because a certain cult is forced upon her/him by virtue of her/his membership of a particular community. The idea of a *Corpus Christianum* is therefore thoroughly tied to concrete territories. Kraemer discerns the idea of the *Corpus Christianum* in certain branches of 'territorial Protestantisms,'[160] which are stubbornly clinging to old parochial perspectives on Christianity. Kraemer antedates the ground breaking work of Andrew Walls[161] by half a century when he points to the pagan roots of the ideal of the *Corpus Christianum*.

The work of Kraemer is characterized by a considerable ambiguity in terms of its treatment of colonialism. On the one hand, he was ahead of his time by pointing out the tendency of churches to treat missionary work as resembling the establishment of religious colonies. On the other hand, as is witnessed in his discussion on the American mind set, his evaluation of the American history is deeply problematic: 'America practically was an unoccupied country that had to be conquered and subdued by the discipline of the combined efforts of the human intellect and the human will.'[162] From a decolonizing perspective, these ideas on the necessity of colonization and the subscription to the myth of the empty land, are deeply problematic, as I have argued earlier in this chapter. Although his work is imbued by a colonial spirit, it is still ahead of its time in his willingness to denounce territorial Protestantisms and by the way he takes the idea of a planetary world seriously. I take therefore the idea of the planetary world seriously as an impetus in my own work to search for relevant time frames in which spatiality can be imagined in theology of mission. Yet, in light of my section on postcolonial geography, engaging the concept of a planetary world can only be fruitful if it is done in tandem with a postcolonial sensitivity.

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160 Ibid., 27. Kraemer's plural is rather surprising here. It feels as if it antedates contemporary emphases on plurality in Christianity even to the point of speaking about different Christianities.

161 Walls, 'Christianity in the Non-Western World: A Study in the Serial Nature of Christian Expansion'. First published in *Studies in World Christianity* 1 (no. 1, 1995): 1-25. Significantly enough, Walls does not mention Kraemer in his article. If Walls would have done so, it would have been possible for Kraemer to be given credit for his thoughts.

162 Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, 47.

2.6.2. *Postcolonial Planetarity*

I propose therefore to take the conclusions of Kraemer one step further and to engage with recent literature on planetarity. One of the differences between Kraemer and recent articulations of a planetary world is that Kraemer holds that the world only recently has become planetary. He distinguishes between the epoch of the regional worlds, with their concomitant autarchy and isolation on the one hand, and between the epoch of the planetary world. Yet, the emergence of a planetary world has not done away with dangerous pseudo-absolutes, but has rather fueled their dangerous proliferation. These pseudo-absolutes, among which Kraemer reckons 'race, nation, classless society, a "holy" or "eternal" country'[163] are increasingly dangerous in a planetary world, since their devastating effects are likely to have worldwide consequences. Kraemer's words might very well be considered prophetic, given the worldwide carnage of WWII, which followed very shortly upon the publication of *The Christian Message in a non-Christian World* in 1938. Since Kraemer is critical of pseudo-absolutes such as race and nationality, his commentary is still relevant in the contemporary world. Yet, more recent formulations of a planetary world, as put forward by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and recently commented upon fruitfully by postcolonial theologians, are more fundamentally planetary: a planetarity that focuses on irreducibly alterity. As a concept, planetarity denounces the unrelenting stress on the global and globalization. As Spivak famously claims, it is impossible to live in the global, since the global is an abstract concept that celebrates global market economy and as such is ill equipped to focus attention on the oppressive character of increasing globalization. In contrast, the planetary 'signifies an alterity that does not derive from us, a system that is beyond.'[164] The emphasis on alterity within planetarity allows us to stay present with real bodies, who always resist abstraction. The emphasis on alterity signals the willingness to open up the perspective from multiple margins in order to shun away from any association with hegemonic systems of thought, most poignantly the association with colonial thought.[165] The alterity that opens up with planetarity goes hand in hand with the presence of the irreducible subalternity.[166] Planetarity resists abstraction because it points to what is 'utterly present, irreducible, unrepeatable, and incommensurate [sic, EDH] local.'[167] In addition, planetary

[163] Ibid., 8.
[164] Laurel C. Schneider, 'The Love We Cannot Not Want: A Response to Kwok Pui-Lan', in *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera Rivera (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 47.
[165] Pui-lan, 'What Has Love to Do with It? Planetarity, Feminism, and Theology', 32.
[166] Stephen D. Moore, 'Situating Spivak', in *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera Rivera (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 20–21.
[167] Schneider, 'The Love We Cannot Not Want: A Response to Kwok Pui-Lan', 47.

awareness is closely connected to planetary love. In the definition of Kang, planetary love is the love that transcends boundaries, localities and differences between people.[168]

The planetary dimension in this dissertation entails therefore the willingness to abandon the shallow idea of the global, and instead to embrace the planetary as a concept that espouses both a deep-seated interdependence and interconnectedness. Yet, planetarity is never a celebration of interdependence and interconnectedness in and of itself, because planetarity always asks the question regarding the impact of these connections for the whole of the planet, thereby eschewing a solely anthropocentric perspective. The adoption of a planetary perspective is therefore particularly well-suited to address the contemporary postcolonial, yet simultaneously neo-colonial situation.

2.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to research those spatial metaphors in the discourse of mission that, as Leavelle has argued, derive their meaning to a certain extent from the connection that exists between the colonial enterprise and geographical imaginations. This chapter builds on the first chapter by delving deeper into the nature of World Christianity. It enlists the help of postcolonial geography as a conversation partner in order to benefit from additional resources in the search for a perspective of postcolonial missiology that transcends a geographic, area-bound perspective of mission. The work of James Sidaway proved especially helpful in this respect since he explicitly leaves room open for postcolonial geography to benefit from resources developed within the discipline of theology, thereby allowing for a mutually beneficial exchange. With reference to the work of Appadurai, it has become clear that the tendency to divide the world into distinct areas has a colonial rationale behind it: the drive to divide and control. Another tendency in which geographical difference becomes indicative of moral and ontological difference is apparent within the discourse of tropicalism. This twin discourse of Orientalism highlights the way in which people in tropical regions of the earth have been othered, by either casting them in a negative light as lazy and indolent, or otherwise regarding them as innocent in an Eden-like state of being. I consider this tropical discourse to be an important new addition to missiology since the recent study of this discourse has not yet been incorporated within the discipline and because it provides an alternative model of othering compared to Orientalism. In this respect, it takes some of the weight from the shoulders of Orientalism, since Orientalism runs the risk of being used as a catch-all conception of colonial othering, while the

[168] Namsoon Kang, *Cosmopolitan Theology: Reconstituting Planetary Hospitality, Neighbor-Love, and Solidarity in an Uneven World* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2013), 16.

othering through tropicalism has its own specific dimensions, such as the connection between climate zones and industriousness.

In light of a criticism of the global, I have proposed, stimulated both by Sidaway and Spivak, an espousal of the planetary as a helpful way of imagining the worldwide dimension of living on earth since the planetary has the ability to bring an ethical imperative with it. As a consequence, the planetary category is able to overcome a sole focus on the anthropocentric dimension of life. The ethical dimension of the planetary feeds directly into an attempt in this chapter and the previous chapter to do justice to World Christianity, especially epistemic justice, in order to overcome the pervasive legacy of identifying World Christianity with Euro-American biases.

The second part of the chapter studied the spatial metaphors of the mission field, homeland, frontier, border and planetary world in order to delineate to what extent these ideas are salvageable or should be abandoned in a postcolonial context. Here, I scrutinized the meaning of the mission field. I outlined how the history of usage surrounding these terms is connected with the construction of the other in concrete and fixed localities. In a postcolonial world, the attraction of the field as geographic metaphor should therefore give way to articulations of the mission encounter which undo the harm of the objectification of the religious and cultural other. With Gupta and Ferguson, I have therefore called for the defetishation of the term field.

The mission field's twin concept, the homeland, has been analyzed as a construct that must give way to the borderland as locus of engagement. Destabilization of the scheme of home / foreign can open new perspectives. As a consequence, the imagined homeland can never be the primary ordering principle from which to rethink mission theology.

The frontier proved to be an inherently problematic idea because of the role it has played within the delineation of civilization and savagery in the history of mission. The inner logic of the frontier dictates that the frontier needs to be pushed perpetually, and thus is intricately connected with an expansive framework. Even though some authors are attempting to refashion the idea of the frontier, I would much rather abandon the term completely in order to stay clear from any associations that might creep in when the term is used.

While I conclude that the mission field, homeland and the frontier are not at home in a postcolonial mission theology, there is still room to propose border-crossing as an incentive for mission, as long as acts of border crossing are contextually determined. Even though the necessity of border-crossing in an act of reconciliation is an integral component of mission, the contextual nature of border-crossing should make clear to what extent particular border-crossing moments are conflated with an expansive motif instead of resulting from the following of Christ in acts of kenosis.

Lastly, I built on the idea of the planetary world, both from resources in post-colonial geography and through tracing the origins of this idea in the discipline of missiology. The planetary world surfaces already in the work of Kraemer, but is, in his work, placed in a distinction between an epoch in which the world had not yet become planetary and a newly discovered planetary world. I consider the contribution of Kraemer important since it precedes contemporary attention to the global. I pair, therefore, the ideas of Kraemer with theorists (such as Spivak) who reflect on the planetary world after the epoch of the global. Taken together, these articulations of the planetary world conjure up an image of worldwide interconnectedness joined with an attention to concrete, bodily experiences of irreducible otherness.

In this chapter, I have researched some of the spatial metaphors mentioned by Leavelle as playing a pivotal role in the construction of colonial relationships. She mentions two other spatial metaphors, margin and center. The centrality of these metaphors warrants a discussion in the next chapter, which will build forth on the findings of this chapter. In the first place, I will search in the next chapter for a new way of theorizing about marginality without reifying an essentialist distinction between marginalized and privileged. Second, I will employ a Christological lens in order to uncover the meaning of the location of marginality within the heart of Christian theology.

3. Marginality

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Marginality as a focal point in mission recently gained momentum because of the publication of *Together towards Life*, which explicitly claims to subvert older paradigms of mission that are characterized by mission to the margins instead of mission from the margins.[1] The shift in the social location of mission signals a willingness to engage with strands of theology and the interpretation of biblical texts that have hitherto been sidelined with respect to theological discourses. In this sense, the preferential option for the margins in *Together towards Life* can be seen as the culmination of a process in which attention to marginalization comes to the fore. The upsurge in interest in marginality in mission is also manifested in the theme of the call for papers for the 13th Assembly of the International Association for Mission Studies held in August 2012: 'Migration, Human Dislocation and the Good News: Margins as the Center in Christian Mission.'[2] In his opening address, Jonathan Bonk claimed the margins to be the center of all Christian mission. His Christological interpretation, drawing upon Matthew 25, focuses on Jesus as judging humanity on the basis of 'how the socially disenfranchised, politically marginalized, and economically destitute figured in their priorities.'[3] Putting the margins at the center requires the abandonment of a territorial perspective on mission in favor of an approach which focuses on the interrelatedness of humanity and a preferential option for the marginalized and disenfranchised.

The upsurge of interest in marginality as a focal point for mission can be explained by an interest in marginality shown in a wide range of disciplinary approaches. The concept of marginality was already proposed in 1961 by Everett V. Stonequist, who argued that a marginal person is someone who is located at the margins of two cultures.[4] In theology / missiology, the history of the emergence of marginality as an organizing principle has not been traced thoroughly. From the available sources, one can conjure that the emergence of liberation theology has

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[1] 'Together towards Life'.

[2] 'Migration, Human Dislocation, and the Good News: Margins as the Center in Christian Mission', *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* 28, no. 2 (2011): 149–50.

[3] Jonathan J. Bonk, '"Whose Head Is This, and Whose title?" (Matthew 22:15-22) - Migration, Human Dislocation, and the Good News: Margins as the Center in Christian Mission' (Presidential Address, IAMS 13th Quadrennial Conference, Toronto, 15 August 2011), https://sites.google.com/a/iams2012.org/toronto-2012/.

[4] Paul Hertig, 'The Multi-Ethnic Journeys of Jesus in Matthew: Margin-Center Dynamics', *Missiology: An International Review* 26, no. 1 (1998): 23.

played an important role, by advocating for the preferential option for the poor,[5] but even before the advent of liberation theology, Bonhoeffer's ethics provided a strong impetus to rethink ethics from below, in the crucible of history.[6] Furthermore, the World Council of Churches has played a leading part in the active inclusion of marginalized people through its incorporation of programs paying attention to disability[7] and the plight of indigenous peoples,[8] resulting in theologies which are effectually being articulated from the margins. In addition, resources are available from theologians who take a biographical approach to theology and consequently theologize from their own experience of marginality.[9] The experience of marginality is both mediated by the suppressed nature of Christianity in parts of Asia and by those theologians who experienced marginalization through migrating to another country, as is indicated in the work of both Jung Young Lee and Peter Phan.[10] Another strand of influence that could be traced is the emergence of Pentecostalism. Amos Yong argues for a theology from below and from the margins, in order to arrive at a truly postcolonial Pneumatological articulation of theology.[11] In mission, advocacy for marginality is connected to the wish to frame mission in relational terms and to forego centrist claims on mission.[12]

In the Dutch context, the 2011 book by Wim Dekker, *Missionair en Marginaal* (i.e. missional and marginal) spawned upon its publication a public debate about the marginal nature of the church.[13] The significance of the book lies in the bold

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[5] Kollman, 'Remembering Evangelization'.

[6] Paul S. Chung, *Hermeneutical Theology and the Imperative of Public Ethics: Confessing Christ in Post-Colonial World Christianity* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 299–300.

[7] Samuel George, 'Voices and Visions from the Margins on Mission and Unity: A Disability-Informed Reading of the Pauline Metaphor of the Church as the Body of Christ', *International Review of Mission*, 2011, 96–103.

[8] Global Platform for Theological Reflection 2010, 'Unity and Mission Today: Voices and Visions from the Margins', 2010, http://www.oikoumene.org/de/dokumentation/documents/oerk-programme/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/just-and-inclusive-communities/global-platform-for-theological-reflection-2010.html.

[9] Felix Wilfred, *Margins: Site of Asian Theologies* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2008).

[10] Lee, Marginality; Peter C. Phan and Jung Young Lee, eds., Journeys at the Margin: Toward an Autobiographical Theology in American-Asian Perspective (Collegeville: The Order of St. Benedict, 1999).

[11] Amos Yong, 'Many Tongues, Many Practices: Pentecost and Theology of Mission at 2010', in *Mission After Christendom: Emergent Themes in Contemporary Mission*, ed. Ogbu Kalu, Peter Vethanayagamony, and Edmund Kee-Fook Chia (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 43–58.

[12] Christopher L. Heuertz and Christine D. Pohl, *Friendship at the Margins: Discovering Mutuality in Service and Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010).

[13] Willem Dekker, *Marginaal en missionair: Kleine theologie voor een krimpende kerk* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2011). In his 2011 dissertation, Dekker traces the question of the absence of God in contemporary society through the work of the theologians Pannenberg, Miskotte and Houtepen. Willem Dekker, *Afwezigheid van God: een onderzoek naar antwoorden bij W. Pannenberg, K.H. Miskotte en A. Houtepen* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 2011).

juxtaposition of missional and marginal: the missional nature of the church is mediated by the marginal nature of the church. Dekker's approach conveys similarities with theological approaches that welcome the commencement of the age of post-Christendom. The consequent marginalization of the church is evaluated in a positive light because the church is reverting back to its pre-Constantine setting, which is considered to be the desired setting of the church.[14] The discourse on the marginality of the church, as is advocated in *Missionair en Marginaal* is derived in part from Anglo-American articulations on secularization, the waning influence of the church and the church's consequential marginalization. This discourse is qualitatively different from articulations of marginality that are closely connected to a concern for representing actual voices on the margins, as defined in subalternity studies. The difference lies for example in the ecclesiocentric character of the proposal of Dekker, in which the primary dimension of marginality is interpreted in terms of the social location of the church.

Another significant trend that feeds into the attention to marginality is the discussion of marginality in cultural studies, as can be seen, for example, in the collection of essays edited by Rutledge Dennis, which focus on how marginality manifests itself through intersections of race, class and gender.[15] The interest in marginality is in this context at home in progressive agendas which attempt to provide liberative and emancipatory prospects for marginalized people. Notably, the appreciation of marginality is markedly different and less positively colored[16] compared to theological articulations, which tend to focus on how the church is being renewed by the agency of marginalized people.

In religious studies, the interest in interreligious dialogue has led to ascribing positive features to marginality. Marginality is within religious studies primarily interpreted in terms of being far removed from centrist investments in religious traditions. Especially from the perspective of women, who often have experienced marginalization in their religious tradition, interreligious encounters might prove fruitful. The flourishing of religious dialogue by women is enabled by a recognition of shared experiences, which arrive from marginalized positions. Dialogue becomes a dialogue of life, and is less concerned with the articulation of religious doctrines.[17]

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[14] Williams Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004); Williams Stuart Murray, *Church After Christendom* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004).

[15] Rutledge M. Dennis, ed., *Marginality, Power and Social Structure Issues in Race, Class, and Gender Analysis* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2005).

[16] See for a concrete example of transforming marginality: Daniel M. Goldstein, 'Dancing on the Margins: Transforming Urban Marginality Through Popular Performance', *City & Society* 9, no. 1 (1997): 201–15.

[17] Helene Egnell, 'The Messiness of Actual Existence: Feminist Contributions to Theology of Religions', in *Feminist Approaches to Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. Annette Esser et al., Journal of the European Society of Women in Theological Research 17 (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 13–28.

Lastly, as is attested in postcolonial articulations, an interrogation of the constructions of metropolis and periphery, center and margins has been placed on the agenda. A postcolonial scrutiny of the interplay of metropolitan sites as the center of empire and the construction of the colonial periphery indicates that the periphery has had a profound power to define and shape the metropolitan center. Center and periphery are therefore not two static concepts, but are instead considered as mutually constitutive and interlocking in a myriad of ways. Recent postcolonial research has contributed therefore to the destabilization of the hierarchical construct of the center and periphery.[18]

The meanings attached to the concept of marginality differ, as we have seen, widely across the various disciplines. The construction of marginality is therefore multi-layered and at times contradictory. Especially within the discipline of missiology, little investment has been made in the proper delineation of the boundaries of the concept. Without a well-articulated definition of marginality, it becomes commonplace to work with a binary conception of margins and center, instead of paying attention to the fluid nature of marginality which allows for multiple centers and margins and their constant negotiation and interaction. Attention to marginality in missiology will prove to be especially worthwhile, because various strands of thinking about marginality are coming together in the discipline. In the first place, arriving from lived experience, the concept of marginality proves to be significant, because of the growth of Christianity from social locations which are not traditionally associated with power and influence. One such example is the growth of Pentecostalism.[19] Secondly, missiology, as a theological discipline, has the option to drink deep from the wells of theological traditions that have identified marginality as a defining feature of their theologies. These theological articulations often foreground Christological themes such as the Galilee motive in the gospel stories, thereby developing a robust theology of marginality anchored in the life of Jesus. Thirdly, missiology has been, in its historical and contemporary entanglements with empire, imbricated with constructions of metropolitan sites and peripheries. The Euro-centric tradition in missiology, drawing on both implicit and explicit hierarchies of race, class and gender, has contributed to the construction of metropolitan sites and their peripheries. Consequently, postcolonial missiology should critically address these fabrications and should actively work from the perspective of subaltern peoples, in order to overcome hegemonic approaches to mission.[20]

The present chapter locates itself at the intersection of these three strands. The goal of this chapter is to articulate a theology of marginality that, on the one hand, draws from resources in Christology, in order to show how marginality as an in-

[18] Hall, Cultures of Empire; Bhabha, The Location of Culture.
[19] Yong, *The Missiological Spirit*.
[20] Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*.

terpretive theme arises out of the Biblical texts. On the other hand, as I have indicated above, a conceptual clarification is called for, in order to work with the idea of marginality as effecting positive change without succumbing to static and binary ideas on marginality. The question I hope to answer is how missiology could work with a modified perspective of marginality that does not give in to a shallow distinction between those who are considered marginal and those who have the power to ascribe marginality to others. Yet, the problem of ascribing marginality to others and thereby assuming a position of superiority cannot be completely solved in the present chapter.[21] A next chapter will take up the question on how to avoid monolithic conceptions of marginality further and propose a theology of vulnerability as a shared human condition. Vulnerability, interpreted in the context of interdependence and relationality, safeguards the development of a theology of marginality which will not allow for a strong distinction between those who are considered marginal and those who have assumed the power to depict others as marginal.

My interlocutors with regard to the theological foundation of marginality are those theologians who work with Christological resources to make clear a) the importance of the social location of Jesus Christ and b) the marginalized and hybrid nature of Jesus-Christ. This discussion takes place in two clusters, each starting with a foundational figure for the discussions at hand, namely Orlando Costas on the one hand, and Kosuke Koyama on the other hand. The work of Costas, Virgilio Elizondo and Roberto Goizueta originated from existential and pastoral encounters and lived experiences as and with Hispanics navigating the pernicious border and borderlands between the United States and Latin America. This particular social location turns out to be fertile soil to reflect on Christ's social location. Costas, an evangelical Hispanic, made the death of Jesus 'outside the gate' of Jerusalem central in this theology of the periphery. Secondly, I will mine the work of Elizondo and Goizueta, both liberation theologians, in order to uncover the meaning of Galilee as a site where marginalization is enacted.[22] The second cluster starts with the foundational work of Koyama, and features theologians who have navigated in their personal life the hybridity ensuing from living and working in the United States while being originally from the Asian continent. The theme of hybridity and border crossing turns out subsequently to be a foundational theme in some of their work. Koyoma provides us with an articulation of the role of emotions in the discovery of Jesus in the periphery.[23] Koyama works with the idea that

[21] One of the most complete, full book length treatment of marginality in mission has been written by Anthony Gittins. I will use his work therefore as an important interlocutors in this chapter. Anthony J. Gittins, *Ministry at the Margins: Strategy and Spirituality for Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002).

[22] Virgilio P. Elizondo, 'Jesus the Galilean Jew in Mestizo Theology', *Theological Studies* 70, no. 2 (2009): 262–280; Goizueta, 'Christ of the Borderlands'.

[23] Kōsuke Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999).

the periphery has become the center because Christ himself has moved to the periphery. The question that emerges through the discussion of his work is whether this particular conception of reversal of center and periphery holds water in the face of emerging theories on the multileveled, interdependent and fluid character of center and periphery. The work of Lee and Phan answer the question on how marginality as a defining characteristic of Christ enters the heart of Christology by theorizing about the marginalization of Christ ensuing from the crossing of the divine-human border. Their perspective will become an integral element of my own search for the meaning of marginality in defining Christology, since they push the borders of the implications of marginality by bringing the margins into the very nature of Christ.[24] Lastly, I search in the work of Paul Yonggap Jeong for clues on how the concept of weakness, as a cognate of marginalization, has permeated the gospel stories and the history of Christianity.[25] The overview of these authors will allow me to draw conclusions with respect to how mission from the margins can be anchored within a wide range of perspectives on Christology. Secondly, the overview of these authors will allow me to be more specific in how to avoid a monolithic conception of marginalization. This, in turn, allows me to gain a perspective on how Christ can function both as a focal point of Christianity, while also retaining his marginal status.

After the discussion of these authors, I will review *Together towards Life* in order to determine if there is something additional to gain from this document for a Christological foundation of marginality in mission. Furthermore, two additional questions need to be answered. In the first place, how is this emphasis on marginality constructed within a postmodern framework? In other words, how can the Christological ideas of these theologians working in contexts of hybridity be brought into conversation with the current postmodern climate? I will take into consideration the work of Joerg Rieger, who has argued at length for the epistemological priority of the marginalized in a postmodern context. Secondly, what are the implications for a mission theology with marginality at the forefront in one's Christological design? And how will this further bear upon a definition of marginality? I will consider the work of Anthony Gittins, who advances the perspective of Jesus as the marginal missionary.[26]

Building upon the insights gained from these theologians, this chapter will tackle the question of definition further by taking elements from intersectionality theory into account. Intersectionality theory is the theoretical articulation of how the intersections between the vectors of race, class, gender and sexual orientation

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[24] Phan, 'Crossing the Borders'; Lee, Marginality.
[25] Jeong, Mission from a Position of Weakness.
[26] Gittins, *Ministry at the Margins*; Anthony J. Gittins, *Bread for the Journey: The Mission of Transformation and the Transformation of Mission* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2001). Previously published in 1993 by Orbis Books, Maryknoll.

contribute to marginalization, discrimination and oppression. The analysis of various forms of intersectionality is an important tool in feminist theory and anti-racist theory.[27] Intersectionality analysis could prove to be suited for clarifying concrete instances of marginalization, because this sort of analysis unearths how oppression is structured along the intersections of multiple axes. By understanding marginality from the framework of intersectionality, I hope to avoid any essentialist reductions of marginality.

3.2. CHRISTOLOGY AND MARGINALITY

3.2.1. *Orlando Costas: Outside the Gate*

First of all, the foundational work of Costas (1942-1987) offers us a perspective on the periphery from an eschatological approach. Costas was born in Puerto Rico and identified as a Hispanic and a Protestant. He confidently moved between ecumenical, evangelical and liberation-theological circles, calling American evangelicals out on their 'captivity' to entrepreneurial methods in their approach to mission.[28] In this section, I will discuss the Costas's work regarding the periphery as a new place for salvation in order to compare his work with the other authors I have singled out for analysis.

Costas shouldn't be regarded as a formal postcolonial thinker. Interpreting him as postcolonial would be anachronistic because Costas died prior to the advent of postcolonial thought within theology. His anti-imperial stance derives in part from witnessing the overthrow of the Dominican democratically elected president during the 1955-56 crisis.[29] Costas was able to incorporate insights from liberation theology by being more open than most evangelical thinkers of that time to the goal of liberation theology, while at the same time retaining his own evangelical fervor and emphasis on personal faith.[30]

Costas himself was, during his short life, increasingly in demand as a commentator of US-based evangelical mission practices because of his ability to clearly communicate a praxis-oriented, Hispanic-influenced perspective while being well versed in the ways of evangelical life and speech. He self-consciously writes from

[27] Jennifer C. Nash, 'Re-Thinking Intersectionality', *Feminist Review* 89, no. 1 (2008): 1–15. Leslie McCall, 'The Complexity of Intersectionality', *Signs* 30, no. 3 (2005): 1771–1800.

[28] His essay on this topic was selected as one of the landmark essays in mission and world Christianity. Orlando E. Costas, 'Captivity and Liberation in the Modern Missionary Movement', in *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity*, ed. Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig, American Society of Missiology Series, no. 43 (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009), 33–45.

[29] Samuel Escobar, 'The Legacy of Orlando Costas', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25, no. 2 (2001): 50–51.

[30] Samuel Escobar, 'Evangelical Theology in Latin America: The Development of a Missiological Christology', *Missiology: An International Review* 19, no. 3 (1991): 317–18.

the perspective of the Hispanic minority in the United States, one of the groups who have been sidelined in American missionary history or mainly been regarded as recipients instead of actors in mission, together with Native Americans and African Americans.[31] Only when one has experienced marginalization from the dominant discourse her/himself, does the possibility open up to write from a sidelined perspective, and Costas indeed describes his life from the perspective of various peripheries.[32] in the first place due to his Hispanic origin and, more importantly for his theological work, his willingness to locate himself within the margin of theology. Costas' work on the epistle to the Hebrews and the significance of Jesus' death outside the city limits of Jerusalem can therefore be read as a critique against the Christendom mentality prevalent in American evangelical Christianity.

Costas's hermeneutical basis for the priority of the periphery rests squarely within the epistle to the Hebrews. In particular, Hebrews 13:12: 'And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood,' is a cornerstone in his work since this verse signifies that Jesus suffered and died outside of Jerusalem, the holy city. Jesus bore the disgrace and shame of a violent death outside the city walls. With the writer of Hebrews, Costas interprets Jesus's death outside the city gate as the periphery to which followers of Jesus are called to locate themselves together with Jesus. Salvation takes place outside the established structures of Christendom, or, inferring from Costas, Judaism.[33] The soteriological location has undergone a decisive shift in Costas. Following the writer of Hebrews, Costas is able to see this shift not as a breach with the Hebrew tradition, but instead as a fulfillment of the radical and oftentimes contested notion in the prophets, especially Isaiah. The dead of Jesus outside the compound and the subsequent plea of the writer of Hebrews to follow Jesus to that location, indicates a centrifugal pattern of mission. Consequently, all aspects of mission should be interpreted from the periphery. The center has moved to the periphery. This new periphery-center resembles by no means the center of Christendom, but is an ever-shifting center, that is perpetually oriented towards new instances of marginalization. Costas draws the boundaries between liberation theologies and his own position by asserting that the periphery is for him not a permanent fixture. Just like Jesus' crucifixion was followed by the resurrection, the contemporary periphery will be redeemed in the eschaton. The eschatological dimension of a redeemed periphery leads Costas to deride in rather polemical terms those who do not share in his eschatological vision as 'sheer activists' and 'witnesses without hope.' I consider this polemical language to be a residue of the polemical situation of his days, and in the contemporary framework, I consider those snide remarks out of

[31] Costas, Christ Outside the Gate, xiii.

[32] The word margin and its cognates do not feature in the work of Costas. I am not sure if the frequent use of the word margin happened later or is indicative of a more ecumenical-focused discourse, or possibly even both. Costas prefers the word periphery instead of margin.

[33] Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 188–94.

place, especially since it seems that Costas's strong Christology doesn't seem to be matched by an equally robust pneumatology. A fully realized pneumatology would point to the presence of the Spirit in the periphery, present in the struggle for life despite adverse circumstances and active resistance to the life-giving ministry of the Spirit. A fully developed pneumatology could consequently lead to a less polemical eschatology, since the Spirit is at work in the present, in the contemporary peripheries. Redemption not only takes place in the eschaton, the life-giving Spirit is already present.

There are numerous benefits to consider in the proposal of Costas. In the first place, his proposal is contextual, since he explicitly tackles the demand for safety, domesticity and manageability, which have been undercurrents of many missionary organizations. Costas's proposal provides an additional argument for the dismantling of Christendom, since he challenges the benefits that Christendom's centripetal approach offered for those who wanted to enter into the 'inside' of Christendom. The categories of 'inside and outside' are for Costas the lens through which he views center and periphery. The scandalous 'outside' of Jesus' crucifixion permanently dismantles any vestiges of an 'inside.' I consider the subversion of the inside and outside to be helpful as an additional argument for the destabilization of the homeland, as I have discussed in the previous chapter. The idea of the homeland, i.e. a safe and stable hiding place, can be theologically questioned through the plea of the writer of Hebrews to identify with Jesus, who died outside the gate.

Additionally, Costas works with a holistic approach to both the Old and the New Testament. Focusing on the letter to the Hebrews is advantageous because it is possible to employ themes and imagery that finds its home in the Hebrew Bible. Lastly, Costas paints a dynamic portrait of the new center and periphery, thereby avoiding the trap of an essentialist depiction of the periphery.

3.2.2. *Virgilio Elizondo and Roberto Goizueta: Galilee*

We will start our overview of theologies that anchor marginality within Christology with the work of Elizondo and Goizueta, since they have elaborated the position that the social location of Jesus Christ is of crucial importance to his message. They focus on the interpretation of Galilee as a contested borderland. The significance of a theology of Galilee for the articulation of marginality lies in the ramifications of Jesus's identity as a Galilean Jew. This interest in Jesus as a Galilean Jew ties in with the broader agenda of liberation theology, since the marginalization of Galilee within the Judaism of the first century has been considered a fruitful area of comparison for marginalized peoples in contemporary societies. The interpretation of the significance of Galilee is complicated because the source material regarding Galilee at the time of Jesus is incomplete. The idea that Galilee was the

Galilee of the Gentiles (Matthew 4:15) certainly has contributed to this idea. However, new research suggests that the percentage of gentile inhabitants in Galilee at the time of Jesus may have been inconsequential.[34] The interpretation of Goizueta and Elizondo employs the trope of the gentile Galilee, which I consider hereby corrected by the research of Mark Chancey. My focus in this section will therefore not be primarily on the significance of the interaction between Jews and gentiles in Galilee, but rather on the intra-Judaic relationship(s) between Galilee and Judea.

Elizondo consciously brings the social location from which he theologizes into contact with the social setting of the work and life of Jesus. For Elizondo, a mestizo theologian, his primary interest is pastoral: to proclaim the good news to those who have suffered multiple marginalizations. Especially in his own context, the good news Elizondo searches for needs to be good news for Mexican-Americans who face marginalization in the context of a dominant Anglo-American culture. Elizondo poses this question: 'Why is Jesus's ethnic identity as a Jewish Galilean from Nazareth an important dimension of the incarnation, and what does it disclose about the beauty and originality of Jesus's liberating life and message?'[35] The answer he provides is that the Galilean factor of the earthly existence of Jesus points to a borderland, removed from the centers of power located in Jerusalem and influenced by a history of multiple invasions. This history leads to a diversity of encounters between various ethnic groups. The earthly ministry of Jesus took place under these circumstances in Galilee. The type of description for Galilee that Elizondo offers induces the possibility of identification for those who experience life characterized by the same elements of first century Galilee.

The emphasis on the marginal existence in Galilee does not imply that the centers and margins have simply switched places. Galilee will never become a center, because that would mean that the logic of the center remains intact. Instead, Galilee functions as a crystallization or focal point where the message of Galilee will be promulgated.

The work of Elizondo is taken up by Goizueta, who in his turn emphasizes the importance of Galilee as a guarantee for the continuation of the message of Jesus. The main argument that supports the significance of Galilee is that 'Jesus Christ's social location is not merely accidental to the Christian *kerygma*; it is at the very heart of our Christian faith.'[36] Consequently, the particular places in which the life of Jesus is situated carry hermeneutical significance. As Jesus lived, travelled and worked in Galilee, the character of the borderland comes into focus. Galilee as a borderland is constructed in opposition to the center of the religious life in Jerusalem. Goizueta takes the argument one step further by arguing that the geography of Galilee is deeply theological: a place to encounter the glory of God. The theo-

[34] Mark A. Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[35] Elizondo, 'Jesus the Galilean Jew in Mestizo Theology'.
[36] Goizueta, 'Christ of the Borderlands', 193.

logical character of the borderland of Galilee is pivotal as a locality that is fundamentally characterized by its hybridity. The location of Jesus in Galilee is not accidental, but reveals the gratuity of the love of God: God reveals His glory in the borderland, the land that is most ‘strange’ and in danger of transgressing the borders of what is proper and holy. Thus, the borderland carries a prophetic character: the borderland brings to light the mechanisms of exclusion and rejection and is uniquely able to confront these mechanisms. The prophetic element in the identification with the borderland hinges on the exclusion and rejection that was bestowed upon Jesus. Since Jesus himself was excluded and rejected, those who have similar experiences in contemporary context can identify with the life of Jesus.[37]

The significance of the work of Elizondo and Goizueta for rethinking marginality lies in their profound Christological basis. They construct Jesus Christ as a marginal person by virtue of his Galilean provenance. They highlight the prophetic element in this location: by being excluded on the margins, away from the center, it becomes possible to identify with others who have experienced marginalization. In order to rethink the center / margin conceptualization, it is important to note that Galilee does not become the center, but rather a focal point. Conventional ideas on aligning the center with worldly and religious power do not hold. This particular way of interpreting Galilee has important ramifications for dealing with the alleged shift of the center of gravity in World Christianity. I am not primarily looking for a shift in the center of gravity, but am interested in researching the interplay of multiple centers and margins in World Christianity. To this end, the identification of religious revivals, such as in contemporary Pentecostalism, is mediated by their character as a contemporary ‘Galilee.’ This means that various movements and locations are able to identify with ‘Galilee’ both as a source of hybridity of religious adherences and as a marginalized borderland. The contemporary identification with ‘Galilee’ therefore remains complex. Nevertheless, a search for the contemporary ‘Galilees’ opens up the possibility for a prophetic stance because it critiques all forms of exclusion in the borderlands.

3.2.3. *Kosuke Koyama: The Periphery Has Become the Center*

In the last section, we have seen how the hermeneutical priority of Galilee enables the affirmation of the presence of God in the borderland as a way of constructing a liberating Christology. Elizondo affirmed that the center and the periphery / margins do not merely switch places: the centrist logic of Jerusalem will not be perpetuated in the borderland of Galilee. The power of the borderland of Galilee arrives from a different source and logic in comparison to the center. The work of Koyama, equally constructed around this Christological theme, takes a different approach. Contrasting and comparing the works of Elizondo and Goizueta on the

[37] Goizueta, ‘Christ of the Borderlands’.

one hand, and Koyama on the other hand, is relevant because these authors have a shared commitment to rethinking Christological issues from the perspective of marginalization. Furthermore, Elizondo, Goizueta and Koyama are striving to offer strands of theology that speak to their respective contexts. In the case of Koyama, his 'Water Buffalo Theology' is a relatively early attempt to rework theological notions about the nature of God from the perspective of marginalized Thai peasants.[38] His Christological leanings are determined by his willingness and his insistence on the necessity to engage profound emotions. In order to understand Koyama's thought world, we not only have to consider the intellectual streams that feed into his work, but we need also to consider the hermeneutic value of emotional experiences. His missiology deliberately reasons with the category of the *pathos*, the category of lament, agitation, intuition and amazement. In order to work with these personal emotions, it follows that theology is colored by biographical elements.[39] In the case of Koyama, the decisive element in his biography is his witness of the 1945 nuclear attack on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Being a witness to those horrific and life-destroying events made him to turn to the book of Lamentations, in which he found the possibility of identification.[40] Another important element in his work is his agreement with Abraham Heschel, whose work is filled with *pathos*. In Heschel, Koyama discovered the foundation of *pathos* in the Biblical texts.[41] Especially in the Hebrew prophets, the *pathos* testifies to the nature of God as being profoundly involved in the suffering of the world.[42] The entry into Christology starts with emotion as well. In this particular case, the emotion is that of amazement. The emotion of amazement could, with a reference to Mark 1: 22, 27, lead to faith in Jesus. The feeling of amazement is described as well in Mark 1:22 and 27, where the synagogue members are amazed at Jesus' teaching as somebody with authority.

The feeling of amazement can be considered to function as a root experience in the later development of Christology. Indeed, the emotion of amazement could, on the one hand, lead to faith in Jesus or, on the other hand, give rise to feelings of repulsion. Alluding to 1 Corinth 1:23, it becomes clear that there is an element of the scandalous about Christ, as the Christ-event functions as both a stumbling block and foolishness. This notion of scandal is an essential element of Koyama's Christology, because the scandal is found in the unprecedented reversal, or 'exchange' of center and periphery. The reversal of the center and the periphery means that the true meaning of Christ could not have been determined according to the norms of the center, and leads to a misunderstanding or feeling of repulsion. The effect of reversal is that the periphery has become the center, because Christ

[38] Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology*.
[39] Koyama, "'Not Even in Israel Have I Found Such Faith' ", 48.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).
[42] Koyama, ' 'Not Even in Israel Have I Found Such Faith', 42.

has made himself known in the periphery. In the words of Koyama: 'Since Christ has gone to the periphery, the periphery has become the center.'[43] The primary way Koyama conceptualizes center and periphery is through his focus on pride and prestige. Rome is considered a center of political power, Jerusalem a center of religious power, while Bethlehem, possessing neither political nor religious power, constitutes the periphery. The birth place of Jesus, as recorded in the gospels, conveys that Jesus locates himself in the periphery. In short, Christ constitutes the periphery. Additionally, Christ is positioned solidly in the periphery by revealing himself as a stranger in need of food and clothing (Matthew 25). The counterintuitive role of Christ in the periphery is thereby constitutive for the Christology of Koyama. Furthermore, not only does the feeling of amazement determine the content of Koyama's Christological design, but the feeling of agitation as well. Agitation is an outflow of the profound *pathos,* the emotions of agitation that arise from the disturbing state of turbulence and upheaval in the world. The feeling of agitation is connected to the *imitatio Dei*, i.e. the *Nachfolge* as part of the Christian life. The spatial element that is incorporated in the wake of the emotional response is the location of the imitatio in the periphery. In the words of Koyama: 'the locus of the agitated imitatio Dei is the periphery.'[44] As a consequence of this statement, the location of the followers of Christ, who are the *agitated* followers of Christ, is in the periphery. In the *Nachfolge* of Christ, one finds her/himself filled with burning passion and agitation, and one finds her/himself located in the periphery as an act of self- identification with the Christ who, as the center-person, presented himself as a periphery-person. The result of the imitatio in the periphery is that Christ is able to absolve people from their fixation with the center, or, in the words of Koyama, their 'center-complex.' Christ points the way to an inverse hierarchy in which the periphery has become the center.

The great merit of the Christological design of Koyama is that he is able, based partly on his own experience, to align the concrete imitation of Christ, the experience of profound disturbance about the unjust state of the world and the periphery closely together. I take from him his starting point of emotional reaction to the discovery of Christ in the periphery as fruitful for my articulation of marginality. The confrontation with the scandalous Christ in the periphery results in either the adoption or the rejection of this scandal. As a consequence, this emotional starting point is beneficial for assessing one's reaction to the reversal of the worldly patterns in the *missio Christi.* Attention to patterns of marginality leads to the feeling that the status quo has been turned upside down. These feelings need to be interpreted in light of the scandalousness of Christ himself and should not serve as a stumbling block or rejection of the way of Christ.

Yet, a problem arises in the conceptualization of center and periphery in the

[43] Ibid.

[44] Koyama, "'Not Even in Israel Have I Found Such Faith' ", 49. Italics in original.

work of Koyama. He seems to work with a binary perspective on the center and the periphery, resulting in the essentialization of the center and periphery which leaves no room for additional nuances. I propose therefore a need to take the thoughts of Koyama further by supplementing accounts of how the margins / periphery can be complex, multiple and interlocking. At first glance, the way Koyama conceptualizes the periphery seems to clash with the thought of Elizondo, because Koyama states that the periphery has become the center, while Elizondo emphatically maintains that Galilee never turns into the center. Yet, comparing these two proposals is difficult because the definition of 'the center' remains unclear. Extrapolating the thoughts of Koyama, it is possible that he would indeed agree with the proposition of Elizondo that Galilee never becomes the center, if the center is identified in conventional terms without being transformed by the life-affirming ways of Christ. It is therefore necessary to stress that the center of Christianity, the center that has been constituted by the move of Christ to the periphery, is constituted by fundamentally different values. The proposal of Koyama, who holds that the periphery has become the center, could therefore give rise to a grave misunderstanding if this statement is read out of context. Taking the context into account, it becomes clear that a superficial swapping of center and periphery is not beneficial in developing a full-fledged theology of marginality. My attempt at synthesizing the thoughts of Elizondo / Goizueta on the one hand, and Koyama on the other hand, shows that reflecting on Christology from the perspective of the periphery allows for multiple interpretive moments which give further significance to the life of Christ. For Elizondo and Goizueta the primary interpretive event is the Galilee theme, while for Koyama, the interpretive significance is primarily placed upon the emotional reactions in confrontation with the counter-intuitive witness of Christ. Both are valuable and can stand alongside one another, as long as the center as it functions in Koyama is considered on a different plane compared to worldly ideas of the center.

3.2.4. *Jung Young Lee: The Hyphenated Jesus-Christ*

The experience of marginality is rooted in Lee's biography. As an immigrant in the United States,[45] Lee is acutely aware of what it means to be perceived as marginal relative to one's cultural surroundings. In his 1995 monograph, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology*, he employs marginality as a hermeneutical method to interpret the life of Christ and the life of the church. His monograph has received relatively little attention, which is not surprising since his book exists at

[45] According to Phan, who has extensively described the Christology of Lee in an article evaluating four Asian Christological proposals, Lee has become a naturalized American citizen. Peter C. Phan, 'Jesus the Christ with an Asian Face', *Theological Studies* 57, no. 3 (1996): 410.

the margins of the academic world.[46] Yet, Lee is included, together with more well-known theologians such as Choan-Seng Song in an overview of Christology with an Asian provenance.[47] This inclusion shows that his pioneering work has been considered significant and original enough to warrant greater inclusion.

Lee's proposal is decisively marked by marginality since he considers marginality both the hermeneutical method and the content of his theology.[48] The hermeneutical method of marginality indicates the special position that marginalized people occupy in the interpretation of Biblical texts and church tradition. As a consequence, the theme of marginality permeates his analysis of the Biblical narratives, even in such places as the creation story.[49] The aspect of marginality that receives most attention in the work of Lee is the racial and cultural aspect, although he is aware of the political and economic vectors that contribute to shaping marginalization.[50] The racial dimension is most significant since Lee, as an Asian-American, continues to be classified and interpreted through his racial characteristics.[51] Marginality functions in complex but interlocking ways and can therefore be articulated in a variety of ways depending upon one's perspective. The classical and the contemporary definition of marginality are the two main conceptualizations discerned by Lee.[52]

The classical definition characterizes marginality as the position of being 'in-between.' This viewpoint is hailed by the dominant group, which is, from the perspective of Lee, those who identify as Caucasian. A marginal person is, according to this dominant logic, a person, such as a migrant, who does not belong either to the dominant group, or to one's native group. The feeling of being regarded as a stranger in society and not belonging to a single culture can lead to a form of duality in one's personality.

The classical definition is complemented by the contemporary definition, which is characterized by marginalized persons being 'in-both' with regard to the two cultures they find themselves within. This means that a marginal person finds her/himself part of two or more cultures. This definition is perhaps more compatible because the classical definition often reflects the actual experiences of marginalized persons themselves.[53] The contemporary definition offers the possibility

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[46] Clive Pearson, "Out of Place with Jesus-Christ", in *Out of Place: Doing Theology on the Crosscultural Brink*, ed. Jione Havea and Clive Pearson (London: Equinox, 2011), 65.

[47] Phan, 'Jesus the Christ with an Asian Face'.

[48] Lee, *Marginality*, 4.

[49] Lee discusses the role of marginality in the creation story at length, although some aspects of his proposal seem rather far-fetched. Ibid., 102–6.

[50] Ibid., 42.

[51] Ibid., 35.

[52] The classical and the contemporary definition of marginality seem to function as archetypes against which Lee articulates his own perspective. Lee doesn't seem to be interested in demonstrating how and where these definitions have been in use.

[53] Lee, *Marginality*, 48.

to articulate the positive experiences of migrants as being located both in their original culture and in their host cultures. In the case of Asian-Americans, it means that it is possible to be both truly Asian and truly American.[54] Yet, Lee argues that the contemporary definition needs to be complemented by another definition. The reason to articulate a new definition is due to the inability of the contemporary definition to account for the experience of the 'beyond.' The experience of 'beyond' is often an existential element of the migrant experience and signals the experience of a surplus that arises from being at home in two or more cultures. The experience of 'beyond' means that an identification as an Asian-American carries more weight than just identifying as both Asian and American. As an Asian-American, one's Asian identity is enriched by one's American identity, and one's American identity is expanded by one's Asian heritage.[55] The proposal of Lee might not seem to hold much water if approached from a centralist mind set, but from a perspective of marginality the inclusiveness of the in-beyond approach makes for a compelling argument. In Lee's own words: '*[t]o transcend or to live in-beyond does not mean to be free of the two different worlds in which persons exist, but to live in both of them without being bound by either of them*.'[56] If one manages to live one's life in the in-beyond, the result will be that one becomes a 'wounded healer to the two-category system.'[57] As a wounded healer, one experiences the wounds that are inflicted by the dominant perspective of the 'in-between,' since one is denied the capacity to self- identify completely with a second culture. Healing takes place by exploring creatively the freedom that arises from being liberated from a suffocating identification with only one culture and thought-system.

The idea of marginality as being acted out as 'in-beyond,' is rooted in Lee's Christological design. Lee aims to understand Jesus-Christ, the hybrid,[58] from the perspective of marginality and not from a centrist perspective. Jesus's earthly life was epitomized by marginality, from his birth by an unwed mother to his scandalous crucifixion. In the God-forsakenness of the cross, the marginality of Jesus-Christ reaches its culmination. Accordingly, Lee opts to read the passages about the incarnation from the perspective of the marginalized life of Jesus. John 1:10-11 makes it clear that although Jesus came into the world, he was not known and accepted by the world. Similarly, Lee makes the case for reading Philippians 2:5-

[54] Ibid., 52.
[55] Ibid., 58.
[56] Ibid., 63. Emphasis in original.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Lee doesn't engage with postcolonial literature, which was at the time of writing less commonplace in theology. The usage of the word 'hybrid' is therefore complicated since it might be anachronistic to interpret the usage of hybridity in an explicitly postcolonial framework. See further Wonhee Anne Joh for a treatment of hybridity in Christologies from an Asian or Asian American provenance. Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 53–55.

11, the Christological hymn, from the perspective of marginalization: Christ became marginalized because he became a servant. In short: 'During the incarnation, God was marginalized in Jesus-Christ.'[59] The hyphen between Jesus-Christ indicates this marginality as a sign of the intimate relationship of 'Jesus' and 'Christ' and the way they are mutually dependent upon each other. The experience of marginality as a positive 'in-beyond' experience directly relates to the marginalized and hyphenated nature of Jesus-Christ.[60] Where the crucifixion of Jesus-Christ displays the culmination of marginalization, the resurrection becomes the focal point of an inaugurated new epoch.[61] This new period is characterized by the radical inversion of center and margins. The Lordship of Christ, which was shown in the resurrection, becomes the focal point or the creative core of those who are marginalized. In other words, through the resurrection of Christ, a new focal point is inaugurated to which humanity can orient itself through the life-giving presence of Christ. The new focal point is equal to the creative core and signals a radical subversion of conventional, pre-resurrection logic. The theology of Lee therefore does not merely state that center and periphery have switched places, as is the case in the theology of Koyama. The creative core / focal point signifies the transformation that takes place through the life-giving presence of Christ. As such, the creative core / focal point does not operate according to the logic of the center, but to the logic of the resurrected Christ.

The idea of the in-beyond conception of a marginal person as a wounded-healer helps to overcome binary and monolithic articulations of marginality.[62] Although he professes an awareness of various forms of marginalization, this awareness is not connected to the autobiographical portions in which Lee could have reflected on the interplay between marginality and privilege in his own life. Instead, Lee focuses solely on cultural marginality, and leaves other vectors such as gender and social class outside the discussion. This is unfortunate, and even almost impossible, given the design of Lee's design itself. The centrality of Jesus-Christ invites broader perspectives on the various sources and ramifications of marginality, in which social class and oppression due to the subversion of gender norms at the very least should play a role. In this respect, the work of Lee feels a bit dated, since the recent proliferation of various vectors of oppression and sidelining are not taken into account. Most glaring is the omission of any references to oppression due to one's gender identity and expression. Lee's proposal invites me to reflect further upon the implications for the question regarding the meaning of marginality in a postcolonial missiology. If Jesus-Christ, the hybrid border-crosser between the divine and the human, becomes the exemplary focus of marginality, then

[59] Lee, *Marginality*, 79.
[60] Ibid., 78.
[61] Ibid., 96–97.
[62] Ibid., 31.

it follows that a personal approach to marginality weeds out all forms of territorially defined marginality. Furthermore, by making Jesus-Christ the exemplary focus, the possibility to divide people in binary categories becomes useless and, frankly, impossible.

3.2.5. *Peter Phan: The Margin-Center*

Phan, a Vietnamese-American theologian, reflects on the influence of marginality on his biography and subsequently on his theology.[63] I include his work therefore in my overview of theologians who are developing Christologies from the perspective of marginality and who carry this process out from a background in the Two-Third World. Phan develops his Christology by highlighting the character of Jesus as the Border-Crosser. By zooming in on this idea of Jesus as the Border-Crosser, Phan is able to outline how Jesus as a marginal person transforms society and in this process creates a margin-center. In order to properly contextualize Phan's line of thought, I will first discuss the elements which make up the identity of Jesus as Border-Crosser. The theology of Jesus as the Border-Crosser par excellence feeds directly into his advocacy for a kenotic missionary spirituality, characterized by weakness and vulnerability.

The incarnation is the ultimate border crossing, since the borders of 'the eternal and the temporal, the invisible and the visible, spirit and matter, but more specifically, the divine and the human'[64] are crossed. The act of border crossing in the incarnation has profound implications for Trinitarian thought, since the particular way in which the Logos exists in the incarnation brings suffering to the heart of the Trinity. The boundaries that are crossed in the incarnation are not totally erased, but they no longer serve as barriers. A reality emerges in which 'the divine and human [are] reconciled and harmonized with each other into one single reality.'[65] In his subsequent ministry, Jesus continues to cross borders freely and naturally. The radical inclusivity that Jesus promoted made sure that the preferential option for the poor did not obscure his attention to those who are in privileged positions. Jesus dwelled at the margins of multiple worlds because of his frequent border crossing, which allowed him to identify not with the status quo, but instead with those in the borderlands of his society. The border-crossing nature of Jesus is rooted both in Biblical texts and in the teaching of the council of Chalcedon regarding the human and divine nature of Jesus. Three Biblical passages take on essential roles in discussing the nature of Jesus as border-crosser. First, Philippians 2:6-11 describes in poetic form the nature of the incarnation. Secondly, Galatians 3:18 explains the radical inclusivity of the Jesus movement by pointing out how previously irreconcilable factions are reconciled into the body of Christ. Lastly,

[63] Phan and Lee, *Journeys at the Margin*.
[64] Phan, 'Crossing the Borders', 11.
[65] Ibid.

Hebrews 13:12-13 argues that Jesus died as an outcast, 'outside the city gate and outside the camp.'

The marginal status of Jesus is a direct consequence of his location at the borders. If marginality is defined as being located on the edges of a particular social world or constellation, it follows that dwelling at the borders turns one into a marginal person since borders are put into place to fence off different worlds from each other. The frequent dwelling of Jesus at the borders means that Jesus subverts the conventional logic of the border. As a result, a new center is created which is inclusive, accepting and reconciling. The new center is the margin-center because the logic of the margin is perpetuated. In the margin-center, the different worlds, earlier separated by rigid borders, are allowed to meet each other. The margin-center will therefore never become a center in the conventional meaning of the world, but is constituted on an inclusive foundation.[66]

The spirituality found at the margin-center has distinct characteristics. This spirituality aids, first of all, the crossing of borders. Phan lists four dimensions of a spirituality founded upon following the kenotic example of Jesus. The four dimensions of spirituality are a spirituality of presence, a kenotic spirituality, reconciliation and a holistic anthropology.[67] A spirituality of presence is based upon a fourfold dialogue in which life is shared with those who live on the other side of a border. The fourfold dialogue consists of the dialogue of life, the dialogue of action, the dialogue of theological exchange and the dialogue of religious experience. In this fourfold dialogue, it becomes clear that a spirituality of presence is founded primarily on the active willingness to seek life together with those on other sides of a border.[68] Second, kenotic spirituality consists in the active *imitatio Christi* in which elements such as the predisposition to live life in vulnerability and weakness are essential components. Third, the spirituality of reconciliation is founded upon the key elements of the Christ event. In an Asian context the restoration of harmony forms a foundational element of a spirituality of reconciliation. Lastly, holistic spirituality centers on an anthropology that emphasizes the possibility to form alliances across borders and to create new possibilities and constellations. As a result, the border loses its function as barrier but functions as a spring board from which these new realities are set into motion.

By bringing the position of Phan into discussion with the other proposals I have reviewed, it becomes clear that the proposal of Phan is one of the most thoughtfully crafted proposals with regard to the Christological implications of marginality. By assigning to Christ the title of the Border-Crosser, the issue of marginality is brought into the heart of Christology. In contrast to the proposal of Elizondo and Goizueta, Phan is able to integrate more diverse elements of the life of Jesus into his proposal, but does not comment upon the role and function of

[66] Ibid., 12.
[67] Ibid., 5–11.
[68] Ibid., 5–6.

Galilee. The account of Phan is therefore less geographically influenced. Still, the influence of Elizondo is detectable in his proposal since Phan cites in the affirmative in the emergence of the *mestizaje*, the mixing of two groups, ethnicities or racial identities. In Elizondo's proposal, which is taken over by Phan, borders will not disappear but will not be the ultimate dividing lines any longer. Instead, borders will turn into privileged meeting places.[69] Phan shares the concerns of Elizondo and Goizueta, and also the concern of Koyama; of locating Jesus emphatically at the periphery, in the margins. Phan comes close to the intimations of Jeong regarding the strength in weakness which is a pivotal element in both of their designs and spirituality. However, Phan better articulates the ramifications of this spirituality. Regarding the social location of Christ, the proposal of Phan to designate the new social reality that is inaugurated by the life of Christ with the term 'margin-center' is convincing. It illustrates on the one hand that this new reality of transformed borders in the movement towards ever greater inclusivity is decisively influenced by its location at the margins. On the other hand, it takes seriously the idea that this location on the margins could be considered a new type of center, because the margins become the focal point of the presence of Christ in the world. Yet, the margin must remain structured according to the logic of Christ instead of being structured along the lines of the dominant logic of the worldly centers. Through the designation of the 'margin-center,' the concern I voiced regarding the proposal of Koyama has been solved. Phan's proposal is therefore a valuable contribution to the ongoing conceptualization of the social location of Christ and those who follow in his ways.

3.2.6. *Paul Yonggap Jeong: Mission and Weakness*

Jeong has worked on a Christological approach in which he relates Christology to the periphery and marginality. I am hoping to gain insights from his work because he has experienced marginality in his own life and he is located at the periphery of academic theology.[70] The focal point of the theology of Jeong is 'mission from a position of weakness.' His Christological emphasis comes to the fore in his insistence on taking the mission of Christ as the prototype for all mission endeavors to be carried out subsequently. The goal of the monograph of Jeong, 'mission from a position of weakness'[71] is to outline how mission from a position of weakness is pivotal in carrying mission out in the way of Christ. As such, mission from a position of weakness is not a recent invention, but is traceable to the very beginning of the Christian movement. In order to prove this main point, Jeong discusses the theme of weakness in Luke and Acts, while paying special attention to the history of mission from a Korean perspective. The selection of the theme of weakness as

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[69] Ibid., 11.
[70] Jeong, *Mission from a Position of Weakness*, 1–2.
[71] Jeong, *Mission from a Position of Weakness*.

an organizing theme for a theology of mission is to be traced to Jeong's own biography. In the same vein as Koyama, reflection on one's own biography becomes a pivotal element for thinking theologically.[72]

Jeong defines weakness in the context of mission as being 'accomplished in humility, brokenness, and obedience.'[73] Weakness is not defined primarily in terms of external criteria, which are the criteria that are primarily identified by an outsider. Instead, weakness is defined by internal, spiritual criteria. Weakness acquires spiritual elements because weakness is defined as having a specific mindset characterized by humility, brokenness and obedience.[74] Those who have worldly power and influence cannot be exempt from carrying out mission from a position of weakness.

Jeong takes Luke-Acts as the basic textual source for outlining his position on mission from a position of weakness. In tandem with the spiritual character of weakness, the focal point in his exploration of weakness is not geographically colored, as was the case in the work of Elizondo and Goizueta. The primary dividing point between center and periphery is located in the dividing point between the Jews and the Gentiles and between those at the forefront of the Jewish traditions and those who are sidelined by this tradition. Those who are sidelined are the sinners, women, including widows, and children. The ministry of Jesus among the Gentiles connects him to a longstanding prophetic tradition in the line of Elijah and Elisha who had been trailblazers with regard to interaction with Gentiles. Jesus is considered as continuing the tradition of these prophets. Jeong is thus able to expand the well-known prophetic tradition in which Jesus participates with the notion of interaction with Gentiles. Jeong connects mission to the periphery with the notion of weakness, as Jesus is conceived to be moving from the center (of Judaism) to the periphery (to the Gentiles). This move from the center to the periphery is for Jeong the hallmark of his conceptualization of weakness. The movement from the center towards the periphery is also considered in Jesus' move towards the 'sinners.' The 'sinners' constitute the periphery not because they are located outside Judaism, but because they are on the fringes of a supposedly pure and unpolluted Judaism.[75]

The Christological design of Jeong displays considerable differences from the proposals of Elizondo / Goizueta and Koyama. Instead of locating Jesus in the periphery, Jeong capitalizes upon the move from the center towards the periphery. Locating Jesus in the center, one who is constantly moving toward the periphery, hampers the possibility of identification with the social location of Jesus as a source of encouragement and empowerment of those who are currently side-lined

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[72] The role of (auto)biography will be discussed more extensively in my discussion of the work of Jung Yong Lee, whose approach is inherently biographical. Lee, *Marginality*, 7–28.
[73] Jeong, *Mission from a Position of Weakness*, 3.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Jeong, *Mission from a Position of Weakness*, 13.

because of their societal and religious location. Furthermore, locating Jesus in the center does not seem to hold water when considering the importance of the passion narratives, in which Jesus suffers unjustly and dies as a marginalized person 'outside the gate,' according to Hebrews 13:12-13. It seems that, in the design of Jeong, Jesus himself remains relatively untarnished by the powerful forces of marginalization, while in the other proposals we have reviewed, Jesus experiences those forces existentially. The value of the proposal of Jeong lies therefore primarily in one's willingness to open up a conceptual space in which weakness is a defining feature for mission, articulated as one's desire to follow Christ. His merit is the opening of the possibility to follow Christ in weakness for those who are at the present moment connected to wealth, power and influence, and to open up a spiritual opportunity to practice the discipline of following Christ in weakness, obedience and in identifying with the poor and the marginalized. Yet, the spiritual dimension of a Christology that explicitly locates itself at the margins, is not yet fully illuminative. For this reason, the following paragraph will delve deeper into developing the spiritual dimension of a Christology from the perspective of marginality.

3.3. A QUEST FOR THE MARGINS

The former section has anchored the topic of marginality firmly in Christology by scrutinizing the work of several theologians who take their own experiences of marginality as a starting point for their creative theological proposals. I have drawn upon their insights to show that Christology provides a promising starting point for reflections on marginality and the periphery, since Jesus Christ has located himself, in the words of Koyama, in the periphery. By following the work of Phan, I have been able to show that the transformation brought about by Jesus Christ can be characterized by the margin-center: Jesus transforms the margins, but never according to the logic of the dominant center, thereby forming a new margin-center which continues to be characterized by its earlier marginal status. In this section, I will first scrutinize *Together towards Life*, which locates mission *at* the margins instead of the earlier mission *to* the margins. Prepositions matter in relationship to marginality! I will scrutinize *Together towards Life* for the possibilities it offers to advance the Christological foundation of marginality I have laid down through the discussion of the authors in the first part of the chapter. Two other questions remain. In the first place, what are the ramifications of discussing the topic of marginality within a late-modern or postmodern frame of thought? In order to answer this question, I will consider the work of Rieger, who warns against the danger that the option for the margins fades out of sight due to the shallowness concomitant with the postmodern condition.

Secondly, what is at stake in discussing the margins as a locus for mission? In

other words, how does one incorporate the perspectives we have gained into mission theology? In this introduction, I will first sketch some defining contours of a definition of marginality. After our discussion of Rieger, I will then continue to mine the work of Gittins, one of the first full-length treatments of marginality in mission, in order to move towards a comprehensive definition of marginality.

What is at stake in the delineation of marginality? In the first place, power dynamics play an important role in determining who / what belongs to the margins. However, caution is necessary, as well-meaning efforts toward determining where the margins are, and who is actually located at the margins, might still betray hints of a center-complex.[76] Who defines where the margins are located? Who defines what the margins are? These questions boil down to an even more fundamental question: who holds the power to define the margins? If those who are located in positions of power are primarily concerned with indicating the presence of the margins, the danger of a paternalistic approach looms large. Paternalistic in this context means the well-meaning ability to be concerned with indicating the presence of the margins, without consulting the voices of those who are actually marginalized. The discussion consequently becomes one-sided. If, at the end of the day, the privileged in academia are those who use their power to define the margins, nothing is gained.

The question of power of definition is exacerbated by the problem that an undifferentiated emphasis on the margins does not take the option of mobility into account. An undifferentiated perspective of marginality leads to a static and deterministic perspective on the world. A change from the margins to the center or from the center to the margins is not expected through this type of reasoning. Against a static conception, a position that stresses mobility needs to be advocated. Connected with this observation, it is possible that center and periphery have indeed been altered already and that the fiction of a dominant West is indeed a figment of the imagination. A dichotomy between an already established center and periphery could easily fail to notice profound changes and developments in the ordering of the world. For example, the economic growth that China, and to a lesser extent, India, are experiencing in the present moment, might be a preliminary pointer to shifting balances in global power dynamics.[77] The act of repeating the conventional way of framing the West as the center and the non-West as the periphery, even if this is done for the reason of overcoming this very dichotomy, still affirms this distinction as the status quo. Yet, one could easily miss the fact that, to a certain extent, power dimensions have indeed shifted. The issue of mobility not only plays a role at the macro level, but needs to be taken into account on a personal

[76] Koyama, ' 'Not Even in Israel Have I Found Such Faith'; Kōsuke Koyama, 'Jesus Christ Who Has Gone to the Utter Periphery', *Ecumenical Review* 43, no. 1 (1991): 100–106.
[77] See for an overview: Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), vii.

level too. Persons who are considered marginal, could, by virtue of changing circumstances and changed perspectives, be regarded as occupying central positions. The reverse is equally true. Those who are currently experiencing marginalization are not done justice by relegating them to a position where their fate in life could not possibly be altered. I will therefore search for articulations of marginality that do justice to the possibility of change in status and position, and I will seek to correct paternalizing definitions of marginality.

3.3.1. *Together towards Life*

In contrast with *Mission and Evangelism* (1982), the predecessor to *Together towards Life*, one of the main changes is found in the emphasis on mission *from* the margins, as opposed to the mission *to* the margins. An important reason why *Together towards Life* argues at length in favor of marginality as an organizing principle is the epistemological advantage of marginalized people. Those who are experiencing marginalization have intense and often physical experiences of what harms life and what affirms life. The epistemological positions of marginalized peoples are opposite that of the privileged who do not have access to this type of knowledge.[78] The section 'Why margins and marginalization' (38-42) discusses further the reasons for a focus on mission *from* the margins. Interestingly enough, the arguments do not find their concentration in Christology, but are all circling around the theme of justice. Mission *from* the margins seeks to counteract injustices perpetrated against marginalized persons. In this process, current unjust power structures must be transformed and mistakes of the past corrected. As the desired outcome, the honor and dignity of all persons should be respected and safeguarded.[79]

At times, *Together towards Life* is working actively and explicitly to forego binary distinctions.[80] In particular, the distinction between guest and host is deliberately destabilized. God assumes the role of host, and all persons are invited to be His guests. The distinction between those who occupy the role of host, for example in the position of a culturally dominant group, and the role of guest, for example in the case of migrant roles, is principally questioned by depicting the triune God in the role of principal host.[81] Since God assumes the role of host, all other churches and Christians are invited to be guests in the presence of the Triune God.

Although the preferential option for the marginalized is defended both theologically and by a host of non-theological reasons, the emphasis seems to be placed upon the epistemological argument, the pursuit of justice and the discovery of the

[78] 'Together towards Life', para. 48.
[79] Ibid., 38–42.
[80] Ibid., para. 70.
[81] Ibid., para. 71.

agency of the marginalized. The Christological reasons to argue for mission from the margins are derived from the ministry of Jesus. In his earthly life, Jesus associated with marginalized people because their lives testified to the injustice of the world and the longing for the fulfilment of abundant life for all.[82] As a result, the relation of Christ to the marginalized serves to confront and transform situations and circumstances which tarnish and hamper human flourishing.[83] *Together towards Life* takes therefore a different perspective from Lee and Phan, since they emphasize that the hybrid Jesus-Christ experienced profound marginalization himself. In *Together towards Life* Christ merely associates with the marginalized, which is less powerful compared to a Christ who truly experiences the force of marginalization with his own body and existence. The rather meagre Christological foundation for the option for the marginalized is further weakened through some significant changes that are made in the finalized version in comparison with an early version of the document. The Christological consequences of the suffering of Christ for the church are in the final version of *Together towards Life* not as profound as they were in a former draft of *Together towards Life*. *Together towards Life* is therefore a document of compromise, in which various churches and theological traditions have had the possibility to contribute. The writing process is therefore characterized by multiple rounds of revision and discussion. In an earlier version, the working draft 11, published in 2012 in the *International Review of Mission*, the consequences of the suffering Christ have been illustrated in a more profound way. In this earlier version, Christ is depicted as the one 'who bears the marks of systemic oppression upon his own flesh.'[84] The solidarity of Christ with those who follow Him is connected with the work of the Spirit: 'The Spirit actualizes Christ's solidarity with the suffering and witnesses to the power of God's grace.'[85] The final version of *Together towards Life* has abandoned the notion of the solidarity of Christ. It uses solidarity solely in connection to the solidarity of church members among each other. All references to the solidarity of Christ are abandoned.[86] The loss of the Christ 'who bears the marks of systemic oppression upon his own flesh' is significant. The dialectic of bodily identification with Christ (the church identifies with Christ – Christ identifies with the church) is lost. Indeed, not only is the aspect of identification lost, but by extension, the dimension of embodiment is written out of the story. *Together towards Life* is concerned with embodiment because it focuses extensively on healing, but the connection between the body, oppression and systemic factors is rendered obsolete in the revised text. The final reason for the reworking of the document is likely to stay unknown. Yet, one could speculate that these theological ideas and their ramifications were too

[82] Ibid., 36.
[83] Ibid., 37.
[84] 'Together toward Life', *International Review of Mission* 101, no. 1 (2012): para. 47.
[85] Ibid., para. 53.
[86] 'Together towards Life', paras 34, 48, 89, 102, 106, 107.

radical for some and could not therefore be incorporated in the final version of the document.

Thus, *Together towards Life* is a significant document considering its influences in churches worldwide and the bold affirmation of mission *from* the margins. Still, the Christology of *Together towards Life* could have been more clearly developed and as a result yields no new insights for our discussion of the marginal Christ.

3.3.2. *Margins and Postmodernity*

Taking up the first question regarding the possibility of opting for the margins in the postmodern condition, Rieger argues that this option has increasingly faded out of sight. Therefore, Rieger argues fervently for the need to recover the role of marginality in theology.[87] Not only does the postmodern condition put restraints on how the margins can be imagined, it actively obscures the importance of the margins in its overwhelming emphasis on difference. The core of Rieger's argument is formed by the statement that the difference between those who are privileged and those who are marginalized increasingly becomes taken up in the totality of difference.[88] Consequently, the postmodern condition is characterized by 'depthlessness,' which indicates the point of rupture caused by the oversight of the foundation[89] of things, such as the question of origin. The 'depthlessness' expressed in the postmodern condition is a 'postmodern myth' because it rests upon an inadequate understanding of the structure of reality.[90] The 'depthlessness' is only witnessed by those who are positively affected by the current economic constellations, but for those who are adversely affected, the postmodern 'depthlessness' proves indeed to be a myth. The real consequences of the economic (and political) climate prove to those on the 'underside of history,'[91] that the 'depthlessness' of postmodernity is hard to sustain. Consequently, postmodernity should not primarily be understood as a thought system, but needs to be viewed in the first place in connection with the actual economic realities it promotes and condones. In the end, Rieger's concern is squarely epistemological: he is concerned with the ways and means of perceiving reality. In his epistemological proposal, the 'underside of history' has a hermeneutical role in perceiving reality. At the

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[87] Joerg Rieger, ed., *Opting for the Margins: Postmodernity and Liberation in Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
[88] Rieger, *Opting for the Margins*, 4.
[89] Although Rieger is critiquing the lack of foundations in the postmodern condition, he is by no means advocating to return to a form of foundationalism. Rather, his epistemological proposal as outlined in this section is his answer to the problems in the postmodern condition.
[90] Rieger, *Opting for the Margins*, 9.
[91] Phrase taken from Gustavo Gutiérrez.

margins of society, one is able to discern realities that are hidden from the perspective of the center. An example from the economic realm clarifies this epistemological principle. In current consumerist societies, hardly any value is ascribed to raw materials. The primary value lies instead in the potential of the raw materials, signifying the potential they possess to be marketed and sold. To be even more specific, in the case of designer clothing, the value is determined primarily by the reputation and cunning of the designer, and does not lie primarily in the material from which the clothes are made. The actual production costs and the worth of the material fade out of sight.[92] Although raw materials do not play a significant part in consumer's imagination, those who actually work with those materials know that their input is crucially important and that the lack of recognition for their work results in subpar work circumstances, inadequate pay and downright exploitation. The difference between affluent consumers and exploited manufacturers is, in the account of Rieger, a form of otherness. Otherness is, therefore, the result of oppression. Otherness is far from 'romantic' or 'exotic.'[93] Although forms of otherness that are produced on the 'underside of history' are certainly not romantic or exotic, those who dwell there have the potential to subvert current postmodern and consumerist ways of thinking. In this respect, they present a far-reaching critique of current consumerism. Furthermore, the ability of those on the 'underside of history' to critique prevailing structures might also contribute to the opening of a new vista towards other, promising alternatives of imagining and structuring the world. In the words of Rieger, a 'surplus' is created that shows that total repression and total control are illusions: openings from which resistance can gain a footing on the ground will inevitably occur. Not all forms of otherness that are displayed in postmodernity are harmless, but occurrences of otherness are social locations from where resistance against domination might spring up.[94]

The ability of those dwelling at the margins of society to offer new vistas forward provides a challenge to the engagement of theology with the underside. The failure of church and theology to align themselves with the underside has resulted in theology's increasing alignment with special interest groups.[95] In other words, the audience that mainline theology caters to diminishes gradually. The new vistas that those on the 'underside of history' can provide should not however result in a

[92] The past decade has witnessed an increase in concern for production circumstances and ecological matters. For example, giant clothing chain H&M sells items made of biologically produced cotton. Furthermore, massive public indignation followed upon the revelation of production conditions in Apple factories in China. Nevertheless, some efforts towards sustainability have become part of the marketing strategies of major brands. Still, developments from the past decade give rise to nuance the perspective of Rieger in this particular instance.
[93] Rieger, *Opting for the Margins*, 15.
[94] Ibid., 16.
[95] Joerg Rieger, *God and the Excluded: Visions and Blind Spots in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 11–12.

form of theological exploitation.[96] Theological exploitation results if the marginalized are used to advance one's own theological agenda. If the marginalized are relegated uncritically to a position of authority, one runs the risk of not recognizing the multiple and often contradictory statements that are made at the margins. Secondly, the opposite danger is reducing the marginalized to passive recipients of help which results in the denial of their agency.

Rieger's contribution is the employment of an epistemological perspective to marginality wherein the marginalized themselves serve to expose unjust social structures. His input is primarily found in the proposal to radically rebuild theology from the perspective of the marginalized. However, one shortcoming of his work is the lack of attention to the proper definition of those who are marginalized and are witnessing reality from the 'underside of history.' The oversight of the definition question does not imply that Rieger is unaware of the dangers that are implicated in his approach. The work of Rieger reads instead as an impassioned critique of mainline theology, which becomes ever more entrapped in its own narrow presuppositions. Yet, it remains questionable to what extent Rieger's critique of mainline theology advances a reductionist perspective of the marginalized. It remains to be seen whether the interests of the marginalized align with the task of subverting mainline theologies. From a perspective of World Christianity, as we have seen in the first chapter, it has become clear that a) the marginalized / those on the 'underside of history' are not a homogeneous group[97] and b) the marginalized are increasingly interested in advancing their own agenda in theology. A case in point is *Together towards Life*, which hardly pays any attention to the particular questions regarding mission involvement that are raised by churches in the West.[98] I take therefore from Rieger his insistence on the epistemological priority of marginalized people, but I continue to search for a perspective on the margins that works more explicitly with a heterogeneous perspective of marginality.

Within the postmodern context, attention to the marginalized is vital to uncover harmful, shallow perceptions of difference, which ultimately lead to the oversight of concrete experiences of marginalization. I asked in the introduction how the Christological ideas of the theologians reviewed in the first part of the chapter can be brought into conversation with the current postmodern climate. The work of Rieger attempts to answer this question by describing the necessity of diverse theological voices who are, from their own standpoint, able to reflect theologically

[96] Joerg Rieger, *Remember the Poor: The Challenge to Theology in the Twenty-First Century* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 1998), 5.
[97] See for example the various working groups that the World Council of Churches employs, which are including persons with disabilities, indigenous people, Dalit's and migrants. See for a list of involvements of the World Council of Churches: https://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do (accessed July 20, 2015).
[98] Gerrit Noort, '"So What?" – Dutch Responses to the New Mission Statement', *International Review of Mission* 102, no. 2 (2013): 191–198.

upon their experiences of marginalization. Yet, it appears that the theologians I have reviewed are primarily interested in finding an answer to the question on how marginality can be understood in relation to the life of Jesus Christ. As Elizondo states, his primary aim is to explain the marginality of Jesus displayed in the social location of Galilee, since the social location of Jesus is a primary point of identification for his audience. Although the stated aim of these theologies is distinct from the project of Rieger, the voices that emphasize marginality continue to make clear that marginality is indeed an important epistemological category and that ignorance of this category comes at theology's own peril.

3.3.3. *Christ the Marginal Stranger*

The material gathered in this section offers a Christologically informed description of marginality of mission, which ties in with the overall goal of the current chapter to provide the rationale for a definition of marginality which is both Christologically centered and provides an antidote to territorially bound perspectives on mission. In this section, I will introduce the work of Gittins, who has advanced the thesis that Jesus is the marginal missionary and that this marginal status is aided by Jesus' frequent role reversals.

For Gittins, mission should not be defined geographically by maintaining a distinction between one's own locality and the locality in which mission is carried out.[99] Instead, Gittins opts for marginality as a defining feature of his theology. The argument supporting marginality has both an epistemological and a Christological dimension. Epistemologically, the marginalized provide those in the center with essential knowledge to understand reality. From their vantage point, they possess the knowledge to know the inner mechanics of the Christian life. In order to share in their perspective of the Christian life, it is necessary to ground oneself explicitly on the margins: a movement towards the margins is required.[100] The Christological dimension of the argument originates from the *Nachfolge* of Christ which is encouraged for every baptized believer. In contrast with the work of, Lee and Phan, the Christological dimension is concerned with the earthly life of Jesus, not venturing into the possibility of the hybrid nature of Jesus-Christ resulting from the crossing of the divine / human border. Gittins opts instead for an analysis of the social interactions of Jesus at the margins of society, which are presented as a model for believers to follow.[101] Privileged followers of Jesus need to learn the language of the marginalized in order to experience the epistemological benefits

[99] Gittins formulated in the 1990s and early 2000s a theology of mission from the perspective of marginality. In two book-length treatments, one published respectively in 1993 but reprinted in 2001 and the other 2002, he develops his thoughts on marginality and mission. Gittins, *Bread for the Journey*, 150. Gittins, *Ministry at the Margins*.
[100] Gittins, *Bread for the Journey*, 151.
[101] Ibid., 158.

of those located on the margins.[102] The epistemological and Christological dimension of his proposal are merging therefore together. The movement towards the margins is connected with the core characteristic of missionary involvement, namely to follow Christ to the margins. For Gittins, the extent of one's involvement in the margins as a witness to Jesus Christ determines one's involvement in mission.[103]

The movement toward the margins as a call for those who are presently not located at the margins becomes even more pronounced in Gittins' 2002 book *Ministry at the Margins*, where Gittins focused on the identity of Christ as a stranger. The stranger-identity of Christ is derived from two passages. The first passage is the story of Matthew 25 in which the marginal nature of the hybrid Christ is primarily located in Christ's status as a stranger. The second passage is the Emmaus story of Luke 24, in which Christ is perceived as the stranger who accompanies two confused followers after the crucifixion events. The incognito-Christ challenges, questions and subverts the story of the disciples on the road. The marginal nature of the hybrid Christ is thereby primarily located in Christ' status as stranger. To be a stranger means to be adaptable to a variety of circumstances which derive from one's social location as far removed from the center. Thus, the Christological foundation enables – via Jesus as the marginal missionary and participating in the ministry of Jesus – a sustained focus on the margins in mission. Jesus is a 'marginal missionary'[104] because He traveled to the boundaries to encounter people who dwelled at various edges. Jesus exhibited some traits of marginality, as being someone without personal status or a location to permanently inhabit. Jesus embodies in his life a plethora of various roles: Jesus is the 'servant-stranger, teacher-learner, host-guest, first-last, one up-one down.'[105] These various roles and functions point to the hybridity of Jesus Christ, who occupied both the roles of the teacher and the learner and was both host and guest. If Jesus Christ could occupy these various roles, the diversity of roles should be a part of the lives of the followers of Christ.[106] If the flexibility in role taking is applied to followers of Christ, it entails that the followers of Christ are called to become strangers themselves and not be content with merely acting out of charity to other strangers.[107] The theological incentives that are determining the reflections of Gittins are radical: Jesus is the marginal missionary. The consequences for the followers of Jesus are equally radical: they are called to acknowledge their marginal status and to repent from

[102] Ibid., 159.
[103] Ibid., 150.
[104] Gittins, *Ministry at the Margins*, 153.
[105] Ibid., 154.
[106] Ibid., 155.
[107] Ibid., 145.

their privilege.[108] The work of Gittins provides important clues on how to restructure Christology through the incorporation of code switching or role reversal, modeled upon the example of Christ. Gittins helpfully challenges the notion of charity, which oftentimes has a staunch condescending character, and which is not modeled upon the example of Christ, but instead upon a do-gooder mentality that elevates the giver of help over the one in need. The work of Gittins is helpful for those who find themselves in positions of relative privilege, since it amplifies the ancient Christian idea of being strangers in this world. The centrality of reciprocity in the proposal of Gittins is safeguarded by his emphasis on the other as the norm for intelligibility, instead of one's own position. This means that the notion of control and power are sidelined in favor of accessibility. As a consequence, risk-taking is favored over approaches in mission that are either magisterial or managerial oriented.[109] Being a stranger is ultimately moving away from one's self-centered perspective, and acknowledging many more perspectives. The idea that one is a stranger, who empties oneself from the centrality of one's own worldview, is a logical consequence of the ideas argued in the first and second chapter, in which Eurocentric, parochial and provincial perspectives on mission were sharply critiqued. The necessity of realigning oneself from one's own perspective in order to allow for the possibility of the plurality of perspectives on one's self, including perspectives wherein one is morally tainted, is a foreshadowing of the chapter on vulnerability, which will explore this idea further to empty oneself of one's own (morally) ingrained self-image.

3.3.4. *Agency and Speaking Power at Various Margins*

The work of Gittins, however helpful his ideas on Jesus as the marginal missionary and the radical nature of the stranger are, shows us only one side of the coin, namely the moral imperative of those who have privileged identities to cross-over to associate with those who have marginalized identities. I endorse the necessity to become strangers, but I question the possibility of the marginalized or the subaltern to exert agency in this design. My concern is mostly with the possibility of those who Gittins considers marginalized to represent and define themselves. The following quote illustrates this concern:

> These forgotten people abound today. They are addicts (alcohol-, food-, drug-, tobacco-, power-, sex-addicts). They are victims of the –isms of others. They are throwaways of the modern world (refugees, migrants, survivors of war). They are handicapped or challenged (physically, mentally, emotionally, morally). And yet, no less than us, they

[108] Ibid., 151.

[109] Anthony J. Gittins, 'Beyond Hospitality? The Missionary Status and Role Revisited', *Currents in Theology and Mission* 21, no. 3 (1994): 165–66.

> are counted among the people for whom Jesus came. They are not far from where we live: just out of sight and maybe out of mind, but not beyond reach.[110]

The problem with this type of language is that a form of commodification of the marginalized arises. The marginalized according to Gittins are akin to unruly classes, who have in past and present posed a threat to society, by virtue of their possibility to upset the status quo. For example, those with disabilities, as I will explain more clearly in the chapter on vulnerability, pose a threat to society since they are able to counter the dominant narrative of humanity defined by independence and ability, a definition of humanity to which persons with disability cannot ascribe to. One should note that in this list deviance is othered and marginalized, especially the type of deviance which has the possibility to make cisgender, heterosexual and white persons uncomfortable. Although these words might sound harsh, I do not wish to discard the intentions, or effects of the works of Gittins, since his work signals the deep desire to be present among the people who are in need of a doctor, echoing the words of Jesus himself (Mark 2:17). This signals, with Costas, a move away from safety and security, a plea to follow Christ 'outside the gate.' Also, Gittins is by no means the only author who constructs such tight distinctions between 'us' and 'them.' A form of objectivation of people considered marginalized is interspersed throughout missiological literature, although *Together towards Life* and the numerous reflections on this document seem to have caused a great shift in speaking about the margins through the emphasis on subjecthood and agency. Authors who wrote before the publication of *Together towards Life*, such as Wayne Holst and Eloise Hiebert Meneses, seem to put the marginalized on display, either as a sight of inspiration and awe of the morality of those on the margins, or as a display of those in need of rescue.[111]

The most poignant question regarding the binary presentation of the marginalized in these authors is, to paraphrase Spivak: can the marginalized speak?[112] In the presence of a strong 'us/them' framework, how is it possible for the subaltern to find her voice? From a Spivakian perspective, it is clear that the scholar is a non-reliable speaker for the subaltern, and by extension that the agenda and means of academia will prove to be non-congruent with the subaltern perspective. Subalternity is not compatible with academic presence, since the very act of speaking and being heard in academia erases the very status of subalternity. The Spivakian problematization of the voice of the subaltern bears heavily on the academic study of mission. This problematization is related to what Mark Lewis Taylor calls the benevolence of granted speech, since the one who grants the speech still remains

[110] Gittins, *Ministry at the Margins*, 153.
[111] Wayne A. Holst, 'A Study of Missionary Marginalization: The Oblates and the Dene Nation of Western and Northern Canada since 1847', *Missiology: An International Review* 26, no. 1 (1998): 37–53; Eloise Hiebert Meneses, 'The Birds of the Air: The Christian Challenge to Culture in Defending the Marginalized', *Missiology* 37, no. 3 (2009): 369–84.
[112] Spivak, '"Can the Subaltern Speak?" [revised Edition]'.

in power to determine whether or not to grant speech.[113] As a consequence, granted speech is a 'key dynamic of imperialism.'[114]

Research of the main missiological journals in 2010 illustrates the problem in terms of equal distribution of various voices. Only 17 of the 84 surveyed articles were written by women, which amounts to a meager 20 percent. In addition, 65 of those 84 articles were written by authors originating from Europe and North America, leaving less than a quarter of the articles written by voices from the two/third worlds. The author of this research, T.S. Drønen, acknowledges that the research sample could have been expanded, but that his findings reflect at the very least a part of the current state of affairs in the discipline.[115] He concludes by stating, (…) 'it becomes clear that the shift of gravity in Christianity does not influence academic studies to any visible extent.'[116] One is therefore pressed to conclude that academic missiology remains a stronghold of male voices from the one/third worlds, and that the voice of the subaltern is largely suppressed by the overwhelming presence of these voices. One interesting irony, actually acknowledged by the author, is that he himself represents the majority of authors in these journals by being a European male. Even though he is needed as an ally, it remains ironic that even a criticism of a critical lack of female voices and voices from the two/third Worlds needs to be voiced by someone who is himself part of the demographic he challenges.

Another significant problem with the possibility of speech by the subaltern is the canonization of certain types of speech in academic convention. Here I follow the lead of Benno van den Toren, who argues that the project of a genuinely intercultural theology is hampered by the sources that are considered suitable for academic conversation. As I have already argued in the first chapter with respect to the plurality of World Christianity, the routine exclusion of oral sources, such as sermons, and popular devotional books, hampers the ability of the subaltern to find her voice in academia.[117]

3.3.5. *Transforming from the Inside*

With Spivak, I have problematized the possibility of the subaltern to speak, but in this section, I want to, very cautiously, point to the possibility of transformation

[113] See for a more extensive overview and evaluation of the work of Taylor, and the possibility to arrive at shared speech by incorporating lament within the missiological discourse, Hof, 'A Missiology of Lament'.
[114] Mark Lewis Taylor, 'Subalternity and Advocacy as Kairos for Theology', in *Opting for the Margins: Postmodernity and Liberation in Christian Theology*, ed. Joerg Rieger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 32.
[115] T. S. Drønen, 'What Are Missiologists Studying and for What Purposes?', *Paper Delivered at the Nordic Institute for Missiology and Ecumenism (NIME), Ackersberg, Sweden*, 2011.
[116] Ibid., 10.
[117] Toren, 'Intercultural Theology as a Three-Way Conversation'.

from the inside. In this chapter on mission from the margins, while lamenting the othering of voices from people with marginalized identities, the vision of the hybrid Jesus-Christ who carries with him the Galilean promise, propels the search for transformative examples and encounters. This can be thought of as a 'transformation of the center from the margins,' to follow Glory Dharmaraj.[118] The transformation from the margins, especially through the agency of women, is enabled by the observation that the reach from various margins is not so far. If women are sidelined in their religious traditions, interreligious dialogue and mutual transformation is aided by the perspective of the margins of their religious traditions. It is often surprisingly easy to reach from the periphery in one religious tradition to the periphery in another religious tradition. This dialogue of daily life easily flies under the radar of the academic world, which is not surprising given the problems of subalternity in academia.[119] The stories about the transformation from the inside shows the agency of those who speak 'outside the gate,' outside the well-known venues of the academic world, as Helene Egnell shows, and most of the time outside of ecclesial institutions as well. The transforming agency and power from the inside is by its very nature difficult to discern when one doesn't share in a specific marginalization. One example is that even when one experiences marginalization as a trans women of color, it can be hard to see the difficulty of navigating an ableist world with an invisible illness. The 'interrogation from the margins,'[120] a phrase coined by Atola Longkumer, reveals the multiple fractures and complicated identities of those who are confronted with various marginalizations. When we take the perspective of interrogation from the margins seriously, it is a logical consequence that those who enjoy privilege in some aspects of their life, will not take the lead in addressing this aspect. Their silence will open up the discursive space to be informed by the perspective of lived experiences of marginalization. This means concretely that white folks will not take the lead in explaining the insidious influences of white privilege on the lives of people of color, but will rather listen to the lived experiences of racial injustice. This takes me to the virtues of silence and humility in stepping back with regard to the discussion of forms of marginalization which one doesn't experience directly. I will further explain these responses in the chapter on vulnerability, as responses when confronted with one's own reactions to the vulnerability of oneself and others. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a further exploration of the multiple fractures of identity, through the employment of intersectionality theory.

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[118] Glory E. Dharmaraj, 'Women as Border-Crossing Agents : Transforming the Center from the Margins', *Missiology* 26, no. 1 (1998): 55–66.

[119] Egnell, 'The Messiness of Actual Existence: Feminist Contributions to Theology of Religions'.

[120] Atola Longkumer, 'Doing Asian Women's Theology', *The Ecumenical Review* 66, no. 1 (2014): 87.

3.4. MARGINALITY AND INTERSECTIONALITY

3.4.1. *Origins in Feminist Theory*

Intersectionality theory is concerned with analyzing and describing how various strands of difference cooperate in shaping privilege and disadvantage. The early development of intersectionality theory find its roots in an article by Kimberlé Crenshaw, who explains how the intersection of race and sex results in a double marginalization of black women.[121] Intersectionality is understood as the 'interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power.'[122] The interaction between the various forms of difference allows intersectional theorists to provide multifaceted accounts of a fractured and complex reality. Feminist theory has gladly taken up the vistas opened up by intersectional theory, since intersectionality explains the differences between women, a main concern in feminist theorizing.[123] While widely acknowledged that intersectional theory is open-ended, sometimes vague and lacking in clarity and methodological consistency,[124] it could also be argued that this very characteristic makes the theory a suitable analytic lens.[125] One of the outcomes of intersectionality analysis in feminist theory is that the sustained attention to the differences of race, class and sexuality serve to dismantle the idea of a homogeneous image of 'women.' As such, intersectionality allows for a 'richer and more complex ontology' in which various epistemologies could be taken into account.[126] A more complex ontology is subsequently able to overturn single-axis analyses by focusing on the various nodes of influence and their subsequent allowance of power constellations.[127] The theoretical wells intersectional theory drinks from are therefore, not surprisingly, postcolonial and poststructuralist.[128] As a logical outcome, intersectionality is able to scrutinize closely the conceptual frameworks that feminist theory has employed, by taking offense at the implicit

[121] Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989, 139–67.
[122] Kathy Davis, 'Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful', *Feminist Theory* 9, no. 1 (2008): 68.
[123] Ibid., 70.
[124] Nash, 'Re-Thinking Intersectionality'; McCall, 'The Complexity of Intersectionality'.
[125] Davis, 'Intersectionality as Buzzword', 78.
[126] Ann Phoenix, Pamela Pattynama, and others, 'Intersectionality', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13, no. 3 (2006): 187.
[127] Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall, 'Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis', *Signs* 38, no. 4 (2013): 787.
[128] Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix, 'Ain't I A Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality', *Journal of International Women's Studies* 5, no. 3 (2013): 82.

western-centric perspectives advanced in some strands of feminist thinking. The theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty published in the late 1980's one of the first criticisms[129] of feminism from the First World, which was, in her interpretation, plagued by a colonizing and condescending dimension.[130] Anne McClintock in the mid-1990's, has shown how British imperialism was mediated by the connection of race, class and gender. The interconnection between the vectors of race, class and gender has affected the perception of the colonial enterprise and played a crucial role to further class distinctions in Britain itself.[131] The colonial other functioned in this period as a useful foil to press for strict gender and class norms within Britain itself.

3.4.2. *Intersectionality in Missiology*

Intersectionality, as an organizing theoretical principle, has to this date garnered hardly any attention in missiological writings. As of early 2015, very few authors are mentioning intersectionality in their missiological work. Significantly enough, the authors I am aware of, who are writing in the discipline of missiology and employ an explicitly intersectional focus, are located at universities in South Africa.[132] The reason for this engagement is understandable: after the era of *Apartheid* had formally ended, inequality did not disappear overnight, but instead appeared once again in various insidious permutations. The framework of intersectionality allows authors who write in a South African context to attend to a transformational framework, searching for fullness of life for all, while paying attention to the various forms of marginalization and their interplay in contemporary Southern Africa.[133] Thias Kgatla explicitly takes the perspective of intersectionality into account through his quest toward developing David Bosch's spirituality of the road[134] along intersectional lines in order to focus on the transformative agenda of mission. Chammah Kaunda searches for liberative communal practices in the context of the church in Swaziland. He offers the following definition of intersection-

[129] Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 'Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies', 804.
[130] Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes'.
[131] McClintock, Imperial Leather. First edition 1995. Commented upon in: Brah and Phoenix, 'Ain't IA Woman?', 80.
[132] Thias Kgatla, 'The Transformational, Intersectional and Transcendental Agenda of Mission: Quest for a Spirituality of the Road', in *Social Engagement: The Challenge of the Social in Missiological Education* (Wilmore: Asbury, 2013), http://place.asburyseminary.edu/firstfruitspapers/27/; Chammah J. Kaunda, 'The Need for Leadership in Gender Justice: Advancing a Missiological Agenda for the Church in Swaziland: Original Research', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35, no. 3 (2014): 1–9; Chris L. De Wet, '"No Small Counsel about Self-Control": Enkrateia and the Virtuous Body as Missional Performance in 2 Clement', *HTS Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (2013): 1–10.
[133] Kgatla, 'The Transformational, Intersectional and Transcendental Agenda of Mission'.
[134] David J. Bosch, *A Spirituality of the Road*, Missionary Studies 6 (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1979).

ality in missiology: 'The missiological imagination addresses issues of gender justice as well as sociocultural, political and economic issues in an intersectional fashion rather than as isolated issues.'[135] The missiological imagination, i.e. creative reflections on mission as a transformative praxis in society, must take into account the interrelatedness of pressing problems in wider society, and not treat them as isolated occurrences. This approach enables Kaunda to treat gender justice as intricately interwoven with the general leadership crisis the church in Swaziland faces at the present moment, and to voice constructive proposals towards the eradication of gender injustice. These three articles connecting missiology and intersectionality are all recently published (2013-2014). As intersectionality theory continues to make deeper inroads in the social sciences, I expect that intersectionality theory will subsequently be more broadly employed within missiology.

3.4.3. *Womanist Theology*

Although intersectional theory seems to be new in missiology, this is by no means the case for theology as a whole, since womanist theologians have carried out pioneering work in this terrain. The development of womanist theology since the 1980s is, by its very nature, based upon intersectional thinking.[136] The development of womanist theology is founded on the recognition that the category of 'women' was incomplete to explain the marginalization and oppression faced by black women. Womanist theology proceeds therefore from the assumption that mainstream, white feminist theology has absolutized the experiences of white women, while not paying enough attention to the ways in which white women, especially middle class and upper class women, have themselves been complacent in the oppression and marginalization of black women. For example, the influx of white middle class women in the labor force, while proving beneficial for the emancipation of those women, was often facilitated by the domestic work carried out by workers of color, who would attend to the households while those privileged women were advancing their careers. Yet the issue of domestic labor and its concomitant labor circumstances and wages were hardly addressed by white feminists. The issues of class and race are therefore the two most important factors in describing the unique challenges faced by black women. The development of womanist theology is consequently a testament to the slow adoption of an intersectional perspective within predominantly white feminist theology. The emergence of womanist theology shows clearly the epistemological priority of the perspective of those who are experiencing multiple marginalizations. At this point, it is also important to emphasize that the intersection of race, class and gender comes with its own permutations, and is more than a simple addition of parts. Racial and

[135] Kaunda, 'The Need for Leadership in Gender Justice', 2.
[136] Stephanie Y. Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2014).

class difference especially can become sexualized in the engagement with black women's bodies, thereby adding to the experience of becoming either invisible or becoming overly sexualized as black bodies living in a racist society. As Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has outlined, the value of intersectionality in women's theology lies exactly in the ability to piece together a comprehensive picture of the kyriarchal oppression. Various theologies originating in the lived experiences of women, such as Mujerista theology, queer theology and womanist theology, each have their own nodes or intersections originating from lived experience.[137] The advent of womanist theology shows therefore that intersection thinking arises out of the lived experience of women who inhabit intersections of race, class and gender, combined with their experiences of faith, in a search for dignity and equal rights, within church contexts, theological discourse and wider society.

3.4.4. *Decolonizing the 'Third-World Women'*

In my own analysis, the question that pertains most directly to my agenda is the following: How does intersectionality theory offer elements that could be beneficial in our search for a perspective on marginality that does not succumb to a shallow and oppressive distinction between the marginalized and the privileged? The answer to this question will be further complicated by our earlier reference to the work of Rieger, who was critical of the endless enumeration of difference in postmodernism, which results in the omission of the necessary attention to power dynamics and oppression. It is therefore essential that my analysis of intersectionality does not succumb to the danger of the endless enumeration of difference, but explicitly creates room for critical engagement with oppression. In this respect, intersectionality provides a new and surprising way of forging alliances between feminists from various schools, especially between poststructuralist feminists and feminist theorists of race, class and gender. Poststructuralist feminists were accused by the politically driven feminist theories of not paying enough attention to the concrete material oppression resulting from enumeration of difference. Likewise, the poststructuralist feminist school had trouble following through with some of the concerns of the more politically inclined theorist such as the emphasis on identity politics. Intersectionality theory proved to be effective in creating a common project between the two theoretical schools, because it spoke to the concerns of both: on the one hand the emphasis on concrete materiality, on the other hand the concern with the deconstruction of monolithic entities.[138] Intersectionality is therefore well-suited to enable me to both accomplish a more nuanced perspective on marginality which actively pushes back against unwarranted generalizations, while still maintaining a critical and liberative perspective.

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[137] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision: Explorations in Feminist The*logy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011).
[138] Davis, 'Intersectionality as Buzzword', 73–74.

My entry for engaging with insights from intersectionality theory is through the work of Mohanty, whose work is considered to be one of the classic articulations of intersectionality theory.[139] Her work is helpful for my agenda since she clearly expresses a postcolonial viewpoint. Her frequently reprinted[140] article, first published in 1988, gave rise to the publication in 2003 of the reception history of the 1988 article. Both essays have their own focal points, and both pertain to my question. The 1988 article is primarily concerned with outlining how Eurocentric perspectives on feminism constructed an essentialized perspective on third world women and how those third world women were, by the process of essentialization, robbed of their unique voices. Because this project mainly challenged the Eurocentric perspective of much of feminism, and therefore advocated strongly the difference and agency of Third world women, less room was devoted to the value of commonality.[141] Commonalities are uncovered when, through a process of acknowledging mutuality and co-implication, the myriads connections between the plights of women worldwide come to light.[142] The point of the 1988 article was to outline how third world women were placed outside of social structures because of their essentialized nature.[143] In this process, they acquired characteristics like the 'veiled woman, the powerful mother, the chaste virgin, the obedient wife.'[144] Because women are placed outside the social structures and not within them, it becomes next to impossible to scrutinize how various vectors and axes have contributed to the actual circumstances with which women in the third world have to contend. Especially in the case that these structures concerned are discarded as being 'underdeveloped' or 'developing,' the distance between the feminists who originate from the developed world and the third world women is widened. Not only is distance created, the very structuring of center and periphery is mediated by the essentializing and othering of third world women. The next step in the argument of Mohanty is crucial, since she links the condescending stance of feminists from affluent parts of the world to the very construction of center and periphery. By describing the third world women as the perennial other, and by locating them in the underdeveloped / developing periphery, the center of the first world becomes established. In short: 'It is not the center that determines the periphery, but the periphery, that, in its boundedness, determines the center.'[145] In other words, the construction of the periphery is necessary in order to place oneself at the center. In the process, the third world women remain the other. The subsequent

[139] Ann Denis, 'Review Essay: Intersectional Analysis A Contribution of Feminism to Sociology', *International Sociology* 23, no. 5 (2008): 631.
[140] Mohanty, '"Under Western Eyes" Revisited', 499. Note 1.
[141] Ibid., 504.
[142] Ibid., 521–22.
[143] Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes', 351.
[144] Ibid., 352. The original text is in italics.
[145] Ibid., 353.

solution of Mohanty for this pressing problem is to point to the various intersections that are shaping the lives of third world women and consequently to shun away from all forms of patronizing essentialization.

In her 2003 article, Mohanty still affirms the agenda she set in the late 1980's, but recognizes in the change of tides the necessity to emphasize commonality in order not to be held captive by the endless enumeration of differences. First of all, she develops a slightly different set of terms to discuss the global distribution of difference in feminist discourse. As we have seen in the first chapter, Mohanty prefers to use the terms One-Third/Two-Third World, instead of the terms Western / Third World. The newer expression of One-Third / Two-Thirds world distances itself from a purely geographical perspective and allows for the more prominent inclusion of disenfranchised people within the geographic West.[146]

How does this newer framework of One-Third/Two-Third world enable the utilization of intersectionality? And how does this framework account for a stress on commonality as a counterbalance to the stress on difference? To this end, Mohanty discusses three models of feminist engagement with international factors, two of which she finds wanting. The first model is firmly established within colonial discourse and maintains a 'Eurocentric gaze.'[147] The second model resembles area-studies by focusing upon the plight of women worldwide. Yet, this model does not allow for exploring the various interconnections between the local and the global but treats the life of women in various parts of the world as mostly self-contained. The third model, adopted by Mohanty, allows for the interconnectedness of the lives of women worldwide. The model of the One-Third/Two-Third world is a necessary development to describe the various forms of disenfranchisement experienced by women, which are not necessarily restricted to the crude distinction between West/Two-Third worlds. By highlighting interconnectedness and communality, solidarity is allowed to emerge.[148] How does this third model, as advocated by Mohanty, play out in practice? Mohanty argues that one should start with the perspective of marginalized women worldwide in order to make the most significant inroads in the pursuit of social justice.[149] The attention to marginalized women worldwide is not a special-interest topic that has few direct benefactors. Instead, Mohanty hopes that the adoption of this perspective will contribute to the envisioning of a just society for all. One must note that although the term 'marginalized' is employed by Mohanty, it should be interpreted in light of the plea for intersectionality she has advanced. The priority ascribed to those who witness marginality in whatever form, has structural similarities with the epistemological similarity of the marginalized proposed by Rieger. I have found therefore in Mohanty a clear articulation of the epistemological priority of the marginalized, combined

[146] Mohanty, '"Under Western Eyes" Revisited', 505–6.
[147] Ibid., 518.
[148] Ibid., 518–25.
[149] Ibid., 510.

with an intersectional perspective which allows for continual negotiation and fluidity of multiple and changing instances of marginalization.

3.4.5. *Towards a Planetary Consciousness*

Our review of intersectionality revealed the decolonizing stance that cannot be removed from the theory. Intersectionality is concerned with shifting from single-axis analysis to multi-axis analysis, allowing for the study of how various forms of difference are yielding various forms of both privilege and marginalization. It radically discards Eurocentric forms of discourse since the very structure responsible for the 'othering' of non-Western women is questioned. Consequently, a conceptual space is opened for new and imaginative forms of communality, which are characterized by emphasis on solidarity, without losing sight of the irreducibility of difference. Intersectionality is therefore more than just a neat theory to account for the perceived elements, such as class, race and gender, which work together in creating and maintaining oppression. At its very root lies the concern to overcome the problems of homogenization, essentialization and othering that occur in the engagement with the third world 'other.' These traits are needed in the project of this chapter, one that seeks to articulate a perspective on the margins that doesn't succumb to erecting ever more distinctions between 'us/them.' We can therefore conclude that the approach of intersectionality for our project proves fruitful, since intersectionality and a decolonizing stance are intricately connected, as was shown from the work of Mohanty. Mohanty has made clear that a critique of oppression starts with 'what is unseen, undertheorized, and left out in the production of knowledge about globalization.'[150] Mohanty shares therefore many of the presuppositions and conclusions with Rieger, since they both advocate for the epistemological priority of the marginalized. Yet, Mohanty is able to overcome the lingering problem of Rieger, namely that the marginalized are becoming a monolithic category. Instead, Mohanty favors a transnational and multi-axial approach that overcomes the fetishizing of 'difference' within the postmodern cultural climate. Intersectionality finds itself at home in a planetary perspective, since intersectionality has a keen eye for how difference is produced and maintained through the construction and maintenance of various centers and peripheries. For example, intersectional analysis demystifies the idea of 'women' as a monolithic group, but rather pays attention to how the construction of womanhood as familial and domestic in the Victorian era in Great Britain, could only exist with the simultaneous devaluing of women's tradition and lived experience in the British colonial territories.[151] As a consequence, intersectionality analysis employs a planetary perspective, not only in the sense of paying attention to transnationality, but takes the

[150] Ibid.
[151] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*.

production of marginalization along environmental lines into account. To unpack this statement further, this means that intersectionality pays attention to the ways environmental hazards are oftentimes unequally distributed along class, race and gender lines, and how marginalization has an environmental impact too. The aid of intersectional analysis allows this chapter to answer the questions of center and periphery, by contributing to a more dynamic, fluid and resistance inducing account of the production of multiple, interlocking centers and peripheries.

3.5. CONCLUSION

Together towards Life shows that an important epistemological leap has taken place in mission theology: mission from the margins has become a defining concept. Yet, *Together towards Life*, as well as other sources within mission studies, continues to work within a static conception of the margins. Relatively little investment has been made to ensure the proper delineation of the boundaries of this concept. Without a well-articulated definition of marginality, the danger arises that a binary conception of margins and center is employed. This chapter has sought therefore to advance a mission theology of marginality which does not succumb to essentialist perspectives on marginality. In order to articulate a full theology of marginality, various authors have been reviewed who mostly locate / have located themselves outside or on the fringes of Western academic theology. By virtue of their status as outsiders, they have been able to utilize their marginal status as outsiders as a powerful incentive in the articulation of their theories. This chapter builds therefore forth on the second chapter by destabilizing the center/margin structure that was a characterizing feature of modernity. The emphasis on the margins as a privileged place to encounter Christ is therefore a direct criticism on the centrist thinking of the colonial condition. Marginality through an intersectional lens provides therefore both a critique on centrist thinking as well as a creative subversion of it by putting the emphasis on the marginal Christ.

My interlocutors with regard to the theological foundation of marginality have been primarily those who work with Christological resources to make clear a) the importance of the social location of Christ and b) the marginalized and hybrid nature of Jesus-Christ. Marginality as a defining concept in mission theology rests upon the interpretation of Christ and the marginal status that Christ employs both by virtue of His incarnation and by virtue of his social location in Israel. The work of Costas shows me how Jesus' death outside the gate of the holy city has direct ramifications for a critique of contemporary mission practices. Jesus is outside, outside of safety, outside the compound and outside of a rigorous orthodoxy. Since salvation happens outside, the preoccupation with safety and manageability and salvation for those comfortably inside takes on an almost idolatrous character. A postcolonial line in the work of Costas is therefore the vehement critique against

the idolatry of safety and salvation for the in-crowd. As a consequence, the periphery, the perpetual outside, can never be a fixed given, but moves along with Jesus himself.

From Elizondo, I take the insistence of the viewpoint that the Galilean factor of the earthly existence of Jesus pointed to the borderland. The Galilean borderland forms therefore a more poignant way of interpreting the earthly life of Jesus than the center of power in Jerusalem. Galilee will never become a center in the conventional meaning of the word, since the centrist logic of Jerusalem as a site of religious authority will not be continued in Galilee. Goizueta takes the thoughts of Elizondo a step further and considers Galilee the place to encounter the glory of God. Galilee is the guarantee of God: in the same way as God was with Christ in the borderland, in the same way will God continue to fulfill his mission. Koyama argues that the scandal of Jesus Christ is seen in the unprecedented reversal of the center and the periphery. The periphery has become the center, the center the periphery. Koyama works however within a binary perspective on center and periphery, and I chose therefore to interpret his work through the lens of Elizondo and Goizueta, who stress that the values of the margin are too subversive to simply exchange the center and periphery. The work of Elizondo, Goizueta and Koyama shows that marginality lies at the heart of the mission of Christ. Reflecting on Christology from the perspective of the margins allows for various anchor points. For Elizondo and Goizueta the primary interpretive event is the Galilee theme, while for Koyama the interpretive significance is primarily placed upon the emotional reactions in confrontation with the counter-intuitive witness of Christ.

In reviewing the work of Jeong, it became clear that he anchors mission from a position of weakness in the move of Jesus to the margins. However, his approach is less suitable for my project since the marginality of Jesus himself is not an existential marginality, but is mediated by a conscious desire to locate himself in the periphery.

The next two authors take a different approach and locate the marginal nature of Christ in the border crossing of Christ between the divine and the human. Phan argues that Christ turns into a marginal person by virtue of his character as the ultimate border crosser. Christ locates himself at the borders and is therefore able to subvert the conventional logic of the center. Christ, the border-crosser par excellence, leads the way in how His followers should subvert the logic of the center. The margin becomes therefore never the center according to dominant logic, but is considered instead the 'margin-center.'

Lee names the transformed margin the 'focal point' or 'creative core.' Lee draws from experiences in his own life as a migrant in the United States. He sketches three perspectives on marginality, namely marginality as in-between (the classic definition), marginality as in-both (the contemporary definition), plus Lee's own definition in which marginalization is in-beyond, signifying the excess meaning that results from being at home in two cultures at once. Lee applies the

idea of the in-beyond to Christ, who becomes subsequently the hyphenated Jesus-Christ who crossed the border of both the human and the divine. The in-beyond conception helps us to overcome binary and monolithic articulations of marginality.

For mission theology, it means that the margin-center or creative core / focal point has already been inaugurated and put into place. The incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Christ point to the decisive act of border crossing and embodiment of marginality by the hyphenated Christ, the Border-Crosser par excellence. I conclude therefore that the task of mission is to follow the lead of the margin center, resting assured in the Galilean promise: the Jesus movement will continue in the same way as the movement was conceived. The task of mission encounters is to embrace and adopt the scandalousness of Jesus-Christ instead of rejecting the stumbling block that Christ poses for centrist logic. Through the embrace and *imitatio* of the scandalous, hybrid Christ, authentic marginal mission encounters are taking place.

In the second part of the chapter, I sought to answer two additional questions. In the first place, I articulated the necessity of an engagement with marginality in the postmodern condition. Secondly, I asked the question regarding the implications for a mission theology governed by marginality. The first question I sought to answer via my recourse to the work of Rieger, who argues that the postmodern condition is characterized by a profound depthlessness. In other words, the endless enumeration of difference makes it difficult to take a stance for those at the 'underside of history' who bear the brunt of the forces of globalization and capitalism. The perspective from the margins is therefore a necessary epistemological position that allows one to dismantle and subvert the centrist logic that upholds current power structures.

The emphasis on the marginality of Christ leads to the assertion, with Gittins, that Jesus-Christ is indeed the marginal stranger. As Jesus-Christ engaged in multiple roles, such as the host and the guest, followers of Jesus-Christ are called to employ a variety of roles and to engages in role-switching. The emphasis on the versatility of roles one can inhabit in one's life cautions against holding on too firmly to the role of 'marginalized,' since this is a severe reduction of the complexity of people's lives. Even though I have denounced an almost essentialist distinction between privileged and marginalized, the uncomfortable question inspired by Spivak still needs to be answered: can one speak from a position of marginalization? This question remains even more uncomfortable in light of the sobering statistics on whose voice gets heard in the main missiological journals: women and people from the Two-Third World are severely underrepresented. This complex problem doesn't know a quick-fix, but instead I have pointed to the possibility of transformation from the inside, from within subject positions characterized by marginality.

The discussion of intersectionality allows one to articulate a definition of marginality that is multi-axial, complex and nuanced, and allows for the explicit and unequivocal rejection of monolithic and essentializing accounts of marginality. Intersectionality recognizes ever more vectors of oppression, such as race, class, ability, gender, sex, sexual orientation, nationality, religion and age. This means that a multi-axial analysis allows for multiple and interlocking accounts of marginalization: it is possible to be marginalized in one aspect of one's life while being privileged in other aspects. Intersectional thought informs the reading of World Christianity as a field of inquiry, because it provides the tools to uncover multiple triggers, causes and explanations for continued racial bias, fear of the non-Western other, self-righteousness and an unabated faith in 'development.' The work of Mohanty has allowed me to consider the construction of a center as the result of colonizing ideas that constituted a periphery of Third World women. Consequently, these women were the subject of a process of othering. The consequence of her work is that centrist logic is intricately connected with a colonial mindset. The disruption and subversion of this centrist logic is thereby a decolonizing act. In this chapter, I have sought to undertake this decolonizing act through the deployment of authors who have themselves experienced marginalization and have painted a kaleidoscopic picture of the marginalized and hybrid Christ.

4. Vulnerability

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The adoption of an intersectionality framework to aid the discussion of marginality in mission theology brings us to the topic of vulnerability. Vulnerability is conventionally ascribed to persons who are marginalized and consequently vulnerability can reinforce yet another dichotomy between those who are powerful and those who are deemed vulnerable. This mechanism will be questioned within this chapter, since it is my hypothesis that vulnerability will provide a robust vista towards postcolonial mission encounters.

The basic observation from which vulnerability is derived is that human beings are characterized by their porous borders to the outside world. Humans have fundamentally the possibility to be affected by a myriad of factors. In the work of authors such as Kristine Culp,[1] this fundamental openness of humanity is characterized with the word vulnerability. Vulnerability is, in this case, the openness, both towards the human other and towards the divine. The fundamental human openness allows one to be affected, both for the good as well as for the evil. In the words of Erin Gilson, 'Simply put, it is only because one is vulnerable that one can be harmed (or benefited).'[2]

Across a range of disciplines, it is now recognized that the opposite of vulnerability, invulnerability, accounts for a spate of societal problems. From the perspective of disability studies, invulnerability as a societal norm leads to the downplaying of the experiences of people with disabilities. One result of striving to maintain one's invulnerability is the reduction of persons with disability to abnormal creatures in need of tutelage.[3] From the perspective of critical race theory, new theories are emerging which tackle the ideal of invulnerability, which is now considered as a factor in the perpetuation of racism. Only by posing oneself as the invulnerable, impenetrable person, one allows oneself to become impervious to the gaze of the other and the other's critical reflection of one's behavior.[4] Finally, from a feminist theological perspective, forays are made into a dialogical and multi-religious understanding of vulnerability.[5]

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[1] Kristine A. Culp, *Vulnerability and Glory: A Theological Account* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010).

[2] Gilson, 'Vulnerability, Ignorance, and Oppression', 309.

[3] Angharad E. Beckett, *Citizenship and Vulnerability: Disability and Issues of Social and Political Engagement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

[4] Alison Bailey, 'On White Shame and Vulnerability', *South African Journal of Philosophy* 30, no. 4 (2011): 472–483. Gilson, 'Vulnerability, Ignorance, and Oppression'.

[5] 'Arbeitsstelle Feministische Theologie und Genderforschung', accessed 23 February 2015,

In the most common reading of the term, vulnerability is understood as a privative category, a *privatio boni*, the lack of something that should be present and is desirable to possess.[6] Being vulnerable is in this reading a shortcoming, a lack of possession of the ideal of invulnerability. Invulnerability is connected with being strong, self-sufficient, and controlled. The desire to consider oneself invulnerable is related to the unacknowledged norm of invulnerability in contemporary society. Showing control and the possession of self-mastery are prerequisite of being taken seriously as an actor in society. The negative perception of vulnerability could therefore easily lead to the production of invulnerability. This negative perception of vulnerability as weakness, depreciation and debilitation results consequently in an attempt to strive for the opposite characteristics: to be strong, self-contained and independent. Yet, as Judith Butler has shown, high costs are involved in the denial of human vulnerability and the attempt to strive towards invulnerability. The denial of vulnerability could result in violence on various levels, both epistemological and physical, and violence ultimately leads to even more violence. She therefore advices to engage in the 'mindfulness of this vulnerability.'[7]

The recent recognition of the salient importance of vulnerability and the denouncement of invulnerability has not been thriving within the discipline of missiology. Yet, one of the tasks of postcolonial missiology is to research how mission and empire have been entangled and continue to be intricately connected in multiple instances. In the postcolonial context of World Christianity, issues of power abuse on the one hand, and empowerment on the other hand, are of all-consuming importance.[8] Missiology has to wrestle with its history (and present!) of suspect or problematic use of power too often compromised by its participation in colonial patterns of rule. A decolonial stance involves not only the active uncovering of the implications of mission in empire, but also searches actively for postcolonial alternatives. My hypothesis is therefore that a theology of vulnerability might contribute to new ideas of how mission can be conceptualized in the postcolonial context of World Christianity. A theology of vulnerability could play a role in raising awareness of the role of invulnerability within past and contemporary discourses of mission. The discipline of missiology has stressed the necessity of partnership, mutuality and friendship as a way to come to terms with the legacy of the entanglement of mission and empire.[9] These accounts are helpful in so far they point to the salient dimension of inter-human contact as foundational for mission. As I

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http://www.uni-muenster.de/FB2/aktuelles/tff/ESWTR_Konferenz2014.html.

[6] Marianne Moyaert, 'On Vulnerability: Probing the Ethical Dimensions of Comparative Theology', *Religions* 3, no. 4 (2012): 1144–61.

[7] Judith Butler, Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence (London: Verso, 2004), 29.

[8] Mery Kolimon, 'Empowerment: A New Generative Theme of Christian Mission in a Globalized World', *Exchange* 40 (2011): 35–56.

[9] Cathy Ross, 'The Theology of Partnership', International Bulletin of Missionary Research 34, no. 3 (2010): 145–48; Heuertz and Pohl, Friendship at the Margins.

have argued in my first chapter with the help of Klippies Kritzinger, mission is understood and defined by the encounters that take place between human actors. Kritzinger proposed to understand missiology as encounterology: the discipline that is concerned with outlining how the mission of God takes shape within and through these encounters.[10] Yet, true encounters carry risks with them since unequal power differentials could easily disrupt the potential for encounter. Hence the sustained stress on partnership, mutuality and friendship, which are proposed in order to safeguard that encounters indeed are carried out on equal footing. Although the theological basis for partnership, friendship and mutuality is largely undisputed and has entertained through the years a near-consensus state within missiology,[11] the concomitant results of partnership have often been less rose-colored.[12] Apparently, as many devastating critiques of current practices show,[13] unequal power relationships are not avoided by implementing practices of mutuality and partnership. Instead, inequality finds new ways to seep into mission practice, especially where the mutations of neocolonial constellations run deep.[14]

We are therefore presented with a situation in which, on the one hand, awareness within the discipline exists about the debilitating results of inequality, paternalistic usage of funds and resources, and skewed decision making. This awareness extends to the knowledge about the changed demographic within World Christianity and the necessity to come to terms with the new challenges this paradigm poses for our rethinking of mission. Reflection has commenced in several areas on how to rethink mission in these new constellations, as I have outlined in my first chapter. In the former chapter, I have contributed to the ongoing reflection by outlining how marginality could play a decisive role in furthering reflections on the nature of mission in the postcolonial setting of World Christianity. Marginality, when conceptualized through the lens of intersectionality, has the ability to disrupt obsolete patterns of center and periphery by problematizing the binary of center versus periphery through the recognition of multiple margins and centers. Consequently, the binary between the powerful and the marginalized became questioned. The present chapter takes the results of the chapter on marginality one step further. It attempts to scrutinize the idea of vulnerability in the hope and expectation to find in this concept on the one hand new ways to dismantle power and privilege within the current constellation of World Christianity, and on the other

[10] Kritzinger, 'Faith to Faith – Missiology as Encounterology'.
[11] Walls, 'The Ephesian Moment: At a Crossroads in Christian History'.
[12] Stanley H. Skreslet, 'The Empty Basket of Presbyterian Mission: Limits and Possibilities of Partnership', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 19, no. 3 (1995): 98.
[13] Jonathan J. Bonk, 'Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem ... Revisited', 2007; Mary T. Lederleitner, Cross-Cultural Partnerships: Navigating the Complexities of Money and Mission (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2010).
[14] Joerg Rieger, 'Theology and Mission between Neocolonialism and Postcolonialism', *Mission Studies* 21, no. 2 (2004): 201–27.

hand to conceptualize vulnerability in such a way that it offers constructive impulses in order to become an integral part of mission theology. Vulnerability will be able to function as a critique of a posture of invulnerability, and as such is both a critique and a generative theme at home in a postcolonial theology of mission.

How is this agenda carried out in this chapter? In the first place, a review of resources within missiology is needed. I will provide an overview of authors, documents and organizations that have already worked with the concept of vulnerability within a theology of mission. This overview will commence with David Bosch, whose plea for the vulnerability of missionaries has been influential in defining the contours of vulnerability in mission.[15] Secondly, I trace the development of vulnerability in ecumenical missiology by discussing two major statements issued by the World Council of Churches on mission. The 1982 statement *Mission and Evangelism*[16] (1982) and *Together towards Life*[17] (2012) provide insights into the development of vulnerability within ecumenical missiology. Furthermore, the Alliance of Vulnerable Mission is a relatively new player within missiology. Jim Harries, who is the chairman of the Alliance of Vulnerable Mission, has published a great deal of material on this topic.[18] Since the Alliance not only proposes a theoretical underpinning for their emphasis on vulnerability, but also reflect on the praxis of vulnerable mission, I will treat their contribution to the ongoing discussion separately. Apart from these works in which vulnerability is advocated, I briefly will discuss some minor works on the topic in order to discover whether or not these bring some new strands of thought to the table. I will mine all these works by asking the question 'in which theological loci do they anchor their conception of vulnerability?' By having first scrutinized them to uncover the options to anchor vulnerability in various theological loci, I will have a clearer grasp to evaluate those authors and documents for their usefulness in constructing a postcolonial missiology in World Christianity. By evaluating, I mean that I will outline to which extent they are sensitive towards postcolonial questions as I have laid out in my introductory chapter. For example, I will focus on how they evaluate the usage of missionaries: if missionaries are primarily considered actors from the Western world, this displays a lack of awareness of the need to decenter the experiences of Western missionaries in favor of local agency.[19]

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[15] David J. Bosch, *The Vulnerability of Mission: A Lecture Delivered on 30th November 1991 to Mark the 25th Anniversary of St Andrew's Hall, the Missionary College at Selly Oak* (Birmingham: Selly Oak Colleges, 1991).

[16] 'Mission and Evangelism'.

[17] 'Together towards Life'.

[18] Jim Harries, *Vulnerable Mission: Insights into Christian Mission to Africa from a Position of Vulnerability* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2011).

[19] As advocated for example by Kollman, 'After Church History? Writing the History of Christianity from a Global Perspective'; Kollman, 'Understanding the World-Christian Turn in the History of Christianity and Theology'.

Yet, as is to be expected, these resources will not be able to exhaustively answer the goal I have posed for this chapter. I will therefore employ resources from outside the discipline of missiology, in order to develop more fully my response to the research question posed by this project. Most notably, resources from feminist theology are expected to be beneficial since they are likely to provide a balanced, nuanced and, at times critical perspective on vulnerability. On the one hand, vulnerability is eschewed by some authors, such as Daphne Hampson, who posits that promoting vulnerability for women is counterproductive, since women have traditionally been sidelined to harmful positions of vulnerability.[20] Still, authors like Sarah Coakley argue for the 'right' type of vulnerability, and depict vulnerability primarily as an opening of the self towards the divine.[21] By further scrutinizing the discussion between Hampson and Coakley, I hope to discuss the possibility of understanding vulnerability in a positive sense as an openness towards the divine. Coakley is primarily interested in the vulnerability which is displayed in the relationship between the human and the divine. Her articulation needs therefore to be supplemented by other accounts which focus on inter-human communication. I find those in the work of Aristotle Papanikolaou and Carolyn Chau, who both build forth on the work of Coakley.[22]

The account of Coakley, and in her wake, of Papanikolaou and Chau, rests heavily on the idea of *kenosis*, the self-emptying of Jesus Christ which displayed his desire not to cling to harmful forms of power. The discussion of *kenosis* leads inevitably to questions about the bodily nature of vulnerability. Vulnerability is never disembodied and abstract, but rests upon the concrete possibilities of transformation, harm and blessing that bodies experience. Within the human body, vulnerability manifests itself. These bodily experiences beg for interpretation. Especially in a postcolonial context, the discussion of bodily vulnerability is pressing. Colonial legacies of disciplining and controlling bodies of colonial subjects have resulted in 'memories in the flesh.'[23] This harrowing legacy of colonialism results in the need to theorize about the 'lasting effects in local and global understandings and experiences of embodiment.'[24] To engage in body-talk in a missiological discourse is therefore difficult and sensitive, because of the complicity of missionary

[20] Margaret Daphne Hampson, 'On Power and Gender', *Modern Theology* 4, no. 3 (1988): 234–50.
[21] Sarah Coakley, 'Kenosis and Subversion: On the Repression of "Vulnerability" in Christian Feminist Writing', in *Swallowing a Fishbone? Feminist Theologians Debate Christianity*, ed. Daphne Hampson (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1996).
[22] Aristotle Papanikolaou, 'Person, Kenosis and Abuse: Hans Urs von Balthasar and Feminist Theologies in Conversation', *Modern Theology* 19, no. 1 (2003): 41–65; Carolyn A. Chau, '"What Could Possibly Be Given?": Towards an Exploration of Kenosis as Forgiveness—Continuing the Conversation Between Coakley, Hampson, and Papanikolaou', *Modern Theology* 28, no. 1 (2012): 1–24.
[23] Mayra Rivera Rivera, 'Unsettling Bodies', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26, no. 2 (1 September 2010): 120. She takes this expression from Luce Irigaray.
[24] Ibid.

efforts in the colonial power arrangements.[25] Yet, precisely because of this legacy, there is a pressing need for a conceptual space where these matters could be addressed instead of remaining silent about them.

How then to theorize about the concrete bodily vulnerability? Resources developed within disability studies lead the way. Most helpful is literature which takes the opportunity to theorize about disability from a theological perspective. The work of Thomas Reynolds provides us with important clues on how to advocate for *vulnerable communion*,[26] a community centered on the active welcoming and receiving of those differently abled. In order to be truly welcoming and inclusive, dominant ideas about disability as a deficit needs to be turned around. Instead of focusing on disability, which is produced by the so-called 'cult of normalcy,' the distinction between able-bodied and disabled blurs. The final search of Reynolds is for transformative redemption and the enabling role vulnerability plays in redemption. I attempt to gain from the account of Reynolds how vulnerability can play a decisive role in the search for human flourishing within an open, welcoming community. A constructive account on a welcoming community is needed within the current constellation in mission which is still continuing its struggle to overcome various dichotomies, such as the marginalized / privileged.

The account of Reynolds leaves the question open as to how a theology of vulnerability can contribute to a stance of resistance regarding profound and debilitating acts of injustice carried out in the face of vulnerability. I will therefore turn to the work of Elizabeth O'Donnell Gandolfo,[27] who has paved the way for communal responses to wronged vulnerability. She focuses on the necessity of truth-telling in community, because truth-telling will challenge narratives that cover up or ignore violation of vulnerability. The communal element provides solidarity and resilience in the face of what Edward Schillebeeckx has called 'contrast experiences.'

Vulnerability is a multi-layered concept, in which vulnerability has potential both for good and for evil. Evil is located in the distortion and violation of vulnerability. Evil is consequently the violation of the boundaries of the vulnerable self. This particular way of theorizing about vulnerability is defended by Mary Potter Engel.[28] Let me thus state unequivocally that not all forms of vulnerability are

[25] See also: Mayra Rivera Rivera, 'A Labyrinth of Incarnations: The Social Materiality of Bodies', in Resistance and Visions - Postcolonial, Post-Secular and Queer Contributions To Theology and the Study of Religions, ed. U. Auga et al., Journal of the European Society of Women in Theological Research 22 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 187–98.

[26] Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008).

[27] Elizabeth O'Donnell Gandolfo, 'Vulnerability, Resilience, and Resistance: A Theology of Divine Love' (Emory University, 2013), http://pid.emory.edu/ark:/25593/d78b3.

[28] Mary Potter Engel, 'Evil, Sin and Violation of the Vulnerable', in *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, ed. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 159–72.

contributing to human flourishing. We are thus searching, together with Coakley, for the right forms of vulnerability. I affirm therefore, with Coakley, that we are not looking for 'an undiscriminating adulation of vulnerability.'[29] One should therefore be careful to make distinctions between the 'right' form of vulnerability and the types of vulnerability that are open to abuse.[30] Within missiology, the 'right' kind of vulnerability takes the postcolonial context of World Christianity into account. From this perspective, it is important that vulnerability is not outlined solely with the concerns of the mission workers from the Western world into mind. I strive therefore towards perspectives that are not primarily interested in foregrounding the concerns of those who have already have set the agenda in mission for a considerable time.

What will be gained if we search for the right forms of vulnerability? Ultimately, in the words of Reynolds, we are searching for ways of reflecting on vulnerability that are leading us to the 'wellspring of our own flourishing' instead of cutting us off from these wellsprings.[31]

4.2. DAVID BOSCH

This section focuses on the role of vulnerability in the theology of Bosch and will provide a scrutiny of the foundational work that Bosch has laid in the description of the concept.[32] The role of vulnerability in Bosch's mission theology will, because of the foundation role Bosch played in proposing vulnerability, also shed light on the genesis of the concept in mission theology. Bosch discusses vulnerability in two articles, in which he grapples both with dialogue and the essence of mission. The first article, published in 1988, explores the nature of interreligious dialogue.[33] Bosch takes issue with forms of dialogue that reduce dialogue to a process with a premeditated outcome, such as the claim that all religions basically lead to the same goal. The outcome of the dialogue process is consequently uncertain for Bosch, but should be characterized by genuine openness towards the other. Any form of usurpation of the religious other is consequently a grave offense against humanity. Vulnerability as a necessary trait in interreligious dialogue prevents dialogue from succumbing to an assured self-centeredness. Vulnerability

[29] Coakley, 'Kenosis and Subversion', 106.
[30] Ibid., 109.
[31] Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 111.
[32] See for the biographic embedding the publications by Bosch' former colleagues and friends J. N. J. Kritzinger and Willem A. Saayman, *David J. Bosch: Prophetic Integrity, Cruciform Praxis* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2011); Willem A. Saayman and J.N.J. Kritzinger, eds., *Mission in Bold Humility: David Bosch's Work Considered* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996); Willem A. Saayman, 'David Bosch -- Some Personal Reflections', *Mission Studies* 26, no. 2 (2009): 214–28.
[33] David J. Bosch, 'The Church in Dialogue : From Self-Delusion to Vulnerability', *Missiology* 16, no. 2 (1988): 131–47.

however does not result in an 'anything goes' attitude, but instead focuses on the essential characteristic of Christianity, in the classic formulation of Bonhoeffer, to be the church for others.

In 1991, Bosch delivered a lecture at the Missionary College at Selly Oak, Birmingham, entitled *The Vulnerability of Mission*.[34] This widely circulated lecture focuses on questions of suffering and vulnerability in the missionary movement. The central background assumption is that the missionary enterprise has enduring validity. Christianity is a missionary religion at heart: Christians care about the (un)belief of others. Bosch, on the one hand, remained positive about the possibility and necessity of mission, but on the other hand severely criticized the paternalistic attitudes displayed in concrete mission efforts. As a consequence, he was able to find a hearing both in liberal-leaning and conservative-leaning circles. In the context of the lecture on the vulnerability of mission, it means that Bosch was not only scathingly critical of the entanglement of mission and empire,[35] but also searched for new and refreshing ways to reimagine Christian mission.[36]

Three main streams of thought are gathered in the work of Bosch to make the argument for vulnerable mission. These doctrinal elements are respectively located in the doctrine of God proper; within Christology and derived from Pauline elements. The first impetus for imagining mission in a vulnerable way is the doctrine of the vulnerable God. As stated succinctly by Bosch: 'God is not an apathetic being. God is pathetic, in the original sense of the word, as one who suffers.'[37] The emphasis on the *pathos* of God is taken from Kosuke Koyama, who is an important conversation partner for Bosch in this article, and who in turn was greatly inspired by the work of Abraham Heschel.[38] The entry point for the discussion of the passability of God is taken from Shusaku Endo's novel *Silence*,[39] which describes the unfathomable suffering of Japanese Christians in the 17th century. The question of suffering, which is oftentimes too gruesome to be captured in words, gives rise to the desire of a theodicy. Bosch warns against the tendency to rationally explain

[34] References in this paragraph are to the reprinted version in the Baptist Quarterly, which is the version most easily available online. David J. Bosch, 'The Vulnerability of Mission', *Baptist Quarterly* 34, no. 8 (1992): 351–63. See further: Bosch, *The Vulnerability of Mission*, 1991.

[35] This viewpoint of Bosch has attracted criticism by Jørgen Skov Sørensen. He employed the method of critical discourse analysis on the work of Bosch and concludes that Bosch still operates from Enlightenment ideas about the nature of mission. He concludes that the language employed by Bosch is part of a "modern epistemological tradition." Sørensen writes: "A closer look at their [Bosch, Andrew Kirk and Paul Hiebert, EDH] employed language, however, its terminology, implied conceptions and the perspective of writing reveals that their theological language patters to a large degree cannot in a sufficiently persuasive way express mission theoretical convictions that represent theological models and understandings moving beyond a basically modern paradigm." Sørensen, *Missiological Mutilations - Prospective Paralogies*, 206.

[36] Bosch, 'The Vulnerability of Mission', 1992, 359.

[37] Ibid., 354.

[38] Koyama, ' 'Not Even in Israel Have I Found Such Faith', 48–49. Heschel, The Prophets.

[39] Shusaku Endo, *Silence* (London: Peter Owen, 1976).

the reality of suffering away. He opts therefore to retain the abyss of suffering by pointing towards the reality of suffering, in which God suffers alongside and with humans. In the novel *Silence*, one of the suffering missionaries argued bitterly over the silence of Christ in the midst of the terrible persecutions he faced. The answer of Christ came as a surprise: Christ did not remain silent, but was suffering too, next to the missionary.[40]

The second theological strand of argumentation is taken from Christology, most notably the incarnation, which is interpreted as *kenosis*, the self-emptying of the divine.[41] In the life of Christ, mission is carried out in weakness and humility. Even after the resurrection, the scars on Christ's body remain part of his identity. The marks of suffering are not vanished after the resurrection. The vulnerability showed in the life and ministry of Jesus remains for Bosch an essential part of his ministry, and will consequently be displayed in those who are following him. The third theological source is focused on the vulnerable mission of the apostle Paul and considers Paul an example for contemporary missionaries. Bosch depicts Paul as the prototype of the victim-missionary. This depiction marks the shift from the vulnerability of mission to the vulnerability of missionaries.

How do these theological considerations manifest themselves in the concrete discussion of the role and identity of mission in the present? Noteworthy is that Bosch ventures away from his discussion of the vulnerability of *mission*, as is indicated in the title of his lecture, and focuses on the vulnerability of *missionaries*. The shift indicates the move from the abstract to the particular, which is necessary in any theology that strives for embodiment. Yet, the focus seems to be placed mainly on the activities of missionaries originating from the One-Third World. Bosch is not engaging in a worldwide, transnational depiction of missionary activity. In order to argue for the vulnerability of missionaries, Bosch distinguishes between two types of missionaries, the exemplar-missionary and the victim-missionary. I infer from Bosch that he does not intend to portray the types in crude opposition to each other, but that instead each and every missionary is characterized by both mentalities simultaneously. The exemplar-missionary is most notably recognizable by her/his tendency to act from a position of cultural and religious superiority. Consequently, the exemplar-missionary exhibits, in the words of Koyama, a 'teacher-complex.'[42] Mission has often been carried out from the One-Third World by condescending and paternalistic characteristics. An exemplar-missionary is the one who possesses truth and correspondingly distributes truth. Missionaries have engaged in acts of cultural superiority. This legacy alone gives rise to persecution and resistance. One should therefore be careful not to consider all encountered resistance as spiritual persecution. The victim-missionaries are the opposite of exemplar-missionaries. The prototype of the victim-missionary is the

[40] Bosch, 'The Vulnerability of Mission', 1992, 354.
[41] The issue of kenosis will be elaborated upon at length further in this chapter.
[42] Bosch, 'The Vulnerability of Mission', 1992, 361.

apostle Paul, who explains at length his weakness and the power of God displayed in and through him. Especially in the Corinthian context, where the church was deeply divided and under the allure of self-conscious, successful 'super-apostles,' Paul displays his weakness as a sign of the dependency on the power of God. The result of the attitude of the victim-missionary, who has adopted the Pauline paradox of strength in weakness, is the development of freedom and community.[43] Both freedom and community are able to flourish when missionaries abandon their patronizing ways.

The evaluation of Bosch should take the time in which his work was written into consideration. In the early 1990s, the development of postcolonial theory was in its infancy, which resulted in less precise categories of analysis to dismantle power dynamics within the missionary movement. In addition, World Christianity as a critical field of inquiry, which foregrounds the experience and agency of Christianity in the two/third Worlds, was less clearly defined compared to the current upsurge of scholarly interest.[44] As a result, the preoccupation with missionaries originating from the West has lessened considerably. The time frame within which Bosch operated necessitated a critical perspective on the debilitating role the exemplar-missionaries had played and continued to play. In the current situation, the emphasis on local agency necessitates a move away from the role of the (Western) missionary as the focal point of missiological inquiry. The proposal for the victim-missionary, who is modeled upon the role of the apostle Paul, leaves unaddressed the question who or what victimizes the victim-missionary. Although the emphasis on the humility and weakness of the victim-missionary is crucial for denouncing paternalizing attitudes, the crude distinction between victims and exemplars seems to lack nuance. From the perspective of the mid-2010's, in order to work fruitfully with the perspective of vulnerability in mission, the single focus on missionaries as a special class of people is in need of revision. Consequently, one of the goals in this chapter is to devise a working definition of vulnerability that does not apply solely to missionaries. In other words, we need to follow Bosch up on the title of his lecture and discuss the vulnerability *of mission* in richer detail than just the vulnerability *of missionaries*. What I gain from Bosch is the possibility of anchoring vulnerable mission in at least three major strands of theologizing.

4.3. WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Bosch anchored vulnerable mission in the *pathos* of God the Father, the *kenosis* of Christ and the victim-missionary example of the apostle Paul. In the process of outlining vulnerable mission, he shifted from an emphasis on the vulnerability of

[43] Ibid., 357.
[44] Irvin, 'World Christianity'.

mission to the vulnerability of missionaries. In the present section, I will consider how vulnerable mission is described in a source antedating the work of Bosch, originating from the early 1980's. This document, *Mission and Evangelism*,[45] issued by the World Council of Churches, remains an official and authoritative source. I am seeking to indicate how vulnerable mission is conceptualized, which sources are used in this conceptualization and how it differs from the approach of Bosch. After three decades, a new statement on mission was adopted by the World Council of Churches. The 2012 statement, *Together towards Life*,[46] which continues to generate discussions as churches appropriate the statement in their own contexts, will be scrutinized to show the developments within the theme of vulnerable mission in particular. A detailed comparison between the two statements in terms of their systematic-theological content has been carried out by Jan Jongeneel, leading to the conclusion that the most important difference between the two documents is the Christocentric emphasis of *Mission and Evangelism* and the pneumatological focus of *Together towards Life*.[47]

4.3.1. *Mission and Evangelism (1982)*

Mission and Evangelism represented a broad consensus among churches that had participated in its realization. The document continues to function as an official statement since *Together towards Life* is not intended to supersede it but to complement it.[48] As a result, both documents can be used by local churches and communities as aids in their reflection on the nature of mission. In this section, I will first focus on the Christological emphasis in the document in order to outline how vulnerability is derived from its Christology. *Mission and Evangelism* reflects the missiological climate of the mid to late 1970s and early 1980s. Two other influential mission declarations were issued around that time. The first, the papal encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975),[49] addressed the issues in mission theology from a decidedly Christological focus.[50] The Lausanne Covenant, resulting from the first Lausanne conference in 1974,[51] was equally focused on Christology as the defining theological locus for anchoring mission theology.[52] In the context of the

[45] 'Mission and Evangelism'.
[46] 'Together towards Life'.
[47] Jan A. B. Jongeneel, '"Mission and Evangelism" (1982) and "Together Towards Life" (2013)', *Exchange* 43, no. 3 (2014): 273–90.
[48] Kim, 'Introducing the New Statement on Mission and Evangelism', 316.
[49] 'Evangelii Nuntiandi: Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Pope Paul VI', 1975, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html.
[50] Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, American Society of Missiology Series 30 (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 305–7.
[51] 'Lausanne Covenant', 1974, http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html.
[52] Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*.

debates of the time regarding the connection between evangelism and social action, it famously asserted that those two would be mute without one another and both need to be employed. This position on evangelism and social action was consequently referred to as the 'double criterion.'[53] The Christological emphasis is carried out by referring to 'mission in Christ way,'[54] thereby setting a specific example for the followers of Christ. Mission is never neutral but can only be carried out faithfully if mission is in line with the example of Christ. With reference to John 13:16, followers are to follow Christ in obedience, because servants are not of greater importance than their masters. Obedience is in diametrical opposition to any form of imperialistic display of power. The emphasis on obedience is reminiscent of the work of Johannes Verkuyl, who listed obedience as one of the pure motives for Christian mission.[55] Obedience is depicted in an eschatological manner through the connection with the impending *parousia*. 'Through the resurrection, God vindicates Jesus, and opens up a new period of missionary obedience until he comes again.'[56] The eschatological perspective emphasizes that mission is carried out 'between the times,' in other words, between the vindication of Jesus through his resurrection and the *parousia*. The emphasis placed on the vindication by God the Father leads to the consequence that suffering is associated solely with the work of Christ, and is not associated with the Father. The emphasis on the role of Christ leads to a perspective of vulnerability that is ecclesiocentric. In contrast with the position of Bosch, vulnerability is connected to the result of the following of Christ for the body of believers. The church bears the stigmata of Christ in its own body, as is attested by paragraph 30:

> Mission calls for a serving church in every land, a church which is willing to be marked with the stigmata (nail marks) of the crucified and risen Lord. In this way the church will show that it belongs to that movement of God's love shown in Christ who went to the periphery of life.[57]

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[53] Jacques Matthey, 'Presentation on Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation', in *'You Are the Light of the World': Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches 1980-2005* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 2.
[54] 'Mission and Evangelism', para. 4.
[55] Johannes Verkuyl, *Inleiding in de nieuwere Zendingswetenschap* (Kampen: Kok, 1975), 229–30. The theme of obedience centered in Christology is present as well in *The Lausanne Covenant*. "The Lausanne Covenant," 1974, paragraph. 4, 5, http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html. However, it seems that obedience as a motive for mission has fallen out of usage in contemporary missiology. See for one later example, in connection with the call to missions the work of Goff. William E. Goff, 'Missionary Call and Service', in *Missiology: An Introduction to the Foundations, History, and Strategies of World Missions*, ed. John Mark Terry, Ebbie C. Smith, and Justice Anderson (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 337.
[56] 'Mission and Evangelism', para. 8.
[57] Ibid., para. 30.

As a result of the imitation of Christ in a self-giving, kenotic, and vulnerable way, the church is expected to share in the suffering of Christ.[58] The ecclesiocentric vulnerability almost blurs the lines between Christ and the church as the body of Christ. The close identification of the two means that Christ and the church share in each other's vulnerability. As the suffering body of Christ, the church is called to engage in interreligious dialogue. The dialogue should be carried out with an attitude of repentance, humility, joy and integrity. The integrity of the dialogue is characterized by its accompanying vulnerability. It means therefore 'an openness and exposure, the capacity to be wounded which we see in the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and which we sum up in the word vulnerability.'[59] This definition of vulnerability as the capacity to be wounded is thus directly derived from the Christological emphasis on the document. Mission in Christ's way is carried out by the church via an obedient form of vulnerability: its capacity to be wounded is the sharing of the church with her Lord. The sole focus on the suffering and vindicated Christ eclipses attention to the Pauline strand of vulnerability in mission, which was an important theme in the work of Bosch. I would argue that this oversight in the document does not derive from its incompatibility with Pauline discipleship, because of the strong Pauline emphases of identification with the suffering of Christ. That no attention is given to a Pauline perspective on the vulnerability of missionaries is therefore probably not because the Pauline perspective is inherently incompatible with *Mission and Evangelism*. Yet, its conclusion would have given embodiment and particularity to the argument.

The emphasis on the church as a vulnerable body of followers of Christ makes the document egalitarian and inclusive. Yet, this more inclusive ecclesiology is not followed up throughout the totality of the document. The unequivocal adoption of the preferential option for the poor causes a disruption in the egalitarian narrative. The disruption is most clearly witnessed in the awkward switch of personal pronouns in the following sentence: 'For all of *us*, the invitation is clear: to follow Jesus in identification and sharing with the weak, marginalized and poor of the world, because in *them* we encounter him.'[60] The invitation to follow Christ is extended to the totality of the church (all of us) but Christ is encountered in the poor and marginalized. The vulnerability of the totality of the church is thus not maintained but a dichotomy between the poor and the marginalized on the one hand, and the unnamed, but presumably strong and powerful, is established. This awkward constellation reveals the time frame in which it was written: the shift from mission *to* the margins towards mission *from* the margins had not yet taken place. The issue of subalternity had not yet entered the conversation, as *Mission and Evangelism* was issued one year before Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak published

[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., appendice 10.
[60] Ibid., para. 37. Emphases mine.

her famous essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'[61] The document is therefore characterized by a certain naiveté with regard to questions of representation, subalternity and advocacy. The need for a new statement was felt acutely in this area, and materialized in the 2012 document *Together towards Life*, to which we now turn.

4.3.2. *Together towards Life (2012)*

We have seen that *Mission and Evangelism* entertains an ecclesiocentric perspective on vulnerability, which is caused by its emphasis on Christology as the determining locus for engaging in theology of mission. In the thirty years since *Mission and Evangelism* was published in 1982, the theological landscape has changed considerably. Several of these changes are reflected in *Together towards Life*. In the first place, the upsurge of Trinitarian theology is reflected in the document.[62] Secondly, the emphasis on pneumatology in the document is extensive, which also ties in with recent developments in missiology.[63] The Holy Spirit assumes an active role and is considered at work in the totality of creation.[64] In contrast, according to *Mission and Evangelism*, the active role of the Spirit is oftentimes tied to the work of Christ and described mainly in its decisive role in aiding conversion to Christianity. As I have outlined in the former section, *Mission and Evangelism* has few resources at its disposal to describe the preferential option for the poor in non-binary terms and to ascribe agency to those considered poor. In the time period before *Together towards Life* was published, considerable developments on this terrain took place, as I have outlined at the beginning of the former chapter.

How is the emphasis on marginality connected with the theme of vulnerability? Vulnerability is mentioned three times in the document. Jan Jongeneel attributes the emphasis on vulnerability to the influence of Bosch's lecture on the vulnerability of mission.[65] In two instances, the vulnerability is primarily ascribed to marginalized groups, like 'women, children and undocumented workers'[66] and seems to be a synonym for marginalized persons.[67] The other instance of vulnerability is taken from another discourse.

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[61] Spivak, '"Can the Subaltern Speak?" [revised Edition]'.
[62] See for a discussion on Trinitarian theology in mission theology: Flett, The Witness of God.
[63] See for a missiology which is based upon pneumatology: Kim, Joining in with the Spirit: Connecting World Church and Local Mission.
[64] Kim, 'Introducing the New Statement on Mission and Evangelism'.
[65] Jongeneel, '"Mission and Evangelism" (1982) and "Together Towards Life" (2013)', 277. Bosch, *The Vulnerability of Mission*, 1991.
[66] 'Together towards Life', para. 70.
[67] Ibid., para. 38.

> Standing against evil or injustice and being prophetic can sometimes be met with suppression and violence, and thus consequently lead to suffering, persecution, and even death. Authentic evangelism involves being vulnerable, following the example of Christ by carrying the cross and emptying oneself (Phil. 2:5-11).[68]

In this quote, it becomes clear that vulnerability is a direct consequence of following Christ through speaking out against injustice. Vulnerability correlates positively with the authentic following of the example of Christ. This vulnerability is primarily an ecclesiocentric vulnerability and is communally oriented. The totality of the church is vulnerable in the act of following Jesus. This type of vulnerability is distinct from the negative association with vulnerability as primarily something that needs to be overcome. By comparing the two meanings of vulnerability in the document it becomes clear that *Together towards Life* is a compromise document: two distinct viewpoints on vulnerability are articulated.

At the end of this section, we can now draw conclusions on what we have gained from the discussion of both the work of Bosch and the ecumenical documents. This enables us to answer the question: What are the similarities and differences between Bosch, *Mission and Evangelism* and *Together towards Life*? Bosch advocates for the necessity of vulnerable missionaries. He is distinctively Pauline in his argument in favoring victim-missionaries over exemplar-missionaries. It is significant that this type of argumentation plays no role in *Together towards Life*. It has been noted that the document is not interested in outlining the topics which mission agencies from the West would have like to see discussed, such as the possibility for the ongoing role of Western missionaries.[69] Foregrounding the agency of the marginalized leads to the consequence that the role of those who occupy centrist positions is out of focus. The lack of explicit discussion of this topic points to the significant turn that has been made by focusing on the epistemological priority of those who experience marginalization. The lack of engagement with the topic of contemporary missionaries can also be attributed to the unequivocal rejection of the former ways of Christian mission, characterized by the 'geographical expansion from a Christian center to the 'un-reached territories,' to the ends of the earth.'[70] The rejection of a geographical idea of mission, in which the West takes the lead, results in the sidelining of the concerns of traditional mission agencies. The fundamental reversal that has taken place is not only announced in theory, but is practiced through the silence on this topic. As a consequence, the Pauline strand of thought as advocated by Bosch, is not in vogue. Bosch's emphasis on the weakness and vulnerability of the missionary, who consequently becomes empowered by the strength of God, is not followed. Significantly enough,

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[68] Ibid., para. 92.

[69] Noort, '"So What?'

[70] 'Together towards Life', para. 5.

the suffering and vulnerability of God's nature is not discussed, although this element is foundational in the theology of Bosch. The Christological argument, which is prominent in Bosch, has become less pronounced in the final version of the document. In surveying how *Together towards Life* engages the topic of vulnerability in comparison with the work of Bosch, it remains doubtful that the vulnerability of mission indeed has played such a foundational role in *Together towards Life*, as is argued by Jongeneel. Comparing *Together towards Life* with *Mission and Evangelism* further reveals that the Christological argument is less pronounced. *Mission and Evangelism* is outspoken in its suggestion that the church carries the nail marks of Christ as a demonstration of the vulnerability of the church. The emphasis on the embodied vulnerability of the church plays hardly any role in *Together towards Life*. Although *Together towards Life* is neither interested in discussing the passability of God or the Pauline notion of the vulnerability of missionaries, it introduces the notion of vulnerability as equated with marginalization. In the former chapter, I have argued that erecting a binary distinction between the marginalized and the powerful is not helpful to support inclusive and multi-axial definitions of marginalization. The same holds true for vulnerability. In the remainder of the chapter, I will develop inclusive ideas on vulnerability, which will be helpful in overcoming the power dynamic at play when some groups are labeled vulnerable and some groups are labeled powerful. But first, we need more scrutiny of the recent developments in vulnerable mission, in order to obtain a clearer vision of the issues at stake.

4.4. Towards a Missiology of Vulnerability

An upsurge of interest in vulnerability has occurred since 2010, sparked by reflections on the centenary of the 1910 Edinburgh mission conference. A review of these resources will enable me to locate the unanswered questions in the literature, as well as problematic areas that need further consideration. For the sake of clarity, a chronological order will be followed in the discussion of sources.

In 2003, Mark Thomsen published an article in which he develops a Lutheran mission theology centered upon the cross as the decisive element for rethinking mission.[71] A contemporary missiology based upon Luther's principles denounces imperialistic Western power since the crucified Christ is not compatible with coercive power.[72] A theology of the cross consequently abandons ethnocentricity and nationalistic ideals. Christian mission consists therefore of a continuous movement

[71] Mark W. Thomsen, 'Christ Crucified: Lutheran Missiological Themes for a Post-Christian Century', Mission Studies 20, no. 1 (2003): 94–116. Some of the material in the 2003 article seems to be have reworked in the publication: Mark W. Thomsen, *Christ Crucified: A 21st Century Missiology of the Cross* (Lutheran University Press, 2004).
[72] Thomsen, 'Christ Crucified', 2003, 100.

of dying to destructive ideals and subsequently arising anew to embrace the true embodiment of the *missio Dei*.[73] A missiology of the cross stresses furthermore that it was God himself who chose to be vulnerable in the world.[74] God's vulnerability shows by contrast the devastating forces of evil in the world, since vulnerability means that the possibility of being harmed by evil is real. The vulnerable God is not immune to the corrupting influences of evil in the world but the possibility of harm did not impede the incarnation. God's vulnerability in Christ results in vulnerable mission. This indicates concretely that mission is carried out through the ripple-effect.[75]

Mission in the way of Christ entails an abandonment of grand schemes and campaigns. Instead, mission is characterized by a gradual dissemination of the impact of the crucified Christ. The work of Thomsen articulates a promising angle since the vulnerability of mission entails a rejection of ethnocentrism. As a consequence, the vulnerable mission of Christ critiques the distortions of the life of Christ manifested by an imperialistic and geographically expansive Christendom.[76] The Lutheran emphasis on God's suffering illuminates a poignant notion of the depth of vulnerability and its consequence for mission. In Thomsen's words: 'This Messianic Reign will always be vulnerable to the coercive forces of Evil.'[77] Yet, the church is called to carry out her mission in a vulnerable, non-coercive mode, guided by the Holy Spirit.

In 2004, Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder published the landmark overview of mission *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*.[78] The authors consider mission as 'prophetic dialogue,' thereby highlighting both the prophetic, proclaiming and countercultural perspective and the dialogical, gentle and conversational aspect of mission. They connect vulnerability to proclamation within the framework of prophetic dialogue. Proclamation needs to be carried out in a vulnerable mode because vulnerability is the hallmark of authenticity. Vulnerability does not lead to an abandonment of proclamation, but suggests rather that vulnerability is the mode that accompanies proclamation. Proclamation, even if done in a humble and contextually sensitive mode, could lead to suffering because the message of the wounded Christ is rejected. In short: 'To be a prophet is almost inevitably to suffer.'[79] The biblical text that lights up in their approach is 1 Peter 3:15: 'Should anyone ask you the reason for this hope of yours, be ever ready to reply, but speak gently and respectfully.'[80] The new element in their approach

[73] Ibid., 103.
[74] Ibid., 105.
[75] Ibid., 96.
[76] Ibid., 110.
[77] Ibid., 106.
[78] Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*.
[79] Ibid., 361.
[80] Ibid., 360.

is that vulnerability is connected to the prophetic element of mission. Vulnerability is not a replacement for proclamation, but is rather the accompanying mode of proclamation.

The year 2010 marked the centenary of the 1910 mission conference held in Edinburgh, which is regarded as the zenith of imperial missions.[81] The commemoration of the 1910 conference, once again in Edinburgh, honored and criticized the legacy of Edinburgh 1910.[82] A fundamental shift in the century between 1910 and 2010 is, in the words of Bevans, the move 'from a missiology of power to a missiology of relationship and vulnerability.'[83] Missiology is no longer preoccupied with establishing and maintaining power, but is instead invested in relationships and promoting vulnerability. If Bevans's statement is true, then vulnerability is indeed a generative theme within contemporary missiology. Although the gist of the statement of Bevans seems plausible given the widespread shame and embarrassment over the military language deployed in Edinburgh 1910,[84] the scarcity of full-length treatments of vulnerability in mission outside global evangelicalism[85] is significant. The lack of sustained reflection on vulnerability despite its identification as a significant theme in mission theology is therefore one of the reasons to explore the possibility of a theology of vulnerability further.

The statement of Bevans is echoed in the Common Call of the Edinburgh 2010 conference itself. The Common Call is the closing affirmation of the conference and is a consensus document that reflects the spirit of the conference. In its fourth affirmation, The Common Call confesses that the 'power of the Holy Spirit is manifested in our vulnerability.'[86] A call to repentance is issued because of the 'asymmetries and imbalances of power that divide and trouble us in church and world.'[87] A missiology of power has therefore been replaced by a missiology of vulnerability. The new element in this constellation, although not explained at length, is the role of the Spirit. Indeed, the relationship between pneumatology and vulnerability has not been articulated in our review so far. The Common Call echoes the Pauline statement that 'strength is perfected in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9), and gives the statement a pneumatological dimension through the agency of the Spirit.

Another significant theme that surfaces in the reflection of Edinburgh 1910/2010 is the connection between vulnerability and the authenticity of personhood. In the work of Bevans, a state of vulnerability is reflected in the authenticity

[81] Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 118.
[82] Janet Caroll, 'Edinburgh 2010 Centennial World Missionary Conference: A Report', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35, no. 1 (2011): 4–5.
[83] Bevans, 'From Edinburgh to Edinburgh', 8.
[84] Matthey, 'From 1910 to 2010', 259.
[85] I will discuss the upsurge of interest in vulnerable mission in evangelical circles in the next section.
[86] 'Common Call'.
[87] Ibid.

of personhood. Openness and communality are at the heart of personhood, but abusive forms of power hamper and distort authentic personhood.[88] We will pick up the question regarding the interplay of vulnerability and personhood later in this chapter through engagement with the work of Aristotle Papanikolaou in order to elaborate further upon the benefits of vulnerability for authentic personhood.

The preparatory documents of Edinburgh 2010 are another source to be considered in researching vulnerable mission. The editors of *Witnessing to Christ Today* make a distinction between mission which is carried out in contexts of poverty (by those who voluntarily make themselves vulnerable) and mission carried out by those without power. Both forms of mission are considered vulnerable mission.[89] Vulnerable mission is, at its core, a participation in the mission of the vulnerable God. In Christ, God's vulnerability is pushed to its extreme. Participation in the vulnerable mission of God is open for those already vulnerable, but also for those who voluntarily side with those who are marginalized and exposed. Significantly enough, an important consequence of vulnerability is its potential to dismantle patriarchal systems. In the words of Balia and Kim: 'The patriarchal ideal of invulnerability is opposed, in fact distorted by the Crucified (…).'[90] Although connecting patriarchal systems with invulnerability is only allotted one sentence in the discussion by Balia and Kim, I will elaborate further on this possibility by scrutinizing the work of Coakley, who has developed a theology of *kenosis* that critiques patriarchal power.

In the wake of the Edinburgh 2010 centenary conference, Jesse Zink published an article on incarnational missiology.[91] While this article is not bringing new insight to the table for incarnational missiology, it follows a peculiar argumentation to defend vulnerable mission. In Zink's words:

> As Christ made himself vulnerable by living on earth, a central task for missionaries is to choose to give up the power and privilege inherent in their background and make themselves vulnerable to those with whom they work. This is especially true for missionaries from the developed world who head to the Global South and bring with them immense personal privilege, wealth, and education.[92]

The line of thought of Zink comes close to articulations of the Alliance of Vulnerable Mission, which will warrant their own section.

Cathy Ross argued in 2010 that partnership in mission is a viable direction for

[88] Bevans, 'From Edinburgh to Edinburgh', 10.
[89] Balia and Kim, Witnessing to Christ Today, 122.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Jesse Zink, '"The Word Became Flesh and Lived Among Us": The Missiological Implications of an Incarnational Christology', in *Edinburgh 2010: Youth Perspectives*, ed. Kirk Sandvig (Pasadena: William Carey International University Press, 2010), http://wcc2006.info/fileadmin/files/edinburgh2010/files/Resources/Kirk_Youth.pdf#page=109.
[92] Ibid., 107.

sustained missionary engagement.[93] Partnership is characterized by relationships carried out in mutual recognition, respect, vulnerability and responsibility.[94] In other words, vulnerability is an essential component of partnership. Ross modifies Bosch's distinction between victim-missionaries and exemplar-missionaries. She proposes to speak about victim-partners instead of victim-missionaries.[95] Partnership is characterized by relationships among equals. The victim-partners are therefore entering the partnership, willing to embark on a journey of recognition and respect. The victim-partner acknowledges that relationships are marked by the inequality of the present world, but strives to enter the communication process with respect. Ross shares my criticism of the attention to the missionary in Bosch's work. I consider therefore the victim-partner a helpful step towards the articulation of a theology of vulnerable mission.

In 2012, Stanley Skreslet devotes a paragraph to the vulnerability of mission under the heading of spirituality in his textbook on missiology.[96] Skreslet connects vulnerability with pilgrimage by pointing out the uncertainty that itinerant monks endured during their travels. Uncertainty is an inherent part of the concept of vulnerability because conventional regulations for an 'ordinary' life are no longer realistic. Describing vulnerability under the heading of spirituality is a new element, and it provides a useful window in the spiritual practice of being vulnerable.

Lalsangkima Pachuau[97] was installed in 2013 as professor on the J.W. Beeson Chair of Christian Mission at Ashbury Theological Seminary. His inaugural address was entitled 'Vulnerability and Empowerment in Crossing Frontiers: A Christian Theology of Mission.'[98] Pachuau developed a theology of border crossing in which he shows his indebtedness to the *theologia crucis* of Moltmann. Although the title of his inaugural address suggests otherwise, he does not advance much upon the themes of vulnerability or empowerment. Vulnerability is taken at face value and is described as the result of the *Nachfolge* of Christ. Vulnerability is for Pachuau the inverse of empowerment: 'To cross frontiers can be both exciting and exacting. It carries a promise of empowerment if one is willing to pay the price of vulnerability.'[99] This opinion of Pachuau is therefore diametrically opposed to my own agenda of employing vulnerability as the hallmark of authentic mission.

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[93] Ross, 'The Theology of Partnership'.

[94] Outside the scope of this chapter are the criticisms that are leveled against the idea of partnership. See for an introduction: Skreslet, 'The Empty Basket of Presbyterian Mission'.

[95] Ross, 'The Theology of Partnership', 147.

[96] Skreslet, *Comprehending Mission*, 185–86.

[97] Pachuau is no stranger in the field of missiology, as is attested by his 2002 monograph Ecumenical Missiology. Lalsangkima Pachuau, Ecumenical Missiology: Contemporary Trends, Issues, and Themes (Bangalore: United Theological College, 2002).

[98] Lalsangkima Pachuau, 'Vulnerability and Empowerment in Crossing Frontiers: A Christian Theology of Mission', *The Asbury Journal* 68, no. 2 (2013): 1–6.

[99] Ibid., 80.

Lastly, the 2013 missiology textbook by Scott Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory* has as its motto Luke 24:26, 'Was it not necessary that the Messiah should *suffer* these things and then enter into his *glory*?'[100] Although the word vulnerability is not thematised in the book, the reflection on vulnerability and suffering is present throughout the text, as the author seeks an alternative to the conflation of mission and empire. The Christological lens of the book means the emphasis is placed upon the suffering which will inevitably befall the followers of Christ. The fragile mission of God, exemplified in the servitude of Christ, is juxtaposed to the glory of God that shines through earthen vessels.[101] The emphasis on spirituality in the work of Sunquist leads him to develop an appreciation for a spirituality of silence, a silence that is not empty but waits on the fulfillment of God's love.[102] The virtues of silence and humility will be expounded upon in the remainder of this chapter, because they are a necessary accompaniment to the practice of vulnerability.

In this section, I have shown how the reflection on vulnerability has developed within missiological literature in the decade 2003-2013. I have not been able to track down reflections on the vulnerability of mission in the period between 1991, the year of publication of Bosch's *The Vulnerability of Mission* and 2003. Especially the commemoration of the 2010 Edinburgh centenary sparked lively debates on the vulnerability of mission. The perceived shift from a missiology of power towards a missiology of vulnerability is an important impetus for the renewed reflection. I have explored new vistas, but unfortunately most sources have not allocated enough time and space to enter a deeper reflection on the exact meaning and ramifications of their statements. As I have indicated in the introduction, this chapter searches for a way to rethink vulnerability in the postcolonial context of World Christianity. This dissertation seeks to anchor mission in Trinitarian thought, while striving to take a postcolonial stance. All the sources taken together suggest that it is possible to connect vulnerability with Trinitarian theology. The postcolonial element seems less pronounced in these sources. If anything, old colonial patterns seem to be reinforced in certain instances, by reinforcing the special position of Western missionaries to make them the primary addressees of a discourse on vulnerability. In the overview of the present section, I have omitted one type of sources, namely the school around Harries, for whom 'vulnerable mission' is a special term to denote his approach to mission. Because Harries *cum suis* have reflected extensively on the nature of vulnerable mission and because of the original arguments they are employing, the discussion of their brand of vulnerable mission warrants its own section.

[100] Scott W. Sunquist, Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013). Emphasis in original.
[101] Ibid., 396.
[102] Ibid., 400–401.

4.5. ALLIANCE FOR VULNERABLE MISSION

The sources that have been reviewed thus far have argued in favor of vulnerability, but there is still a need to clarify the definition of vulnerability. The school around Harries is therefore to date the only academic and professional group of thinkers and practitioners who both research the theoretical underpinnings of vulnerability in mission and have strived to incorporate these principles in their praxis of mission. The Alliance for Vulnerable Mission will therefore be used as a case study in this chapter to unearth how vulnerable mission can either be used as a tool for decolonization, or be part of a structure that perpetrates colonial ways of thinking. The foundational assumption I employ in the review of the Alliance is that a mere distinction between power on the one hand and vulnerability as an antidote for a missiology of power does not convey all the complexities that are needed for a decolonial stance. In other words, one could advocate for vulnerability on the one hand, but at the same time color one's idea of vulnerability in such a way that it still evokes ways of thinking associated with empire.

In short, the focus of the Alliance is to establish mission practices that are rooted in the use of local languages and the use of local (financial) resources. Together with its plea for local languages and local resources, an impassioned critique on present power structures in mission practice is issued.[103] Practitioners of the Alliance actively work to reduce foreign dependence in both language use[104] and resources.[105] In order to understand the presuppositions of the Alliance, one should note that the phenomenon of cross-cultural missionaries as such is not questioned. Even though ecumenical missiology has long sought to minimize focus on missionaries from the West,[106] and even though the Lausanne Movement has recently affirmed this intention in its Cape Town Commitment,[107] the focus of the

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[103] Core publications are: Jim Harries, Theory to Practice in Vulnerable Mission: An Academic Appraisal (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2012); Harries, Vulnerable Mission. See for a further overview of the publications of Harries: 'Articles by Jim Harries', accessed 19 July 2013, http://www.jim-mission.org.uk/articles/index.html. See their website for detailed information about the movement: http://www.vulnerablemission.org/

[104] Of course, the use of local languages should not be treated as a novelty in mission. In fact, there are myriad entanglements between missionary influence and linguistics. See for an overview Alastair Pennycook, 'The Modern Mission: The Language Effects of Christianity', *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* 4, no. 2 (2005): 137–55.

[105] The emphasis on local languages and local resources might feel anachronistic for some readers, as this discussion is part and parcel of postwar missiology. The extensive discussion of the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission is therefore not primarily geared to discover new elements in their ideas, but rather to unearth how these ideas lead to their particular ideas on the vulnerability of mission.

[106] Noort, '"So What?'

[107] "We challenge the tendency to see ministry and mission (local and cross-cultural) as being mainly the work of church-paid ministers and missionaries, who are a tiny percentage of the whole body of Christ." 'The Cape Town Commitment: A Declaration of Belief and a Call to Action' (Lausanne III, Cape Town, 2010), paragraph 3.A.II.

Alliance is to a large degree on Western missionaries to Africa.[108] In the case of the Alliance, the empire doesn't 'write back.' Unfortunately, we are left with the ideas of the Alliance, which are written overwhelmingly from a perspective originating in the two-third world.

Which assumptions are underlying these ideas of the Alliance? In the first place, Harries assumes a 'linguistic incompatibility' between the languages spoken in the West and in the non-West. Incompatibility means that the conceptual worlds evoked by various languages are, often to a large extent, incompatible. The issue of linguistic incompatibility assumes importance in mission encounters where a missionary speaks English in her/his native tongue, while the other conversation partners speaks English as a second or third language. A conversation in English in which a non-native speaker engages does not automatically result in a conversation on common ground with shared worldviews. If anything, the ubiquitous use of English obscures the varieties of worldviews of the conversation partners. In addition, Harries considers it a misconception that dialogue takes place between just two people. Other actors are often involved in the conversation. Those silent actors can be imaged in a variety of ways, such as the presence of ancestral spirits or the fear that one might lose her/his reputation when certain utterances are reported. As a consequence, Harries opts to speak about polylogue. The characteristic of a polylogue is that multiple actors are present and not just the visible dialogue partners.[109] As a result, Harries condemns the ubiquitous usage of English in mission encounters. Instead, he opts for the usage of local language in a local context. In this way, missionaries make themselves vulnerable because they do not longer possess the safety of their familiar language. They are instead invited to enter a system of meaning foreign to them. The polylogical character of language further destabilizes the central role of the missionary, since the missionary is just one of the many actors that play a role in conversation. For example, education (both secular and theological) cannot be left to Western missionaries, because it should be homegrown and carried out in local languages.[110] As a consequence, the Alliance encourages as a consequence missionaries either to step back

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[108] Harries, *Vulnerable Mission*, xiii.

[109] Jim Harries, 'Providence and Power Structures in Mission and Development Initiatives from the West to the Rest: A Critique of Current Practice', in *Vulnerable Mission: Insights into Christian Mission to Africa from a Position of Vulnerability* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2011), 100. Article published originally as Jim Harries, 'Providence and Power Structures in Mission and Development Initiatives from the West to the Rest: A Critique of Current Practice', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 32, no. 2 (2008): 156–65.

[110] Jim Harries, 'A Linguistic Case for the Necessity of Enculturation in Theological and Economic Teaching Based on the "Shape of Words": Including a Case Study Comparing Sub-Saharan Africa with the West', in *Vulnerable Mission: Insights into Christian Mission to Africa from a Position of Vulnerability* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2011), 127. Originally published as Jim Harries, 'A Linguistic Case for the Necessity of Enculturation in Theological and Economic Teaching Based on the "Shape of Words": Including a Case Study Comparing Sub-Saharan Africa with the West', *Journal*

from their jobs or to become fluent in a language and worldview which is not their own. If the character of English as a language of empire is not explicitly taken into account, the decolonizing potential of the argument is limited.[111] The primacy of the vernacular is, of course, conclusively and convincingly put forth by Lamin Sanneh, who has drawn attention to the local and original appropriation, thereby highlighting the centrality of local agency.[112]

The second working assumption of the Alliance is the assumption that money is value-laden. Value-laden is the opposite of neutral, which means in this context that money has no moral component in and of itself but the moral component of money becomes visible through its usage. Instead, inspiration is drawn from the work of Jacques Ellul, who argues that considering money neutral is opposed to thinking in line with the Biblical texts.[113] As a consequence, the task of mission organizations is to scrutinize the way they use money. A second consequence it that missionaries should enter into a process of critical reflections on their own culture of origin. They should be involved, for instance, in critical reflection on the assumption behind the wide-spread practices of donating money to mission agencies.[114] Within this process of scrutiny, the lifestyle of the missionaries becomes a site of reflection in order to unearth harmful entanglements of mission, money and power.[115]

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of Intercultural Communication 18 (2008).

[111] Kang, 'Out of Places: Asian Feminist Theology of Dislocation', 115.

[112] Lamin O. Sanneh, Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture, American Society of Missiology Series 42 (Orbis Books, 2009).

[113] Stan Nussbaum, 'Vulnerable Mission Strategies', *Global Missiology* 2, no. 10 (2013): 3–4. Nussbaum traces the position of Harries back to Jacques Ellul, but I have not been able to find explicit or implicit references to Ellul in the work of Harries himself. It seems that the position that money is value-laden in the work of Harries is primarily argued on the ground of sources within cultural anthropology.

[114] A recent trend in development studies seems not primarily critical about the usage of money and instead encourages "free money" as a new solution geared toward the alleviation of poverty. The critique of the role of Western development workers leads to an attempt to leave out the middle man of the development worker as much as possible. David Hulme, Joseph Hanlon, and Armando Barrientos, *Just Give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the Global South* (Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2010). Another trend that is noteworthy in this context is the paradigm of postdevelopment. Postdevelopment theorists criticize conventional ideas on development from a postcolonial and poststructuralist viewpoint. The discourse of development is scrutinized as a discourse that plots certain parts of the world as developed and other parts of the world as underdeveloped and in need of aid in order to arrive at the imposed standard of developed countries. Postdevelopment argues for a "pluriverse" instead of a universe as a result of the deep interconnectedness and fragmentation of humanity. Consequently, the foundation for development aid through donating money is rendered obsolete. Escobar, Encountering Development, xii.

[115] The plea for a simple lifestyle finds it parallel in the Lausanne Occasional Paper following a conference on Simple Life-Style, issued already in 1980. Lausanne Movement, 'An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Life-Style', 1980, http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lops/77-lop-20.html. It seems that the issue of lifestyle has been relatively absent from missiological discourse since the publication of the Lausanne Paper in the 1980's but it might well be that the Alliance for Vulnerable

In this section, I want to bring the views of the Alliance in conversation with Jonathan Bonk, who has been influential in problematizing the relationship between mission and money and has provided a helpful categorization on the various possible responses in light of missionary affluence.[116] Bonk holds that affluence is a Western problem with a spiritual dimension, and as such requires spiritual solutions. He provides a helpful model for charting the various solutions proposed to the problem. Four positions have been taken in which missionaries deal with the unequal distribution of wealth and access to resources compared to the people they are working with. One solution is that missionaries primarily associate with those who are akin to themselves in social status, such as other missionaries or locals who are part of the middle-class. The second solution is to claim to divest one's privilege regarding living circumstances, while maintaining it in critical areas like education for one's children and healthcare. Thirdly, they can deflect the issue by focusing on mission strategy instead of morality, or lastly, pursue to live a genuinely incarnational lifestyle. Bonk proposes a fifth way of dealing with affluence, namely through the role of the righteous rich, that affluent Westerners can take upon themselves. As the righteous rich, they enact the role that is expected in their host culture as appropriate for rich persons, acting as benefactors and facilitators where possible.[117] In the classification of Bonk, the Alliance falls squarely within the fourth strategy, a voluntary divestment of one's privileges. Bonk rightly raises the question to which extent such divestment is feasible in practice, and instead puts the argument on another plane, challenging affluent Westerners to responsibly work with their resources. One critical note should be placed in this context, namely to what extent the affluence of missionaries originating in the West still rings true in the context of the economic crisis of 2008 and its aftermath, the demise of the middle class in the United States and Western European countries and widespread unemployment. From the perspective of the mid-2010's, the affluence of the middle class which bears the brunt of the rather costly[118] cross-cultural mission seems questionable. Thus, a change of perspective is necessary, according to Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-Lan: it is high time that those who formerly identified themselves with the upper classes, are now realizing that they in reality do not belong to the 1%, but find now that they, instead, belong to the 99%.[119] An additional problem is the tacit assumption that missionary work always flows in the

Mission might spark new reflection on this issue.

[116] Jonathan J. Bonk, Missions and Money: Affluence as a Missionary Problem-- Revisited (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006); Jonathan J. Bonk, 'Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem... Revisited', International Bulletin of Missionary Research 31, no. 4 (2007): 171–74.

[117] Bonk, *Missions and Money*, 2006, 165–72; Bonk, 'Missions and Money', 2007, 172.

[118] See for an impassioned critique on, together with a break-down of the costs of foreign missionaries James F. Engel and William A. Dyrness, Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong? (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

[119] Joerg Rieger and Kwok Pui-lan, *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude* (Lanham: Rowman

direction of those with more resources to those with less resources. This assumption is not only questionable in light of the demise of the middle class in many Western countries, but is also invalidated through the emergence of a wealthy upper-class in, for example, China, India and oil-producing nations in the Middle East.

Another problem with the emphasis on affluence, which I consider problematic both in the work of Bonk and in the Alliance, is their tacit assumption of the church as middle-class institution, which omits the perspective of churches without affluence. Especially since the discussion about the pervasive and enduring legacy of slavery and institutional racism has been coming to the forefront of the discussion with new urgency, for example through the rise of the #blacklivesmatter movement and the much-celebrated work of Ta-Nehesi Coates,[120] the racially charged nature of affluence and destitution needs to be investigated. The insistence of the Alliance that money is not neutral could therefore be extended to critically consider the historic legacy which has produced an unequal distribution of affluence, and how those inequalities are influencing spending on mission. As a consequence, the insistence upon vulnerability as a willing divestment of one's privileges must therefore be accompanied by the simultaneous reflection on the intersection of class and race that makes up the mindset of affluence.

A third working assumption of the Alliance is the recognition of orality as fundamental to the Christian faith.[121] An emphasis on orality means that the emphasis on written sources, as has been characteristically the case in missiology, is eclipsed by an emphasis on oral sources. An emphasis on oral sources means that local sources, which are often not written down, are equally valued as written sources.[122] As a consequence, the vulnerability of orality lies in the willingness to evaluate theological claims along the lines of their applicability in oral cultures, and, as a consequence, to allow more fluidity in theological expressions.

The review of three assumptions has brought to light that the outcomes of making oneself vulnerable are primarily in the area of language, resources and theology. What are the theological ideas that lead to these assumptions? Vulnerability seems for Harries to be anchored primarily in Christology. Jesus refused to be lured into the mechanisms of power. Instead of following the proposals of Satan to acquire power and dominance, as recounted in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13, Jesus clearly never tried to seek an official office or setting up administration or organization.[123] Vulnerability is, for Harries, more so than for the other authors

& Littlefield, 2013).

120 Ta-Nehisi Coates, Between the World and Me (New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau, 2015).

121 See for an introduction on orality in theology of mission the work of Randall Prior. Randall Prior, 'Orality: The Not-So-Silent Issue in Mission Theology.', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35, no. 3 (2011): 143–47.

122 Nussbaum, 'Vulnerable Mission Strategies', 3.

123 Jim Harries, 'Vulnerable Mission as an Alternative to Failing Aid Paradigms: Facing Reality on

and documents we have reviewed, connected with explicitly refraining from seeking power. Although Jesus was in a position to seek power, for example by accepting the offer of Satan or striving towards erecting a movement, He deliberately chose not to do so. The account of Harries differs because he is more open towards considering the option that Jesus could have reached for a position of power. Consequently, the model of vulnerability shifts: Jesus is not the vulnerable sufferer whose stigmata the church carries, but is someone who voluntarily refused to grasp worldly power.

Because the Alliance mainly is concerned with the role of missionaries from the Two-Third World, vulnerability is mainly connected with a geographically determined segment of the church. Stan Nussbaum concedes that the discussion with the receivers of vulnerable mission has not yet commenced.[124] Yet, he posits that the goals of the Alliance are in line with what is advanced in mainstream missiology.[125] Although Nussbaum fails to define this term, it seems safe to state that mainstream missiology[126] is heavily invested in questioning the role of Western churches as sole champions of the cause of mission.[127] It is therefore problematic that the discourse of vulnerability is connected chiefly with activities of missionaries from the West. Vulnerability as defined by the Alliance attributes privilege to individuals and churches originating from the West. This privilege consists in the voluntary shedding of one's privilege in order to engage in mission in the way of Christ. This type of vulnerability is relevant only in a Western context and privileges the Western missionary over the non-Western follower of Christ. Being powerful amounts to being privileged, because the powerful have a special opportunity to engage in an act of shedding one's privilege. The vulnerability propagated by the Alliance is therefore not an inclusive vulnerability, such as a vulnerability based upon the vulnerability of the whole church in following Christ. Yet, one could wager the objection against my criticism that the proposal of the Alliance is just a form of contextual theology, which attempts to find a meaningful way to describe vulnerability for those who find themselves in Western contexts. Of course, Christological images that arise out of particular contexts and acquire special meaning in a specific context are necessary. The problem in this case is therefore not a problem of a localized form of Christology. Instead, it is problem-

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Reaching Africa', *Global Missiology* 4, no. 10 (2013): 3.

[124] Stan Nussbaum, 'Vulnerable Mission Vis-À-Vis Mainstream Mission and Missiology', *Missio Dei* 4, no. 1 (2013).

[125] Ibid.

[126] Mainstream missiology could be defined as missiology that orients itself towards influential figures of the discipline such as David Bosch, Andrew Walls, Lesslie Newbigin, Stephen Bevans, Roger Schroeder and Lamin Sanneh. One could also equate mainstream missiology with the missiology originating from the World Council of Churches.

[127] Bevans, 'From Edinburgh to Edinburgh'; 'Cape Town Commitment: A Declaration of Belief and a Call to Action'.

atic how this specific Christology constructs an *other* who is subsequently not included in the Christological design. Although the proposal of the *Alliance* is a form of local theology, the proposal is also a particular construct that only acquires meaning in contrast with the non-Western other. The non-Western other is namely the one who does not possess the resources and linguistic ability to voluntarily lay these assets down and engage in a conscious act of becoming vulnerable.

What is the reason that the Alliance is so keen on insisting missionaries should make themselves vulnerable in another country, instead of approaching vulnerability as an existential characteristic of the totality of the church in mission? A part of the answer might be connected to the problem that the Alliance wants to solve in mission. The primary problem perceived in mission are the current forms of dependency in all its permutations: 'financial, theological, cultural, linguistic, psychological, technological or personal.'[128] As a solution, reducing dependency is aimed at. The dependency is primarily interpreted as a characteristic of the non-Western church. I consider it questionable that the problem of dependency is mainly placed with the non-Western other. In order to maintain the relation of dependence between recipients of help in the non-West and donors from the West, one needs to work with a paradigm that negates the multitude of transnational sources and influences. While Harries continues to work with an outspoken distinction between local languages and local sources in contrast with Western languages and sources, I have questioned the rigid binary of local and Western in the second chapter. Field work carried out in Angola according to the principles of the Alliance, revealed that both the emphasis on local languages and local sources is problematic. In the context of Angola, Portuguese is both the language of the former colonizer as it is increasingly the native language of Angolans. Furthermore, the resources of Western agents in mission are dwindling,[129] while the agency of rich Angolans in church funding is on the rise. Due to rapid urbanization in Africa, this state of affairs might soon be the case in other contexts beside Angola.[130] Although the Alliance argues for the usage of local languages and local resources in mission, it does not prevent a focus on the Western missionary, who is admonished to empty her/his privileges. In light of the inevitable dichotomy between Western mission workers and dependent receivers, this particular concept of vulnerability fails to provide a viable alternative. The emphasis on Western mission workers begs to ask the question: why does the Alliance still seek to send out mission workers to foreign countries? Unfortunately, this question is not tackled in the literature I have reviewed. The omission of the question could signal that, although

[128] Christopher L. Flanders, 'Editorial Preface to the Issue: Vulnerable Mission', *Missio Dei: A Journal of Missional Theology and Praxis* 4, no. 1 (2013).
[129] Noted in a worldwide context by Damayanthi T. Niles, From East and West: Rethinking Christian Mission (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 67–68.
[130] Danny Reese, 'Vulnerable Mission in Angola: An Intra-African Conversation with Jim Harries', *Missio Dei: A Journal of Missional Theology and Praxis* 4, no. 1 (2013).

Harries emphatically asserts: 'The Scriptures clearly promote non-colonial models of mission,'[131] the colonial model of mission has not been overcome. The theme of vulnerability is therefore in the work of the Alliance employed to perpetuate the colonial distinction between an idealized and projected safe homeland on the one hand, and on the other hand the exotic and dangerous foreign territory. The underlying logic accompanying the continuation of this unhelpful and harmful dichotomy lies in the aspect of making oneself vulnerable *in* this dangerous, foreign land. One becomes vulnerable in a dangerous situation, and apparently the situation is much more dangerous in the *foreign* land, as opposed to the home country. The home base is hereby described in terms of stability and safety, while the foreign 'mission field' acquires overtones of instability and danger. The distinction between safe and unsafe is problematic.[132] If vulnerability is connected to the semantic field that becomes evocated with the use of 'danger,' old dichotomies between missionary and missionized are brought back to life or simply continued without questioning.

4.6. Feminist Theology

4.6.1. *The Possibility of Kenosis*

In our search for a perspective on vulnerability that is openly postcolonial and takes the context of World Christianity into account, it is important to clarify further what exactly is at stake in advocating vulnerability and to clearly define this concept. In our overview of the literature, we have unfortunately not come across accounts that clearly delineate both the content and the limits of the concept. In this section, I will therefore broaden my horizon and search for answers in the debate about the meaning of kenosis, especially with an eye for the experiences of women. Feminist theology is able to venture creatively into new territory by discovering the radical nature of the incarnation by showing how Jesus himself rejected claims to power but lived his life both in vulnerability and relationality.[133] I have chosen to use resources within feminist theology because vulnerability is always intricately connected with the body. The experience of vulnerability is embodied experience. In feminist theology, the awareness of the fundamentality of bodily existence leads to a willingness to reflect theologically about embodiment.

In this section, I hope to find fruitful material in the discussion about the nature and extent of *kenosis*. As we have seen in the work of Bosch on the vulnerability of mission, the *kenosis* of Christ is the linchpin around which the discussion of

[131] Harries, 'Vulnerable Mission as an Alternative to Failing Aid Paradigms', 3.
[132] Cf. the work of Paas: Paas, 'The Making of a Mission Field'.
[133] Lisa Isherwood, 'Dancing Theology on Earthquakes: Trends and Direction in Feminist Theologies', *The Expository Times* 122, no. 4 (2011): 165–66.

Christocentric mission centers. Yet, we are left with few clues about what this vulnerability might entail for the totality of the church in mission. In addition, we have not yet touched upon the question regarding which types of vulnerability are beneficial for the church in mission, and which types instead do not challenge a structural Western-centrism by locating vulnerability primarily in the non-West. In order to answer the question about the possibility of kenosis, I will review a debate between two feminist theologians who debated the possibility of kenosis as a liberative praxis for women. This discussion started in the late 1980s and is continuing up to the present day. The discussion mainly revolves around an article which was written by Hampson, entitled: 'On Power and Gender.'[134] In this article, she argued that *kenosis* is mainly a male answer to a male problem, and is therefore fundamentally ill-directed to empower women. The article of Hampson has attracted criticism, which pointed out how Hampson operates in a paradigm that values self-sufficiency above all else. Coakley has offered a scathing criticism of Hampson, calling her version of *kenosis* unviable. In addition, she finds the feminism of Hampson to be wanting, accusing Hampson of clinging to untenable gender stereotypes. Coakley proffers her own version of *kenosis* which is characterized by receiving power-in-vulnerability through the practice of centering prayer.[135] While Coakley is mainly interested in how *kenosis* consists of the human opening for the divine, Papanikolaou is mainly interested in how *kenosis* could be a model for human relationships. He draws upon the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar and elaborates upon his Trinitarian understanding to argue for *kenosis* as self-giving acts of love that constitute and enable personhood.[136] Finally, writing in 2012, Chau, while analyzing the work of Hampson, Coakley and Papanikolaou, focuses on forgiveness as a key term in salvaging *kenosis*.[137] All four authors are interested in the pervasiveness of (structural) sin, the extent of grace and the restoration of personhood. I start with discussing the position of Hampson, whose work has been foundational for the other authors.

Hampson proceeds from the acknowledgment of three paradigms: powerfulness, powerlessness and empowerment. She discards the first two paradigms, because they are characterized by the centrality of masculinity. The first paradigm signifies the omnipotence of the Christian God, while the second paradigm, which is characterized by the incarnation, is characterized by the abnegation of power. The second paradigm, the abnegation of power in the incarnation, is not an option to consider for Hampson, as women do not have power to abnegate. It is therefore unhelpful and possibly harmful to ask women to engage in acts of kenosis. As a feminist theologian, Hampson places herself therefore within the third paradigm: the paradigm of empowerment. As a result, she pleads for the empowerment of

[134] Hampson, 'On Power and Gender'.
[135] Coakley, 'Kenosis and Subversion'.
[136] Papanikolaou, 'Person, Kenosis and Abuse'.
[137] Chau, '"What Could Possibly Be Given?'

women. If *kenosis*, a pivotal idea in the Christian tradition, cannot be salvaged for women, it follows that the Christian tradition as a whole becomes questionable. Hampson indeed declares herself a postchristian feminist. A second reason for becoming a postchristian feminist is that Christianity does not possess a conclusive symbol for the equality of women and men. A third point of contention is that Jesus did not let himself become empowered by the women in his life.[138] Although he himself worked for the empowerment of women, he did not allow his self-understanding to be transformed by women. Driven by those arguments to become postchristian, Hampson sketches the contours of a new humanity characterized by mutual empowerment, mutuality and equality.[139]

Coakley questions the assumptions from which Hampson proceeds. She sets out not only to defend *kenosis*, but also to show the necessity of *kenosis* for Christian theology.

The theological history of *kenosis* is complex and extremely varied. The range of possibilities are numerous, as Coakley already lists four distinct possibilities.[140] Two of these possibilities are falling on the extreme side of the spectrum. The 'gnostic redeemer' theory assumes a form of pre-existence of Christ. Emptying occurs in the earthly appearance of Christ.[141] On the other hand, the ethical approach assumes no pre-existence. It interprets the emptying of Christ as the decision not to grasp certain forms of (abusive) power. The critique Hampson levels against *kenosis* is mainly levelled against the former option, which speaks of the relinquishing of pre-existent divine attributes. Yet, this is not the type of *kenosis* that Coakley advantages and considers to be more in support with the current state of New Testament scholarship. Yet, it would be too soon to disregard Hampson's claims altogether, since she does not aim to criticize New Testament scholarship, but instead later interpretations which have urged women in submission by advocating *kenosis*. What type of *kenosis* does Coakley herself then appreciate? Coakley is inspired herself by the Giessen School of Lutherans. This school of thought focused on the self-emptying of the *human* nature of Christ. A *kenosis* regarding the human nature of Christ means that Christ willingly and consciously refrained from seeking to acquire harmful forms of power during his earthly life. He willingly sought not to be in accordance to centers of power but rather located himself on the periphery.

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[138] Hampson seems to be too quick to disregard the possibility of empowerment of Jesus by the women in his life. For example, one could point to the affluent women who supported financially the ministry of Jesus. Although this example is no empowerment in the sense of a transformed self-understanding, it is nevertheless an example of Jesus who allows himself, at least materially, to be empowered by women. See Luke 8:2-3.
[139] Hampson, 'On Power and Gender'.
[140] Coakley, 'Kenosis and Subversion', 89.
[141] Ibid., 84.

What then, is the role of vulnerability in the account of Coakley? Since vulnerability is a contested concept, it is important for her to explicitly outline which direction she is not taking. In the first place, it is not 'an undiscriminating adulation of vulnerability'[142] since that might attract abuse of various kinds. It is also not a 'straightforward *identification* between "vulnerability" in general (often a dangerous and regrettable state) and the particular notion of spiritual *kenosis* under discussion.'[143] One should therefore be careful to make distinctions between the 'right' form of vulnerability and the types of vulnerability that are open to abuse.[144]

For Coakley, proper vulnerability is Christocentric and builds on her exposition of the exact meaning of *kenosis*. Since she located *kenosis* in the human nature of Christ, it follows that the vulnerability she is advocating, is acted out in association and connection with the *kenosis* of Christ's human nature. Christ chose not to have certain forms of human power. This means that he remained vulnerable in light of his humanity, because he was determined not to act out harmful forms of power. If we are following Christ, and if we are entering in a mystical union with Christ through wordless prayer, we are enacting the same mind as Christ had. Thus the Pauline statement in Philippians 2 about the 'mind of Christ' is valorized through a vulnerable opening up of ourselves to the divine. And this openness to the divine acts as an undoing of masculinity as far as masculinity is associated with harmful forms of power. Coakley delves into the mystic tradition by advocating for wordless prayer as a vulnerable opening up towards the divine. She uses a fourth/fifth century Syriac source which used the phrasing 'hidden self-emptying of the heart.'[145] The vulnerable, 'hidden self-emptying of the heart' leads to deeper entering into the same patterns Christ was subjected to, namely the patterns of cross and resurrection. Consequently, opening up oneself for wordless prayer in this way leads to a deeper grafting into the body of Christ. This Christocentric mysticism of Coakley does not lead to oppose empowerment. On the contrary, she holds empowerment (by divine power) and vulnerability in close relationship with each other. They do not cancel each other out. The result of the power-in-vulnerability is not necessarily quietist either, but could lead to empowerment to speak out with a prophetic voice. As a result, this power-in-vulnerability could be truly subversive toward the powers that be. I consider the *via mystica* of self-emptying and the expansion of the self into God as a necessary and valuable corrective because it offers a viable way of fulfilling the Pauline dictum of orientation to the mind of Christ (Philippians 2). Still, and I will come back later to this point, we need to supplement her emphasis on the *via mystica* with robust articulations of a prophetic resistance to the violations of vulnerable life.

For Coakley, vulnerability should therefore not be equated with powerlessness.

[142] Ibid., 106.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid., 109.
[145] Ibid., 108.

She draws upon the work of Michel Foucault to argue that all persons possess power, however limited this power may be. She therefore rules out perceptions of vulnerability that determine vulnerability as the absence of power. The significance of adhering to the position that everyone possesses power is that power cannot be ascribed exclusively to the male domain, which is the position of Hampson. It means consequently that abusive forms of power are not located solely in the male realm. Consequently, there is a need to uncover forms of *kenosis* that are constituted by the decision not to adhere to forms of (abusive) power. As a result, the plea for vulnerability does not adhere to restricting and conventional gender roles, but is freed up in order to be applicable across the gender divide.

4.6.2. *Personhood and Healing*

As we have seen, Coakley mainly was interested in sketching how vulnerability could signal the possibility of the openness towards the divine in order to receive empowerment. Coakley's account did not discuss issues of inter-human relationships. However, in my quest for the 'right' type of vulnerability which can be applied to a theology of mission within the framework of World Christianity, we need to supplement the account of human-divine relationships with an account of inter-human vulnerability. In order to discuss inter-human vulnerability, we need to take a closer look, not only at the 'right' form of vulnerability, as Coakley has described, but also at what happens when vulnerability is violated. Papanikolaou gives us a description, through the lenses of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Marie Potter Engel, of how taking advantage of vulnerability results in the unmaking of personhood. Papanikolaou considers there to be a high degree of concurrence between Coakley and Balthasar with regard to the idea of *kenosis*. To sum up once more: 'Both theologians see *kenosis* as a fundamental stance before God in which vulnerability means opening a space for God's love to be present as a self-constituting empowerment.'[146] In the account of Engel, in situations of abuse, the sin committed could be described as the 'lack of consent to vulnerability.'[147] Abuse transforms vulnerability into weakness. The inherent vulnerability and frailty of human life is disrespected and violated. In the victim, the violation of vulnerability leads to destroying the capacity for the 'right' forms of vulnerability. The victim could either shun all forms of vulnerability or adopt unhealthy forms of dependency and vulnerability. Having taken up the account of Engel, Papanikolaou then posits that healing could take place through a form of *kenosis*. How is this *kenosis* interpreted? The key terminology Papanikolaou uses is the 'emptying of fear.' The 'emptying of fear' is a kenotic movement that takes place for the sake of the other.[148] The 'emptying of fear' takes place in a set of relationships that are non-

[146] Papanikolaou, 'Person, Kenosis and Abuse', 46.
[147] Ibid., 54.
[148] Ibid., 55.

destructive and enable personhood. The self-emptying of fear is a sign that there is indeed something that could be given or emptied.

How can we apply the work of Papanikolaou on personhood, kenosis and healing, to the quest for a postcolonial theology of vulnerable mission? In the first place, the violation of vulnerability in various and diverse mission encounters, both contemporary and past, has led to destroying the capacity for the 'right' forms of vulnerability. As a result, either dependency or striving towards invulnerability are witnessed. A postcolonial missiology therefore acknowledges the psychological damage that has been done within skewed and unjust power relationships. It is telling that reconciliation, both on a cosmic scale and within interpersonal relationships, has become a dominant paradigm within missiology in the 21st century.[149] Taking the mechanisms of vulnerability into account helps to understand the damage that has been done and the legacy that this damage leaves behind. Understood in the proposal of Papanikolaou, vulnerability becomes a holistic concept, that both bears upon the relationship with the divine as upon interpersonal relationships. Within the context of World Christianity, this means that safe spaces need to be created in which healing can take place. Healing, understood as an 'emptying of fear' by Papanikolaou, is possible within a set of relationships that enable personhood instead of destroying it. Reconciliation within World Christianity entails thus a scrutiny of the myriad of concrete instances in which violation of vulnerability took place, and attempts to create the possibilities for healing through an emptying of fear. Yet, the road to reconciliation will be partial, incomplete, painful and sometimes downright obstructed. I do not have any intention to suggest a 'quick fix' that will easily overcome the past foes of colonial dominance. I intend merely to take into account the issue of vulnerability and its violations that seeks to understand the colonial legacy in the present.

Although we have been searching for an account of what takes place when vulnerability is betrayed, it is possible to keep pressing our question further and to search for possibilities of resistance from the perspective of abused and wronged vulnerability. We find these resources in the work of Chau.[150] Chau engages in a close reading of both Coakley and Papanikolaou and attempts to take their work further. Chau takes her starting point in the question that Papanikolaou framed as the one pertaining most to his own quest: 'what could possibly be given?' What could possibly be given, emptied, in a kenotic act, in the face of abuse and the

[149] Robert J. Schreiter, 'Reconciliation and Forgiveness in Twenty-First Century Mission', in *Fullness of Life for All - Challenges for Mission in Early 21st Century*, ed. Inus Daneel, Charles Van Engen, and Hendrik Vroom, Currents of Encounter: Studies on the Contact between Christianity and Other Religions, Beliefs and Cultures (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 191–200; Ross Langmead, 'Transformed Relationships: Reconciliation as the Central Model for Mission', *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* 25, no. 1 (2008): 5–20.
[150] Chau, '"What Could Possibly Be Given?'

unmaking of personhood?[151] Papanikolaou answers that question by pointing to the possibility of the emptying of fear, which leads to a strength-in-vulnerability. Chau wishes to extend his argument further by bringing in the potential for forgiveness. Yet, she makes it clear that no-one who suffered abuse is under any obligation to forgive. As she indicates a way beyond a mere emptying of fear, she argues for the specific type of emptying that takes place in forgiveness. Forgiveness is interpreted as the emptying of claims that one person, rightfully, has against the other. It signifies therefore the openness that stems from the releasing of these claims. Although sin has wounded human existence in overwhelming and ungraspable ways, sin does not have the last word. The meaning of true redemption is thus that love defeats sin. In the words of Chau: 'Forgiveness is precisely the movement of resistance, of changing a pattern of destruction and sin to a pattern of healing and love.'[152] The power of forgiveness is made manifest in the ability to transform circles of violence. Chau moves beyond Papanikolaou because she stresses more emphatically the radical nature of love and grace. Consequently, she opens up the possibility for herself to be more radical about the nature of *kenosis*. *Kenosis* and forgiveness are bound up closely with one another. The reclaiming of gifted personhood enables survivors of abuse not to think of their wounded selves as having possibly something left to give in a kenotic act. Instead, there is the joy of discovery of endless love which leads to a new wholeness through the act of forgiveness.

4.6.3. *Power-in-Vulnerability*

What have we ultimately gained from the overview of these authors? In the first place, we have found through Coakley a way to maintain the possibility and necessity of the 'right' forms of vulnerability without succumbing to patriarchal ideas about vulnerability. Distributing strength and vulnerability along the lines of the gender dichotomy leads to an essentialist perspective on gender, as was the case in the perspective of Hampson. Instead, Christ turns patriarchal values upside down. The power that was manifested in Christ, the power-in-vulnerability, is a totally distinct form of power compared to the destructive patriarchal power. The possibility to subvert patriarchal power structures is the reason I have turned to feminist articulations of vulnerability. Those have the power to show that advocating for vulnerability does not mean that one succumbs to forms of vulnerability which have the very real possibility of putting women in danger. Instead, by allowing Coakley to govern our account of the 'right' type of vulnerability, we have tried to create a solid basis in which the right type of power can be discussed. The

[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid., 18.

power-in-vulnerability consists of a deliberate non-grasping of patriarchal, oppressive and damaging forms of power, but is instead an opening up towards the divine. As Coakley has touched upon in her new book, *God, Sexuality and the Self*,[153] desiring this type of power-in-vulnerability is challenging. It might even be accompanied by a loss of social standing because of the prophetic stance it requires.[154]

Interpreted thus, the power-in-vulnerability has indeed the potential to counter patriarchal and patronizing attitudes within mission. We are entering a separate discourse though, when we compare Coakley with the work of Bosch, the documents issued by the World Council of Churches and the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission. The gulf between missiology and theology[155] manifests itself in the distinct approaches and subject matter. Yet, I think that the work of Coakley has a bearing upon how mission theology has thus far tackled the subject of vulnerability. The work of Coakley supplements some of the intuitions that have been briefly articulated in the abovementioned works. For example, the emphasis in *Mission and Evangelism* on the church as a vulnerable body of followers of Christ is egalitarian and inclusive. The account of Coakley is able not only to probe deeper into the meaning of the church as a vulnerable body, but also explicitly takes into account the subversive and prophetic stance of believers stemming from the denouncement of patriarchal values. As such, the account of Coakley functions as a worthwhile supplement to feminist missiologies, such as those of Katja Heidemanns, Christine Lienemann-Perrin and Letty Russell.[156] From a postcolonial feminist perspective, as advocated, among others, by Kwok Pui-Lan, the work of Coakley serves as a helpful addition by outlining how the self might be opened up towards the divine in a way that distorts patriarchal values.[157] As Pui-Lan and many others have argued, the civilizing mission of modernity was characterized by its patriarchal values, which were consequently imposed upon missionized women.[158] Although I acknowledge many other strategies, the advocacy for power-in-vulnerability is a promising concept of addressing some of the patriarchal legacies left behind by the colonial period. The success of dismantling patriarchal legacies of the past is determined by the type of Christology employed in

[153] Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
[154] Ibid., 85.
[155] See Kirsteen Kim, 'Missiology as Global Conversation of (Contextual) Theologies', *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* 21, no. 1 (2004): 39–53.
[156] Katja Heidemanns, 'Missiology of Risk?: Explorations in Mission Theology from a German Feminist Perspective', *International Review of Mission* 93, no. 368 (2004): 105–18; Christine Lienemann-Perrin, 'The Biblical Foundations for a Feminist and Participatory Theology of Mission', *International Review of Mission* 93, no. 368 (2004): 17–34; Russell, 'God, Gold, Glory and Gender'.
[157] Pui-lan, Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology.
[158] Ibid., 17–18.

the present. Coakley's Christology is characterized by her claim that Christ deliberately did not grasp harmful forms of power, the vulnerability of Christ is therefore mainly posited with regard to Christ's human nature. Interestingly enough, a surprising parallel is forged at this point with the work of Harries. Harries equally interprets the vulnerability of Christ within the distinct choices made by Christ. He deliberately chose not to grasp certain forms of power. The most pressing example in the life of Christ is the temptation story as recounted in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. The Christological basis from which Harries proceeds is helpful in so far it explicitly connects the non-grasping of certain forms of power with the mission of the church. But his work remains too caught up in the perspective of missionaries from the West, which prevents Harries *cum suis* from asking fundamental questions about the need and necessity of missionaries originating from the West in a postcolonial time.

In surveying the work of Papanikolaou and Chau, I have indicated that I take the wronged vulnerability seriously because of its capacity to wound humans deeply. As I have outlined in the introduction, I have expressed the necessity of searching for the 'right' forms of vulnerability, or, more specifically, the 'right' way of response to the vulnerability humanity shares. In the accounts of Papanikolaou and Chau, I have encountered descriptions of the grave consequences of the violation of vulnerability. The unmaking of personhood can only be countered by the graced encounter of openness in the emptying of fear. The graveness of the unmaking of personhood needs to be countered by strong strategies for resistance. Chau has already hinted at resistance, which is actively working towards love and healing and changing old patterns that led to destruction. The possibility of resistance lies not in taking an invulnerable stance, but lies in the kenotic movement of the emptying of fear and the emptying that takes place in forgiveness. Chau and Papanikolaou have led the way towards an accessible road in which forgiveness and the emptying of fear are central.

4.7. Bodily Vulnerability, Disability and Resistance

4.7.1. *Resistance*

How can we align the fundamental vulnerability of life and the affirmation of life as a gift of/from God together? This difficult question might defy an answer, since it probes the depth(s) of human nature and/through the nature of suffering and pain. As we have seen earlier, strength is revealed in weakness, and power is revealed in vulnerability. But whose vulnerability is this? Before I further outline a response to vulnerability, I want to posit more clearly the two forms of vulnerability, the contours of which already arose from the discussion of the work of Coakley

and the search for the 'right' form of vulnerability. In the first place, I focus attention on the unequal distribution of vulnerability worldwide, in which colonialism, the machinations of empire, and capitalism have contributed to this inequality. Some forms of human vulnerability are either actively produced or willfully ignored by those who have the power to either alleviate or prevent the suffering resulting from this vulnerability. For example, the power of pharmaceutical companies, who are oftentimes primarily interested in keeping medicine prices artificially high, effectively robs certain groups of people of the possibility of affordable treatments. Another example might be the devastation of land in the Niger delta, resulting from oil leaks. From this perspective, vulnerability cannot be separated from the pursuit of justice, the necessity of lament[159] and active resistance.[160]

In the second place, another form of vulnerability should be discerned, namely the form of vulnerability which is not primarily focused on one's life circumstances and resilience, but on the characteristics of the self. This form of vulnerability is associated with openness and invulnerability is her opposite. As I have indicated in the beginning of the chapter, this form of vulnerability requires work on the self, in order to disentangle oneself from the prevalent obsession with security and invulnerability in our societies. These two forms of vulnerability are not entirely separate from each other, since the production of invulnerability, the willful ignorance of the existential vulnerability of life, causes aggregated vulnerability, the 'wrong' type of vulnerability, for those who are on the receiving end of measures to bolster one's invulnerability. Perhaps the clearest example of how the striving for invulnerability aggravates vulnerability is the war on terror. The intense border policing in the United States and grotesque measures to prevent terrorism has led to the torture of innocent victims in the Guantanamo Bay prison.

The two responses to the existential vulnerability that characterizes all human life might therefore be depicted as follow:

Existential vulnerability → invulnerability → aggravated / wronged vulnerability.

Existential vulnerability → acknowledgment of vulnerability → Community / connectivity / planetarity.

Two diametrically different responses are therefore possible in response to the existential vulnerability of life; in the first place, the push back against invulnerability, which leads to aggravated vulnerability to those who are on the receiving end of measures that need to maintain the fiction of safety and impenetrability. On

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[159] Hof, 'A Missiology of Lament'.

[160] See for a closer account of the link between empire and vulnerability: Snyman, 'Empire and a Hermeneutics of Vulnerability'.

the other hand, the acknowledgment of existential vulnerability leads to a respectful engagement not only of one's own vulnerability, but also of the vulnerability of the other, opening up the door for mutuality and interdependence.

The widespread production of invulnerability begs the question of the appropriate response, namely to open up the possibility of interconnectedness instead of the hyper-individualism that results from invulnerability. I take my inspiration from the important work by Dorothee Sölle, who subverts the meaning of the phrase 'window of vulnerability.' This phrase originally meant, in a context of military strategy, an opening in the line of defense in which the enemy has an opportunity to strike. From a military perspective, the 'window of vulnerability' should remain closed at all times, in order to prevent an attack from outside. What happens when the window of vulnerability is hermetically sealed off at all times? This means that the view towards the sky, the view towards transcendence is cut off and inaccessible.[161] Sölle wrote at the time when the arms race of the Cold War was one of the most pressing issues theologians had to address. Her work holds up remarkably well in the contemporary world, which is characterized by fear of terrorist attacks and an increasingly violent backslash, resulting in a continuous downward spiral of violence. Actively keeping the window of vulnerability open is the current task at hand, for mission theologians and for mission practitioners alike.

In this section, I will discuss a specific context in which I consider it necessary to keep the window of vulnerability open. This is the context of white privilege, since the maintenance of white privilege is closely connected to presenting oneself as invulnerable. I would like to focus specifically on connecting the dots between whiteness, white privilege, (implicit) racism and the production and maintenance of invulnerability. White privilege is a pervasive feature of a raced society in which white people continue to benefit from structural advantages by virtue of their whiteness. White privilege is hampering the flourishing of society as a whole, because white privilege fosters and creates unjust and asymmetrical connections between diverse groups in society. Whiteness is a 'socially and historically constructed category of racial identity.'[162] Whiteness is upholstered by a strategy of invulnerability, which aids white selves in their perception of the world and disallows white selves to critically engage with their own subject positions. Whiteness is characterized as the particular outlook of whites on the world, which is perceived as the default and normative way of perceiving the world.

The close link between whiteness and invulnerability is in need of dismantling through the acknowledgment of vulnerability. However, the complicating factor of white fragility needs to be taking into account here, since fragility as a term is

[161] Dorothee Sölle, The Window of Vulnerability: A Political Spirituality (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

[162] Ruth Frankenberg, Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 36–37.

connected to the inability of many white people to respond to racism. Although the term fragility shares some overlap with vulnerability, they inhabit different discourses. Fragility is connected once again with privilege. Most white folks have hardly endured any form of racial stress, and when confronted with the unpleasant subject of their imbrication with racial prejudices, they deflect the topic. Their inability to deal with racial stress is considered a form of fragility and results from an inability to sustain an honest inward assessment of their own contributions to a system of racial oppression.[163] Fragility results when the first cracks arise in the armor of invulnerability. Fragility manifests when the window of vulnerability resists closing. Fragility shows that one has lived one's whole life inside one's safe, trusted, reliable and familiar compound, and one has not been challenged to live, metaphorically speaking, 'outside the gate,' to borrow the terminology from Orlando Costas. But, only 'outside the gate' will the confrontation with one's fragile self take place and will one be challenged to make the transition from fragility to vulnerability. In other words, one should embrace the tenaciousness of the window of vulnerability because that window actively resists being closed. The solution for invulnerability is therefore to address the problem of fragility and search for ways to endure racial stress and turn unproductive fragility instead into productive vulnerability.

I take inspiration here from the work of both Alison Bailey[164] and Samantha Vice,[165] who are involved in theorizing about whiteness and racism. Vice's thought-provoking article title 'how do we live in this strange place?' orients us to the (im) possibilities of living well as a white person in a place that is irreversibly damaged by its grueling racist past. In Vice's case, this strange place is South Africa. Vice suggests in this context a trajectory that is characterized by humility, reflection, silence, repentance and the willingness to step back from public discussions and let the black population take the lead. Her account is helpful in so far as it takes the possibility seriously that the way to live a morally good life is not only through activist work, although this remains an important aspect, but also through a focus on work on the self. The problem with an activist, do-gooder stance is that this stance perpetuates the active dimension that white selves are so intimately familiar with, but which also perpetuates the priority of white actions and perspectives.[166] The same response is shared by Bailey, who sums up neatly what the dangers are of pushing for resistance without doing the inner work required:

[163] Robin DiAngelo, 'White Fragility', The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy 3, no. 3 (2011), 54-70.
[164] Bailey, 'On White Shame and Vulnerability'.
[165] Samantha Vice, '"How Do I Live in This Strange Place?"', *Journal of Social Philosophy* 41, no. 3 (2010): 323–342.
[166] Sullivan, Revealing Whiteness.

> Whitely do-gooding responses give us substance. When whites bypass 'working on our stuff' in favor of direct political action we risk falling back into unreflective do-gooding, rescuing, controlling, fixing, and missionary responses that allow us to restore our goodness (at least in our own minds) rather than understanding our complicity in systematic wrong doing. Humility and silence offer more effective, and perhaps less whitely, moral responses.[167]

With Vice and Bailey, I propose therefore humility and silence as important building blocks for the countering of invulnerability and the embrace of vulnerability instead of fragility. But there is something missing in the account of Vice, since the responses of humility and silence are rather solipsistic and individual. And it is this hyper-individualism that is a characteristic of whiteness. We need therefore responses that are more communal, that have the possibility to break out of a solipsistic worldview. Bailey suggests therefore that the only way to take vulnerability seriously is to acknowledge that vulnerability is relational: 'vulnerability is openness before someone.'[168] This openness is reflected in the plurality of perspectives that arises when one opens oneself up to 'disagreeable mirrors'[169] who are able to reveal the complexity of one's moral taintedness. The necessity for disagreeable mirrors arises from the necessity to share epistemic resources. White folks have by virtue of their whiteness difficulty in understanding the world that systemic racism has produced. They need therefore other epistemic resources than the one they can provide themselves. The restricted vision from the center disallows an honest appraisal of the perspective from the epistemic standpoint of marginalization. White folks need therefore an epistemic vulnerability in order to be able to engage with the resources offered from the perspective of marginalization. The necessity of epistemic vulnerability, which is able to shatter centrist perspectives, ties in therefore with the findings from the third chapter. In the third chapter, I explained the epistemological priority of the perspective of various marginalized identities. Only from the perspective of various margins, is it possible to distinguish the impact of various centrist positions. The interrelational dimension of marginality bears therefore a direct impact on the approach to vulnerability as proposed in this chapter. The interrelational character of the response to both fragility and invulnerability, although it is the only way forward, is still accompanied by the problem that this approach might put additional burden to people of color, since they are expected to serve as those 'disagreeable mirrors.' I want indeed to stress emphatically that the function as 'disagreeable mirror' should not put the burden for educating white people once again solely with people of color. Instead, I suggest that the encounters from which these reflective function arrive happen naturally when whites are stepping outside the gate, outside gated communities where they are part of, and are willing to cultivate, with Vice, humility and silence.

[167] Bailey, 'On White Shame and Vulnerability', 476.
[168] Ibid., 480.
[169] Ibid., 478. The phrase "disagreeable mirrors" is taken from James Baldwin.

In the preceding section, I have outlined that one desired response to vulnerability is to take the road of humility and silence. This humility and silence are a result of allowing disagreeable mirrors to shine light on the hidden superiority contained in the ongoing tendency of white selves to posture themselves as invulnerable. But what responses are possible in light of harmed vulnerability? This harm can result if one is confronted with the damage which results from someone else's push back against vulnerability. For example, when white folks try to minimize the impact of racial macroaggressions in order to maintain themselves as pure and untainted, people of color are harmed since the integrity of their selves is not taken seriously. I want to stress that that I take the perspective of intersectionality that I developed in the former chapter to heart and emphasize once again that the world can never be divided into people who are vulnerable and those who are strong. An intersectionality perspective acknowledges the many dimensions or vectors in which one can experience vulnerability through oppression, such as classism, racism, ableism, ageism, heterosexism and sexism. In order to outline the perspective on the oppressive nature of vulnerability, I turn to the dissertation of Gandolfo, since she offers resources on the intersection between vulnerability and divine love, reasoning from a feminist perspective that takes natality and maternity as her anchor points.[170] Gandolfo proceeds from a different starting point compared to the perspective of critical race theory, since she is not primarily involved in outlining the necessity of vulnerability, but instead stakes out the harm perpetrated on vulnerable bodies. This direction is notably different from the one I have employed in this chapter, in which I have traced the havoc that invulnerability has caused, especially since my primary focus has been mission theology that deals with the aftermath of colonialism. Gandolfo doesn't venture into the realm of critical race theory, and is therefore not concerned with the negative consequences of invulnerability. Instead, she interprets God as invulnerable, because God is always reliable, unchanging in love and compassion, and a rock for those who seek refuge. It is exactly those characteristics of God that make him an unwavering source of support in the midst of volatile and oppressive human circumstances. Although I agree with what Gandolfo wants to convey about the nature and character of God, I highly doubt whether the word invulnerability is sufficient. Invulnerability fits seamlessly in the classic characteristics ascribed to God such as impassibility and immutability. Instead, I would propose that it might be more worthwhile to describe the trustworthiness of God with a plethora of terms derived from the Biblical texts themselves, such as 'rock of refuge.' I do not disregard the reassuring stability that the presence of God can provide in the midst of afflicted vulnerability, but where I am primarily indebted to the work of Gandolfo, is her thorough outline of the responses to afflicted vulnerability. She proposes a three-

[170] Gandolfo, 'Vulnerability, Resilience, and Resistance'.

fold approach to live in the midst of vulnerability courageously and with resilience. In the first place, the remembering of past suffering entails the courage to name the violation that has been inflicted upon oneself and upon communities. Drawing upon the work of Johann Baptist Metz on dangerous memory and upon Edward Schillebeeckx on contrast experiences, the remembering of violation is indeed subversive. It allows one to own one's experiences, to not be confined by the narrative of the perpetrators, and to recover one's own story in the midst of those voices who are challenging one's own narrative and one's own perspective. The first act of remembrance is followed by the act of contemplation, a spiritual practice which orients the self to divine love. This practice opens up the self to the divine affirmation of worth and dignity and serves as a powerful counter narrative against the forces of dehumanization. In Gandolfo's words:

> […] contemplation can be understood as *resistance* to the violation of vulnerability and human dignity insofar as it affirms, forms, and transforms practitioners into their God-given identity as not only loved by God, but as sacred *loci* of the divine presence in the world.[171]

This second praxis closely resembles the work of Coakley, which I surveyed earlier. Not surprisingly, Gandolfo lists Coakley as an inspiration for her own work in this respect. The third praxis is primarily communal, inspired by Galatians 6:2. Solidarity breaks down the isolation which can accompany the breaking down of the self when the self is violated. Solidarity allows us to relate stories to each other, to acknowledge the structural character of violence and abuse. Solidarity should not be imagined in a romantic way, as an easy way out to fix what is broken. Instead, communities arising out of brokenness can be tough, rough-edged, and scarred.

This three-fold approach towards resistance and resilience in the face of raw vulnerability leaves us with an account of resistance that is silently powerful, as opposed to loud and powerful in an activist way. To engage with vulnerability in the midst of life and in the midst of complex historical processes materializing in the present means that one finds oneself at the crossroads of shifting and conscripted spaces.[172] I want to take the work of Gandolfo a step further and ask the question of the social location of the resistance and resilience in light of the violation of vulnerability. The processes of resistance and resilience point to the meeting of the vulnerable Christ himself: in the borderland. The hybrid Christ as the wounded healer is the one who located himself permanently in the borderland and stands waiting at the other side of the border. The borderland is a place of negotiation, tension and oftentimes wanton violence, but the transformed borderland as

[171] Ibid., 249.
[172] Culp, *Vulnerability and Glory*, 102, 202–3.

the location of Christ points to the possibility of healing, community and the discovery of power-in-vulnerability.

4.7.2. *Bodily Vulnerability*

The body as a contested and constructed site is strangely absent from the missiological writings I have reviewed so far. Yet, in order to keep missiological theory grounded, the impact of vulnerability on real bodies needs to be discussed. If the body is left out of the equation, one runs the risk of becoming abstract and removed from the vicissitudes of daily life. Although the phrase 'body of Christ' features extensively in theologies of mission, the actual bodily dimension is scarcely touched upon. I need therefore to engage with strands of theology and theorizing in general that have explicitly written about the vulnerability of the body. The question of bodily vulnerability gives, in a missiological context, rise to discussions of memory and history. Colonial legacies of disciplining and controlling bodies of colonial subjects, which present themselves in the legacies of mission, have resulted in 'memories of the flesh.'[173] This harrowing legacy of colonialism results in the need to theorize about the 'lasting effects in local and global understandings and experiences of embodiment.'[174] To engage in body-talk in a missiological discourse therefore is difficult terrain given the complicacy of missionary efforts in the colonial power arrangements. Yet, because of this legacy, there is a need for a conceptual space where these matters might be addressed, instead of keeping silent about them. From Culp, I gain the insight that vulnerability is historically mediated. Consequently, the analysis of vulnerability does not arise out of nowhere, but starts *in medias res*.[175] The lasting and pervasive influences of history upon the constructing of various types of vulnerability in the present should therefore be acknowledged.

How do we move from considerations about the necessity of discussing the bodily element in vulnerability towards disability studies as a promising site of investigations? Why do I focus specifically on disability? For some theorists, disability might be considered an essential characteristic of humanity in general.[176] Disability is, in this opinion, considered as a continuum, and not as an absolute state. In whatever form and at whatever point in their life, everyone encounters the limits of one's body and existence. Yet, in the words of Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, 'our collective cultural consciousness emphatically denies the knowledge of vulnerability, contingency, and mortality.'[177] Erin Gilson has argued in the same

[173] Rivera, 'Unsettling Bodies', 120. She takes this expression from Luce Irigaray.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Culp, *Vulnerability and Glory*, 122.
[176] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, 'Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory', *NWSA Journal* 14, no. 3 (2002): 21.
[177] Ibid.

vein when she considers the relationship between the widespread ignorance of vulnerability and oppression.[178] Disability is a powerful window into vulnerability and could therefore function as a site of investigation to overcome constructions of invulnerability. However, the ability/disability continuum is characterized by a constructed nature, attesting to the prevalence of the 'cult of normalcy' that pervades our society, as Reynolds has argued.[179] As is pointed out by feminist disability scholars, both the female body and the disabled body have been subjected to scrutiny which renders these bodies abnormal and deviant from the norm.[180] The bodily dimension of vulnerability then, becomes a topic in which the concept of the body is both sensitized (as the location of inquiry) and destabilized (as the location of the normalizing gaze). The topic of disability offers the possibility to critically scrutinize strategies of invulnerability and the pervasiveness of the 'cult of normalcy.' As a result, disability ought not to be considered to be a 'special interest' topic, in which only persons are interested if they have a vested interest in the topic. This is taken up by Julia Kristeva, whose writings on disability evoke questions of that nature.[181] From a theological perspective, Reynolds helps us to overcome the distinction between the invulnerable, strong, able- bodied person on the one hand, and the disabled, vulnerable person on the other hand. It is to his work that we now turn.

Reynolds takes disability as his epistemological focal point in order to construct a theology of hospitality and community. The great merit of his approach is that he is able to build a theology from the margins by foregrounding experiences that have been repressed by the mainstream. Although he never theorizes much about the epistemological priority of the marginalized in the same vein as the authors I have discussed in the chapter on marginality, Reynolds comes close to their intentions. From a perspective of disability, it is possible to see the world in another light, compared to the able-bodied perspective. In order to work fruitfully with disability as a concept, a proper definition is called for. Reynolds provides a remarkably holistic and integrative definition. For him,

> disability is a term naming the interstice where (1) restrictions due to an involuntary bodily impairment, (2) social role expectations, and (3) external physical/social obstructions come together in a way that (4) preempts an intended participation in communal life.[182]

The definition remains grounded in physical circumstances, but offers a more expansive definition since he is concerned with the interplay of the physical and the

[178] Gilson, 'Vulnerability, Ignorance, and Oppression'.
[179] Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*.
[180] Kim Q. Hall, 'Feminism, Disability, and Embodiment', *NWSA Journal* 14, no. 3 (2002): vii–xiii.
[181] Julia Kristeva, 'A Tragedy and a Dream: Disability Revisited', *Irish Theological Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (2013): 219–30.
[182] Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 27.

social. Consequently, Reynolds trades the medical model of theorizing disabilities for a social model.[183] Since disability is a social construct, it is not possible to maintain a strict dichotomy between 'disabled' and 'abled.' Disability is intrinsically connected with the vulnerability in which all of humanity partakes. In this sense, no human being is perfectly 'abled.' Disability should be constructed therefore as a continuum. Although Reynolds considers disability as a continuum, in which the distinction between able-bodied and disabled is fluid, he maintains the real suffering involved for those who are, in whatever way, affected by infirmities.[184] Since disability is a social construct, which can and should be critically scrutinized, the conceptual space opens up to research the roots of the constellation in question. Reynolds argues vehemently against what he considers the 'cult of normalcy.' He defines the 'cult of normalcy' as the tendency in wider society to focus attention to the able-bodied and to define those who do not adhere to the norm of ability as deviant. The 'cult of normalcy' is heavily invested in a medical approach that strives towards healing in the sense of a restoration of the current norm of ability. Reynolds, on the contrary, refuses to participate in this medical idea, and searches for other dimensions of healing.

Before the wealth of these ideas for my own design of missionary vulnerability can be scrutinized, I will first turn to the strands of thought that Reynolds hopes to avoid. He warns against the theological trivialization of disability. Trivialization means in this case that the full implications of disability for theology are neglected by settling the matter of disability in an obvious and clear-cut way. Three instances of theological trivialization need to be avoided. In the first place, it needs to be avoided to reduce persons with disabilities to the recipients of charity and to regard them as an object of pity. This approach creates a dichotomy between those who are perceiving themselves as 'healthy' and 'normal' and those who are 'handicapped' and 'disabled.' Mutuality and reciprocity are lacking in this approach. Secondly, disability should not be treated as a source of inspiration for those who are 'healthy' and 'normal.' If this is the case, people with disabilities are infused with special qualities which make them into virtuous examples to follow. The third approach, lastly, has some elements in common with the second approach. This approach focuses on the pedagogy of suffering in persons with disability. They are considered to be favored by God in order to bear spiritual fruits out of their suffering.[185] In the last two approaches, the singularity of persons with disabilities is downplayed in order to function as a means towards something else.

We must reconsider therefore what we believe to be healing. Wholeness is, following the lead of Reynolds, the primary characteristic of healing. Wholeness is not defined as the restoration of disability in a state of ability, but is rather imagined along the lines of community and interdependence. Wholeness is the result

[183] Ibid., 26.
[184] Ibid., 14.
[185] Ibid., 38–42.

of a radically inclusive community, in which everyone opens her/himself up to the vulnerability of the other. The vulnerability of the other provides a window into our own vulnerability. Sharing one's humanity with each other is exemplified in God's vulnerability, who shares the vulnerability of humanity by fully entering the human condition. The vulnerability of God is revealed in the full humanity of Jesus Christ. If vulnerability is the basic given of human life, it follows that being vulnerable is the default state. Invulnerability is consequently not the proposed ideal for human flourishing. Instead, receiving one's existence from the other is to be desired. The ideal of rational, autonomous and individual personhood, to which people with disabilities cannot ascribe to, is neither attainable nor desirable. Even though the reality of suffering is by no means denied, disability is not a deficit that needs to be fixed or repaired. The category of redemption is therefore not taken to denote the fixing of impairments in order to return to the normative state of 'normalcy,' which is a problematic concept.[186] But redemption as a focal point of inquiry remains multi-faceted. On the one hand, redemption is a transformative movement, which takes place within human vulnerability, without overcoming it. On the other hand, a vista opens up toward eschatological fulfillment. The eschatological whole is anticipated, but is experienced now only as incomplete and fragmentary.[187] The tension between the fullness in the eschaton and the current possibilities of redemption are likely to stay with us. Yet, an explanation of the eschaton indicates what exactly needs to be redeemed and provides us with clues about which element of redemption needs to be foregrounded. The tension remains thus in Reynolds between on the one hand the denouncement of the 'cult of normalcy' and redemption without cancelling out vulnerability, and on the other hand the real suffering, pain and infliction resulting from disability and in need of redemption.

The work of Reynolds has led me to the following conclusions on vulnerability. Reynolds is squarely in line with my stated intention to explicitly incorporate perspectives that derive from marginality in all of its forms. In the theology of Reynolds theorizing from the perspective of disability allows one to gain a perspective of the intolerance for deviance from normalcy and the tendency to theologically trivialize disability. Not only that, it provides a clear window into vulnerability. Vulnerability and disability are not to be equated with each other, although their conflation might, in common usage, be easily understandable.[188] I am not discussing disability because disabled persons are the most vulnerable persons *par excellence*. I am discussing disability, in connection with Reynolds, because it provides a window into vulnerability. The discussion of disability serves rather

[186] Ibid., 19.
[187] Ibid., 238.
[188] A quick google search learns that the conflation of disability and vulnerability is easily found. See for example this statement on The Official Website of the Disabled Persons Protection Commission in Massachusetts: "Persons with disabilities are some of our most vulnerable citizens." http://www.mass.gov/dppc/abuse-recognize/vulnerability.html (accessed March 17, 2015).

to dismiss the norms of invulnerability, which exclude persons with disabilities from ever adhering to the norm. Instead, the discourse on vulnerability, which I have researched, safeguards and protects vulnerability. Vulnerability is safeguarded through nurturing practices of community and acceptance. The discourse on vulnerability and disability, especially when encountered from an explicitly feminist viewpoint, leads to a vehement critique on the normalizing tendency inherent in invulnerability. Whenever invulnerability as the norm is stressed, disability will be considered a deviation of the norm.

For our present purposes in this chapter, this means that we have probed a layer deeper into the meaning of vulnerability. As I have indicated, I intended to mine the work of Reynolds in order to search for clues on how vulnerability as a constructive account can play a decisive role in the current constellation in mission, with its ongoing struggle to overcome various dichotomies, such as the distinction between the marginalized and the privileged. As Reynolds has shown, the right acknowledgment of vulnerability enables us to share our humanity with each other. The acknowledgment of both our own vulnerability and the vulnerability of the other can lead to flourishing and the establishment of inclusive communities. It also leads to a much greater tolerance of diversity and bodily representations, since the 'cult of normalcy' is actively resisted. Encounters with the 'right' type of vulnerability are characterized by their concrete, bodily character. Within and between vulnerable bodies true encounters take place. As I have foregrounded in the first chapter, mission encounters are the primary dimension in which mission is acted out. It follows that these encounters are colored by the vulnerable character of those who engage in these encounters. Invulnerability is resisted and subverted though these encounters. The communities which might arise out of these types of vulnerable encounters, might be considered missional and communities of witness. Missional, as they witness to the vulnerable mission of God. Witnessing, as they attest to the 'power-in-vulnerability' granted by the empowering openness towards the divine. The encounter between open and vulnerable bodies leads to the activation of the prophetic dimension of witness, as has been described by Bevans and Schroeder, since instances of invulnerability and adherence to the 'cult of normalcy' will be actively challenged.[189]

4.8. On the Contextual Nature of Vulnerability

The discussion so far has made clear that this chapter should not be interpreted as condoning all forms of vulnerability. Suffering, which stems from vulnerability, is neither beneficial nor should be sought after. Instead, I have been exploring

[189] Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011).

various responses to the aggravated vulnerability through the work of Gandolfo, by pointing to the possibility of remembrance, lament and the transforming power of community. As Bevans and Schroeder argue, by drawing upon the work of Eloy Bueno, an 'epistemological leap' took place regarding mission practice when churches recognized that it was their task not merely to alleviate the burdens of the poor, but to work systematically to dismantle systemic aspects of injustice.[190] My position should therefore not be read as advocacy for mission practitioners to *become* vulnerable. Instead, I voice the call for the recognition of all human vulnerability. In other words, vulnerability can be considered as the terrain on which all mission encounters take place. As such, it is my intention to advocate more than just a trite and worn-out cliché of making oneself vulnerable (a very popular expression in Dutch: *jezelf kwetsbaar opstellen*). Since mission encounters are, at least for a considerable time to come, haunted by the specter of colonialism, one should pay close attention to the myriad ways in which vulnerability is denied and circumscribed. The reason for this close attention is the way in which a connection has been established between the powerful, rational, autonomous, impenetrable agent of the Enlightenment, the denial of vulnerability and the colonial enterprise.[191] As such, the denial of vulnerability bears upon mission practices and attitudes and their continued influence in the contemporary time frame. Pushing back against vulnerability leads, as we have seen already in Butler, to the abuse of vulnerability.[192]

Consequently, my plea for acknowledging vulnerability is contextually determined. My argument for taking seriously the postcolonial context of World Christianity led to the necessity to discuss the topic of vulnerability. Humans are vulnerable, and we are vulnerable when we engage in mission encounters. Mission is practiced by vulnerable persons. As I have argued in this chapter, vulnerability is contextual and needs therefore to be treated as multifaceted, and not as a monolith. In every context anew, different facets of vulnerability come to the fore. For example, I acknowledge with Julia Kristeva that the argument 'we are all vulnerable' is, in itself, not a particularly helpful way of framing the debate around vulnerability.[193] The 'we are all vulnerable' narrative could, taken to its extreme, lead to a form of indifference and passivity in the face of concrete circumstances and injustices. A certain form of depthlessness occurs in the case of a shallow recourse to the 'we are all vulnerable' narrative. Yet, in the face of the need for a contextual account of vulnerability, one could very well argue that at the present moment, the Netherlands needs a narrative in which it is explained that this country is engaged in constructing invulnerability by fencing itself off against the perceived corrupting influence of outsiders. The recent push-back against unwanted asylum seekers

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[190] Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 370.
[191] Gilson, 'Vulnerability, Ignorance, and Oppression'.
[192] Butler, Precarious Life.
[193] Kristeva, 'A Tragedy and a Dream'.

is a specific example of how current sentiments in a country advocate a form of invulnerability by fencing themselves off against the perceived corrupting forces of foreigners.[194] This explanation could subsequently challenge the present situation and find possibilities for resistance.[195] If invulnerability is constructed and maintained in these specific situations, one of the possible solutions is to actively seek practices that undermine the creation of invulnerability and move to a situation in which the self-containedness of the Netherlands is challenged. One of the possibilities to counter a strategy of invulnerability is to analyze and subvert the idea of the safe, stable, self-contained homeland and expose it as a dangerous myth, as I have demonstrated in the second chapter. In a planetary world, deep interconnectedness precludes the possibility of a country with is not affected by the porousness of its borders.[196] The antidote against invulnerability is contextual, and points to resources which will 'lodge in the border,' as we have seen in the second chapter, and are able to subvert the myth of the safe homeland. Vulnerability, in this case, means the acknowledgment of interconnectedness and the impossibility to wield complete control over one's environment.

It is for these reasons that I do not consider this contextual treatment of vulnerability to be a glorification of suffering. I advocate employing the oppositional pair of invulnerability and vulnerability in missiological discourse for the sake of analyzing the instances where willful invulnerability occurs. I also aim to provide theological resources for analyzing the inner machinations of the two concepts. Yet, there remains a form of ambiguity in vulnerability which cannot be reduced or easily solved. Vulnerability as a concept is multifaceted. Dependent on context, certain aspects need emphasis over other aspects. The irreducible ambiguity of vulnerability is not in itself negative. It points to the capacity of the concept to assess a certain position or situation and to analyze it according to the most pertaining aspects.

4.9. ON OPENNESS

Openness and vulnerability share a semantic field with each other. Vulnerability can be considered as a form of openness. In this section, I will explain how openness differs from vulnerability and why I have chosen to favor vulnerability over openness as a leading concept. While openness is generally considered a positive

[194] In Dutch I have written about the end of the myth of the Netherlands as a country that was invulnerable for the violation of human rights. Eleonora Hof, "Zet mensenrechtenschendingen op de kaart," www.godschrift.nl, August 23, 2013.

[195] One possibility of resistance is found among those groups of people who organize vigils on the sites of the migrant detention centers. See for example: www.schipholwakes.nl (providing background information in English as well).

[196] Bauman, 'Living and Dying in the Planetary Frontier-Land'.

trait within missiology, hardly any works address openness specifically. The work of Ross Langmead is an exception. He argues for both conviction and openness, as two poles which are both necessary in mission.[197] Conviction refers to the explicit, witnessing dimension of Christianity, in which proclamation is appropriate. Openness, on the other hand, is connected with the dialogical dimension of mission, in which genuine openness for the other is required in order to be introduced into her/his thought world. As such, Langmead wishes to espouse the statement on mission that was adopted at the 1990 San Antonio WCC mission conference. In this statement, it was proclaimed that it is impossible to set limits to the saving grace of God, but that on the other hand, it was acknowledged that salvation is only granted through Jesus Christ.

Openness as a concept is related to the idea of dialogue, in which openness is a necessary feature in order to come to richer and deeper understandings of the religious other. Yet, oftentimes, this form of openness is predicated upon the relativizing of the ideas of one's own religious adherence, and is therefore closely tied to the idea of religious pluralism. Marianne Moyaert has discussed in this context the idea of openness, and concludes it is a form of 'derailed openness,'[198] in which the nature of religious adherence is not taken seriously. Instead, she insists on the need to acknowledge that interreligious encounters make us nervous because they point to the strangeness both of the other and of ourselves. We oftentimes cannot give a rationally convincing account of our ultimate convictions, and equally often fail to understand the account of the other. We all have allegiances and convictions, which are sometimes even strange to ourselves. We cannot resort to evicting the strangeness of ourselves and the other by pointing towards the idea of openness, which consequently becomes something of an empty shell. Instead, Moyaert opts for vulnerability instead of openness to describe the interreligious dialogue. Vulnerability depicts the inability to know the outcome of the dialogue and the precariousness of real dialogue since real dialogue confronts us with strangeness.

The work of Moyaert is helpful in describing the reasons why I do not consider openness the best approach for my research. With Moyaert, I think that one could argue that the current forms of openness that are advocated within interreligious dialogue are somehow and somewhat misguided. While I acknowledge that mission encounters are shaped differently than encounters for the sake of religious dialogue, I acknowledge substantial overlap with the position of Moyaert. Moyaert holds that whoever enters the interreligious dialogue, does so with a desire to share something of one's ultimate commitment to what she/he has found to be truthful and precious in her/his own life. As such, an unwarranted stress on the necessity

[197] Ross Langmead, 'Conviction and Openness', Australian Journal of Mission Studies 1, no. 1 (2007): 43–50.

[198] Marianne Moyaert, 'Interreligious Dialogue and the Value of Openness; Taking the Vulnerability of Religious Attachments into Account', *The Heythrop Journal* 51, no. 5 (2010): 738.

of openness relativizes this belonging. Instead, one enters the interreligious dialogue with vulnerability: a vulnerable acknowledgment of one's own convictions and the desire to engage in dialogue with the real and lived adherences of the religious other. The resemblances with mission encounters are striking. These encounters take place in the acknowledgment of the value of commitments, without in any way relativizing those commitments but allowing them to bear upon the mission encounter.

4.10. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have attempted to explore the concept of vulnerability with the goal of finding in this concept new ways to dismantle power and privilege within the current constellation of World Christianity, while also conceptualizing vulnerability in such a way that it offers constructive impulses to be considered as an integral part of mission theology. Vulnerability functions in this chapter on the one hand as a critique on a posture of invulnerability. At the same time, I have anchored vulnerability in mission theology, especially within Christology, in order to function within a postcolonial theology of mission.

In this chapter, I have conducted an overview on the usage of vulnerability within a selection of missiological sources. The goal of researching these sources is to discover to what extent these sources become relevant building blocks for the project at hand, and to what extent they are in need of complementation or correction. I have found that Bosch has laid the foundation for rethinking mission from the perspective of vulnerability. Bosch anchors vulnerable mission in the *pathos* of God the Father, the *kenosis* of Christ and the victim-missionary example of the apostle Paul. The account of Bosch proceeds from the perspective of missionary actors, and it is precisely this perspective that is questioned in postcolonial sources. Secondly, I have traced the development of vulnerability in *Mission and Evangelism* and *Together towards Life*. *Mission and Evangelism* emphasizes the church as the vulnerable body of Christ, in which the church bears the wounds of Christ. Its ecclesiology is thereby egalitarian and inclusive. In *Together towards Life*, in contrast, vulnerability has two distinct meanings. On the one hand, it is connected with destitution and poverty, but on the other hand, it correlates positively with the authentic following of the example of Christ. Rather surprisingly, I have found the conception of *Mission and Evangelism* to connect more closely with the overall program of this chapter, since it considers the vulnerability of the whole church, and does not create an unhelpful distinction between those who are vulnerable and those who are at the center of power, as is the case in *Together towards Life*.

Lastly, the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission, founded by Harries, is to date the only academic and professional group of thinkers and practitioners who both research the theoretical underpinnings of vulnerability in mission and have striven

to incorporate these principles in their praxis of mission. Yet, their focus is primarily upon the Western missionary, who voluntarily strips himself or herself of their power and resources. As such, the Alliance is still very much preoccupied with the agency of Western missionaries, without taking into account the perspective of those who receive the so-called 'vulnerable mission.' Their omission of the voice of the receiver of their vulnerable mission poses serious problems for a sincerely postcolonial missiology. In light of the ensuing dichotomy that is constructed between Western mission workers and dependent receivers, this particular concept of vulnerability fails to provide an adequate proposal for an actively decolonizing usage of vulnerability.

The sources I have reviewed in the first part of the chapter do not engage in deeper explorations of what vulnerability entails, nor do they take into account the discussion of bodily vulnerability. Especially in a postcolonial context, the issue of bodily vulnerability needs to be discussed. Colonial legacies of disciplining and controlling bodies of colonial subjects have resulted in memories that are inscribed upon human bodies. This harrowing legacy of colonialism results in the need to theorize about the long term effects of these memories. I have stressed therefore that not all forms of vulnerability are contributing to human flourishing. Yet, awareness of human vulnerability is a prerequisite in order not to engage in further violations of vulnerability. I have been searching therefore, together with Coakley, for the right forms of vulnerability. Drawing on the *kenosis* of Christ, which is mainly interpreted within the *human* nature of Christ, it follows that it is possible to empty oneself of harmful and patriarchal forms of power. In following Christ, one is invited to engage in acts of self-emptying through the purging of patriarchal and abuse power if one opens oneself up to the non-coercive love of the divine. The self is not negated, but instead transformed through the encounter with the living God. A result of the self-emptying is the 'power-in-vulnerability', a power that negates invulnerability but instead considers vulnerable love the highest form of strength.

I have supplemented the work of Coakley by the theology of Papanikolaou, since he applies the model of 'power-in-vulnerability' to inter-human relationships. Papanikolaou shows how a kenotic vulnerability is a model for interpersonal mission encounters. The result of the destruction of vulnerability through its willful violation results in either independence or overdependence. Papanikolaou's work offers therefore a valuable contribution to the restoration of the right form of vulnerability for a mission theology that consciously acknowledges the complex ways vulnerable personhood is harmed through colonial processes and their aftermaths. The right form of vulnerability enables personhood and the restoration of the capacity of wholesome relationships only takes place through an act of *kenosis*: a vulnerable presentation of one's wounded and battered self to the other. I stress the insistence on the grave consequences of each violation of vulnerability, but I also want to point very hesitantly to the possibility of healing. Healing does not

take place through the adoption of an invulnerable stance, but is rather to be found in the kenotic movement of an emptying of fear. I realize in full the soul-destroying nature of violence and brutality, and I acknowledge that an eschatological perspective on healing needs to be balanced with outlining the possibilities for healing in the presence.

I have adopted the account of Coakley of 'power-in-vulnerability,' but during the work on this chapter, I discovered I needed to probe deeper into the nature of bodily vulnerability. If the body is left out of the equation, theology runs the risk of becoming abstract and removed from the vicissitudes of daily life. I took therefore resources from within disability studies into account, since this discipline challenges the construction of the ideal rational, individual and invulnerable person because people with disabilities cannot adhere to this ideal. The myth of invulnerability and its concomitant symptoms of manageability and manipulability [*beheersbaarheid* en *maakbaarheid*] is consequently exposed as a dangerous force that dehumanizes people with disabilities. Disability studies questions the rigid distinction between able-bodied and disabled, because this distinction feeds the fear for disability that allows able-bodied people to push disabled folks into their own category. A radical solution is consequently to construct disability as a continuum, in which all people are placed. This solution is indeed radical because it shows that invulnerability is an illusion, but that acting upon this illusion creates harmful situations for those who are deemed 'disabled,' because they become part of an insidious position of inferiority. Yet, dismantling this form of invulnerability can only come through the acknowledgment of one's own vulnerability. Only through acknowledgment can one share one's own fragility of existence with the other and can authentic (mission) encounters take place. Sharing the core of one's existence with one another is modeled upon the example of Christ, since the vulnerability of God is revealed in the full humanity of Jesus Christ.

The two responses to existential vulnerability that I have discovered are therefore as follows:

Existential vulnerability → invulnerability → aggravated / wronged vulnerability.

Existential vulnerability → acknowledgment of vulnerability → Community, connectivity, planetarity

In this chapter I have explained both responses, both the road of invulnerability and the road of acknowledgment of our shared human condition. This acknowledgment leads to community and connectivity. This connectivity comes into being when the image of the global is transcended by the image of our communal living place as planetary. This image is inspired upon the work of Sölle, who argues that it is necessary to keep the window of vulnerability open, in order to remain open to transcendence. The acknowledgment of the harmful first response is outlined

through the conflation of white privilege, covert racism, invulnerability and ignorance. I have proposed the solution of mindfulness of one's vulnerability, combined with the willingness to let the other function as a 'disagreeable mirror' into one's own prejudices. As a consequence, the most appropriate response are the virtues of humility and silence, which require work on the self. In order to arrive at a community characterized by openness and sensitivity, one is encouraged to process one's experiences of wronged vulnerability within community. Within communities, truth can be told and the narrative of the wronged vulnerability can be recovered amidst of the silencing that is needed to maintain independence and ignorance.

5. Vocation

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of vocation is highly significant in mission theology on various levels: individual, organizational and ecclesiological. On an individual level, a specific and personal felt vocation is, at least for some persons, determinative for their involvement in mission, both on a national and international level. Various mission organizations legitimize their involvement in cross-cultural missions by referring to their vocation for the world, while the missionary nature and vocation of the whole church has been at the forefront of missiological reflection ever since Vatican II.[1] Vocation, in its most basic sense, refers to the knowledge of being called by God towards someone or something. Vocation assumes God as the one who calls, and with God as the actor the vastness of theological questions surrounding the topic are already becoming clear. The understanding of vocation is directly tied to the nature of God, the character of the church and the role of the individual. The content of vocation thus is inseparably connected with the vocation itself: vocation is not an abstract or void concept, but is connected with a reality one is called to transform. In the words of Edward Hahnenberg, the topic of vocation pertains to 'a thicket of theological problems that are not easily resolved: the relationship of the divine will to human freedom, the nature of providence and predestination, the workings of grace and the limits of spiritual experience.'[2]

The context in which I am discussing vocation adds a layer of complexity, since I am discussing vocation in an explicitly missiological context, in which the vocation by God is connected to the human response to the *missio Dei*. The language of mission and vocation is therefore distinguished from theologies of vocation that are primarily focused on the clergy, a topic that has garnered a considerable amount of theological discussion.[3] The discussion of the vocation of the clergy assumes a clearly demarcated churchly role to which the person who is

[1] One particularly telling example is provided here, but many more could be given. "Mission is central to Christian faith and theology. It is not an option but is rather an existential calling and vocation. Mission is constitutive of and conditions the very being of the church and of all Christians." 'Preparatory Paper No. 1: Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today', 2005, para. A.9.

[2] Edward P. Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2010), xi.

[3] See for research on and literature about vocation and the clergy, conducted in the context of the Dutch Protestant church, J. van Holten, *Rol en Roeping: Een praktisch-theologisch onderzoek naar de rolopvatting van aanstaande, beginnende en oudere predikanten gerelateerd aan hun Roepingbegrip* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2009).

called might respond. The missiological context of vocation puts additional questions on the table, such as: What role has vocation played in shaping the modern missionary enterprise? What are the geographical ramifications of missionary vocation? How can vocation be imagined in the context of World Christianity? Which images of the missionary are conjured while discussing vocation?

The discussion about vocation and mission takes place within the constraints of the research I have described in the first chapter. This dissertation as a whole seeks to uncover theological loci relevant to the discussion of postcolonial mission in the context of World Christianity. The discussion of vocation and mission is therefore directly determined by the contextual need to engage a decolonial position. In order to apply this agenda to the topic of vocation, it is of paramount importance to research the history of how vocation and mission have functioned together. In this introduction, I will sketch some of the contours of this connection, in order to work them out in more detail later in the chapter.

The origins of the missionary call, defined as a specific awareness of God's call and direction to be involved in the work of mission, are intricately bound up with the modern mission movement.[4] In the words of Ingrid Eskilt, who writes from the perspective of Norway: 'The missionary call was the main motivational factor for going into a missionary vocation.'[5] The call to mission will always be interpreted in tandem with the wider cultural and theological climate. Since the current climate is much more secular than during the height of the modern missionary movement, the plausibility structure of receiving a call towards mission will be less likely. The possibility of receiving a clear and distinct call to serve as a missionary abroad fitted into a perspective in which the role of the foreign missionaries was clearly defined. The missionary considered her/himself to play a role in the plan of God within which all people should know the message of the gospel in order to be saved. With the advent of the ecumenical movement and the growth of the church in the Two-Thirds World, the emphasis shifted towards inter-church relationships and development work. As a result, the position of the missionary became more ambiguous and less clearly defined.

Eskilt's research has furthermore brought to light the changed perspectives on the missionary call through the generations. She has studied the changes between the perspective of veteran missionaries, baby boomers and generation X. The objective dimension of the call to mission, in which the inner call of the prospective missionary is confirmed by outsiders, has become less pronounced. The role of obedience to the Matthean 'Great Commission' has faded and became replaced with an involvement in missionary work because of an experienced relationship to Christ. Furthermore, the self -identification of the missionary is changed: being a missionary is no longer the most important defining characteristic in one's self-

[4] *The Call, Qualifications and Preparation of Candidates for Foreign Missionary Service* (Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1906).
[5] Eskilt, 'Are You Called or Just Personally Motivated?', 383.

identification. The discourse about the role one seeks to fulfill changed from being articulated with references to the sacrifices put into mission work toward the perspective of the possibility of genuine contributions made to the world through mission work.[6] Eskilt helps us to put the topic of vocation and mission into the context of the modern missionary movement. In her opinion, there might have been a paradigm shift within the perception on the missionary call analogous with the paradigm shifts David Bosch has described in *Transforming Mission*. I would like to add that, if the analogy with Bosch is applied, it also holds true that old paradigms do not disappear completely, but that multiple paradigms can exist simultaneously.[7]

A changed perspective on vocation (albeit in this context vocation is interpreted in a broad sense) is described as follows by Anthony Gittins: ‘For two millennia the search for the Christian vocation has led through the highways of scholarship where scriptures and history are scrutinized, and the byways of people’s lives where bread is broken and memories are forged; today’s itinerary favours the low road.’[8] In this quote, it becomes clear that the contemporary context favors the low road, meaning that an increased emphasis on the concrete materiality of the Christian life is the context in which vocation is recognized and enacted.

A recent Dutch policy document of the overarching association in which various mission organizations are united [NZR], has identified prevalent contemporary issues that mission organizations need to consider in their policies. One of the more salient points offered for consideration is the topic of vocation and its practical ramifications. At present, the majority of these church related mission organizations are reluctant to employ missionaries abroad. Yet, individual believers continue to experience a missionary vocation, and seek for opportunities to act upon their vocation. The opportunities that are available to them are often with parachurch organizations, which are oftentimes influenced by an evangelical outlook on mission. One of the reasons why Dutch church related mission organizations are reluctant to recognize individual vocations towards mission is their emphasis on the pressing need to engage in equal relationship with their partner churches in the majority world. The policy of church related mission organizations is characterized by the developments in ecumenical missiology and strives to incorporate the principle of partnership and equality. As a result, the sending out of mission personnel is mainly determined by a job vacancy received from their partner churches abroad. Consequently, the possibility to act upon a personal vocation is increasingly limited.[9] On the one hand, certain individuals (across the denominational spectrum, including within mainline Protestant churches), continue to experience individual vocations, while on the other hand, practical constraints to act

[6] Eskilt, ‘Are You Called or Just Personally Motivated?’
[7] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*.
[8] Gittins, ‘Beyond Hospitality?’, 165.
[9] Noort, ‘Uitzending gewogen’.

upon these individual vocations result in a theological change by problematizing the sending of individual missionaries. These two diverging lines of theology and practice are anchored upon different theologies of mission. Ecumenical theology and practice, in line with the mission conferences of the World Council of Churches, stresses partnership, equality and mutuality.[10] While the necessity of these qualities is by no means denied in an evangelical take on mission, the emphasis is placed consistently upon the task of mission and obedience to Christ in taking up the Matthean Great Commission.[11] The issue of vocation consequently emphasizes the rupture in approach between evangelical and ecumenical missiology. While vocation in ecumenical missiology is intricately bound up by the life of the church community, vocation within evangelical circles could be imagined as both individual and specific. Yet, as the research by Eskilt has shown, who has employed respondents who were active within the evangelical organization Youth with a Mission [YWAM], evangelicalism is not to be considered monolithic but instead consists of various different directions, viewpoints and actions.[12]

The observation that the modern missionary movement was intricately connected with a specific conception of the missionary call means that researching this mutual connection likely will yield results in outlining how the missionary vocation has had concrete geographical implications, given the scope and influence of the modern missionary movement. In the second chapter, I laid the foundation for rethinking spatial metaphors which are used in mission. I have critically traced how often used tropes such as the 'mission field' and the 'frontier' have enabled geographically expansive perspectives on mission. I will follow up though in this present chapter to outline more precisely how vocation has enacted spatial imaginaries. In order to do so, I will turn to the close connection between the missionary call and the concrete possibilities this spiritual idea has had in establishing connections with the 'mission field.' In order to understand these connections and the changed perspective of the nature of vocation, I will take recourse to the work of Charles Taylor in *A Secular Age*.[13] I engage with the work of Taylor because of the probing depth of his account on the formation of modernity, which is clearly

[10] Geevarghese, 'Towards and Beyond Edinburgh 2010'.

[11] Bert Hoedemaker has characterized the evangelical and the ecumenical movement as two different spiritualities. "Het gaat om twee verschillende manieren [oecumenisch en evangelisch, EDH] om de moderne zendingsbeweging in de geschiedenis van het moderne christendom op te nemen, en om twee verschillende visies op de mondialisering van het Christendom. Ondanks de veel gehoorde mening dat de scherpe kantjes van de polarisatie er inmiddels af zijn en dat de twee opvattingen zich naar elkaar toe bewegen, loont het de moeite de beide spiritualiteiten (want daar gaat het uiteindelijk om) tegenover elkaar te profileren, om zo de erfenis van de zendingsbeweging zo helder mogelijk in beeld te brengen." Hoedemaker, *Met anderen tot Christus*, 21.

[12] Newer developments from an evangelical perspective, most clearly articulated in the collection of essays *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations*, have not been considered in this chapter. Smith, Lalitha, and Hawk, *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations*.

[13] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007).

illustrated in the history of vocation. Taylor's work provides most of all a history of ideas and it is specifically this history that helps us trace how vocation has become bound up with modernity. Taylor outlines how religious vocation, broadly defined, had a distinct plausibility structure within societal structures defined by the prevalence of the religious and the sacred. In modernity however, due to the gradual disappearance of the plausibility structure of the religious and the sacred, the concomitant structure that upheld the possibility of religious vocations disappeared. With the help of Taylor, I intend to trace the changing plausibility structure in which vocation (in this instance, specifically towards mission) can take place.

The current chapter will therefore consist of two parts, the analytical part in which I carry out the program as described above, and a constructive theological part, in which I seek to provide anchor points or *leitmotivs* for a contemporary account on vocation in the postcolonial context of World Christianity. In order to be able to discuss postcolonial characteristics of a theological design, it is necessary to outline first the trajectory which preceded the current state of affairs. In doing so, I hope to show that the perspective on vocation shifts together with changing ideas on the nature of Christian mission. My aim in the second part of the chapter is therefore to work towards four anchor points, way marks or *leitmotivs*. With these anchor points, I designate four distinct theological themes which, woven together, form the parameters within which a postcolonial mission theology of vocation can be articulated. As I have explained in the first chapter, I employ the idea of 'markers of adequacy' in order to work through the different options available for any contemporary theology of mission. Markers of adequacy are not available beforehand but are something to gradually stumble upon. Although Philip Clayton does not describe the markers of adequacy, everything that affirms life, as is proposed in *Together towards Life*, seems like a good starting point. The quality of affirming life is not yet very concrete but it helps in shaping a direction in which theological thought can ripen and mature.[14]

These four way markers aim to contribute to guide both individuals and communities towards discernment for their role in mission. The impetus for this goal is twofold. In the first place, this chapter will research to what extent missional vocation can contribute to harmful, expansive images of mission in which vocation is closely connected with empire. Second, the ongoing experience of individual vocation in the Dutch context sometimes clashes with church-led mission organizations that are limited in their ability to send out people for mission. The question becomes then: How could the language and conception of vocation be transformed? How can the language of vocation, pointing to a revered tradition in which God speaks to the individuality of human life, be transformed in order not

[14] Philip Clayton, 'Missiology between Monologue and Cacophony', in *To Stake a Claim: Mission and the Western Crisis of Knowledge*, ed. J. Andrew Kirk and Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999), 78–95. 'Together towards Life'.

to serve imperialistic, conquering ideals of mission, but instead serve new post-colonial realities in World Christianity? In order to bring the discussion about vocation up to date with the reality in World Christianity, I have devised these four way markers in order to guide the discussion and give content to the abstract idea of vocation. Within World Christianity, characterized by its radical polycentric nature and a superabundance of enacted theologies, I consider it necessary to take theologies of vocation seriously and not dismiss individual vocation. By engaging with individual vocations, it becomes possible to discuss the various preconceptions and premeditated ideas about what constitutes mission and how it should be carried out.

Which sources might provide the most suitable way of approaching the discussion of the four way markers I am devising? In the first place, it needs to be noted that, somewhat surprisingly, the theology of vocation does not play a major role in the theological handbooks on mission by both Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder[15] or Bosch.[16] In contrast, missionary vocation receives an extensive treatment in *Comprehending Mission*.[17] Stanley Skreslet discusses under this rubric both research on missionary recruitment, missionary spirituality and images of the missionary throughout history. On a popular level, within evangelical circles, the missionary call is oftentimes discussed, but has a distinctively practical focus.[18] This relative scarcity of theological reflection within explicit missiological literature is also noticed by Geneviève Chevalley. Her dissertation explores from a mystical perspective the relationship between mission and vocation.[19] In addition, relying on well-known and often studied missiological sources will hardly bring new perspectives to the table. I have therefore chosen to borrow selectively from sources outside of missiology proper, or to take recourse to less studied sources within missiology.

The *leitmotiv* that will be discussed first is the subject of narrative. With the help of Alasdair MacIntyre, I argue that various forms of mission theology produce different forms of narratives about the goal and effects of mission, and these narratives subsequently impact the role that the topic of vocation plays within that

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[15] Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*.

[16] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*. Vocation nor calling is as a separate entry in Wright either. Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2006). Senior and Stuhlmueller do not elaborate on vocation, just noting that this theme runs throughout the first letter of Peter. Donald P. Senior and Caroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983), 299.

[17] Skreslet, *Comprehending Mission*, 167–94.

[18] One of the recent discussions of the missionary vocation on a popular level from an evangelical perspective features also an extensive bibliography on grass-roots writings about the missionary call. M. David Sills, *The Missionary Call: Find Your Place in God's Plan for the World* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008).

[19] Geneviève Chevalley, *Une Poétique de L'appel, La Vocation Missionnaire: Appel, Réponse et Responsabilité, Mission* (Leiden, 1998), 254.

particular narrative. In this section, I will investigate how vocation is intricately connected with the narrative of mission, with the intention of developing a vocational theology centered in the overarching story of God and humans.[20] MacIntyre will point me in the right direction with respect to the centrality of narrative, from which I can further develop the connection between narrative and vocation.

The second *leitmotiv* or way marker, community, will be primarily described by resources which, appropriately, have their genesis in a communal process. I will take into account the way in which documents from Vatican II, the World Council of Churches and the Lausanne Movement articulate the communal vocation of the church towards mission. I balance the role of the community with the role of the individual, and strive to develop an account of how vocational discernment will be most fruitful in the context of multi-ethnic communities.

The third *leitmotiv*, spirituality, explores first of all the role of the *missio Spiritus* in vocational discernment. The pneumatological priority in vocational discernment will be explored in order to articulate a pneumatological foundation of vocational spirituality. In discussing the orientation towards the world of vocational spirituality I seek to safeguard this spirituality from otherworldly articulations. This orientation towards the world leads to a discussion on how vocation spirituality cultivates its prophetic dimension.

The fourth direction is articulated as the necessity to experience vocation either as 'the' poor or in community with 'the' poor. In this section, Hahnenberg is my main conversation partner, since he forcefully argues for the necessity to connect vocation with 'the' poor. His book lacks a missiological dimension, and is therefore used as a basis to press the missiological dimension of vocation further.

Lastly, a note on the terminology I use in this chapter. As so often is the case in English, two different words, one with a Latin heritage (*vocation*) and one with a Germanic lineage (*call*) can be used for the same idea. In this sense, vocation and calling could be used interchangeably. Yet, the word call seems to be in use in a rather specific way, denoting the missionary call which focuses on the individual who has received a vocation to be a foreign missionary. The word vocation is used in a broader sense to denote the vocation of the total church towards a multitude of qualities or action (holiness, love, diaconal work, mission, etc.). In addition, the word vocation is used as well to specify vocation in a clerical or monastic way. In this chapter, I will use the word call if I am discussing the specifics of the idea of being (individually) called towards mission. When I use the word vocation, I denote the broader constellation of theological ideas that are connected with the vocation of the church towards mission.

[20] Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1985).

5.2. VOCATION AND ITS SPATIAL IMPLICATIONS

This part of the chapter seeks to clarify the connection between missionary vocation and its geographical implications. This section builds therefore on the second chapter, which discussed the necessity of performing analyses of how mission discourses have the ability to function as catalyst for missionaries to act with far-ranging geographic consequences. In this part of the chapter I am predominantly concerned with dissecting the inner mechanisms of geographically expansive theologies of vocation, which are in contemporary mission theology mainly present within evangelical theology. An individual vocation is generally considered in this type of theology as an important motivation for involvement in foreign mission.[21] In addition, several mission organizations demand from mission candidates the ability to recount a personal vocation to missions in order to be accepted in the organization.[22] This type of missionary call aligns the individual and personal missionary vocation with the construct of the 'mission field,' which is an idea with a colonial subtext, as I have explained in the second chapter.

At this point, it is helpful to point out that the spatial ramifications of vocation can be interpreted as a form of emotional geographies. Recently, research on emotions has flourished within the discipline of geography, as a new-found awareness that emotions have always played an important role in spatiality, but that this topic has not received enough attention. According to the editors of *Emotional Geographies*, this sub discipline '(…) attempts to understand emotion - experimentally and conceptually - in terms of its socio-*spatial* mediation and articulation rather than as entirely interiorized subjective mental states.'[23] I would suggest that missiology as a discipline might benefit from borrowing resources from emotional geographies, given the considerable emotional investment by missionaries in certain locations.[24] I am inspired by the work of Vítor Westhelle, who asserts that 'Our vocation is not only lived out in locations and places, it is about shaping and recreating them, investing in them an intention.'[25] Missional vocation most certainly shapes locations and invests meaning in those locations, especially through

[21] Charles R. Gailey, 'Motive, Motivation', ed. A. Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 664.

[22] See for example Wycliffe Bible Translators, who lists this aspect first under the header of "evaluate your readiness": http://www.wycliffe.org/Go/PreparingtoServe/EvaluateyourReadiness.aspx (accessed 10 March 2014).

[23] Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith, eds., *Emotional Geographies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 3. See also on emotional investment in locations: David Conradson and Deirdre McKay, 'Translocal Subjectivities: Mobility, Connection, Emotion', *Mobilities* 2, no. 2 (2007): 167–74.

[24] See for a concrete example my work on the emotional investment in the region surrounding Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. Hof, 'Re-Imagining World Christianity: Challenging Territorial Essentialism'.

[25] Vítor Westhelle, 'Wrappings of the Divine: Location and Vocation in Theological Perspective', *Currents in Theology and Mission* 31, no. 5 (2004): 369.

the employment of the trope of the mission field. Vocational awareness infuses indeed locations with meaning and emotional attachment through living one's vocation in a location that is different from one's original location.

5.2.1. *The Sociology of the Missionary Call*

In this section, I attempt to show how the alignment of vocation with the construction of the 'mission field' is enabling a perspective to perceive mission primarily in a geographically expansive way. I am employing literature both from the social sciences, as well as from missiological sources. The handbooks and monographs that I will scrutinize have the explicit goal to raise support for foreign missionaries. If sociological and missiological sources are taken together, I expect that a comprehensive picture will emerge of how the missionary call enables a geographically expansive perspective on mission.

A seminal work is the research by the sociologist Jeffrey Swanson, who is himself a son of missionaries to Ecuador.[26] As a researcher trained in the social sciences, he returned to Ecuador in order to study the vocation of missionaries who work with the World Radio Missionary Fellowship. His findings indicate that there are three factors that contribute to the deployment of American nationals as missionaries in Ecuador, namely one's moral career; the sense of strangerhood and the awareness of the missionary call. In the first place, Samson enlists the idea of a moral career as a defining factor for missionary deployment. A moral career signifies in this context the course of a life that is decisively influenced by the desire and actions to be set apart as agent in the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth. This moral career requires a sense of being a stranger in this world, the idea of being set-apart for service in the kingdom of God. The theme of being a stranger is lived out through the awareness of having received a call to serve as a missionary. The missionary self-as-stranger requires a constant negotiation of one's call in light of both the fears and joys of serving on the mission field.[27] In this respect, I consider it significant that the theme of strangerhood and sacrifice is not necessarily a joyful theme in the life stories of the missionaries. Instead, Swanson proposes that there are two types of responses to the missionary call, although both types have in common that those who receive the call are usually preoccupied with the prospect of serving as a missionary from a young age. The first type of missionary joyfully responds to the call and prepares oneself gladly for service and sacrifice. The second type is rather terrified by the prospect of

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[26] Jeffrey Swanson, *Echoes of the Call : Identity and Ideology among American Missionaries in Ecuador* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[27] Ibid., 15. The second chapter has critiqued the mission field extensively. I use the term here purely in a descriptive way, in order to capture the discourse in which the missionary call takes place.

serving as a missionary in a place far removed from everything familiar.[28] Surrendering one's life to missionary service has therefore the character of a heroic sacrifice as a surrender of one's whole life to the service of God.[29]

The research of Swanson indicates that, sociologically speaking, the main pull factor for missionaries to be involved in full-time mission service is participating in social events with an explicit missionary focus, such as retreats and conferences. Within this context, the personal interaction with missionaries on furlough is an important factor to propel young people towards imagining their life as strangers in service of God's mission. The findings of Swanson are in line with the research carried out by Richard Hibbert, Evelyn Hibbert, and Tim Silberman, who published in 2015 their findings on the factors that lead to the cross-cultural mission service of young Australian missionaries. They list three main influences that lead to discernment of a personal call to mission. In the first place, it is important to note that all interviewees, without exception, listed the influence of personal contacts with missionaries or other influential persons in their life who were invested in mission, such as pastors or family. The second key factor, with 43% of the respondents, was the participation in short-term mission trips. Thirdly, 31% of the respondents mentioned the awareness of the distress of the world and the call to alleviate the plight of people elsewhere.[30]

Swanson not only describes the ways in which young people are navigating their call before they set foot on the mission field, but also details the way in which the aspiring missionaries navigate their vocation once they are 'in the field.' Swanson describes the mission field as the location in which the missionary call is enacted as follows:

> On its face, doing missionary work is a means to the end of world evangelization. But in psychological terms, the mission field is also an end in itself – a mythical place and inner destiny to which a previous life of set-apartness has led. In the lives of many missionaries, that place is forever elusive; the story does not always turn out as it did for the Elliot and his friends in Guatemala. [31]

Swanson refers here to the story of Jim Elliot and his friends, who were speared to death by members of the Auca tribal group in 1956.[32] The mission field is a

[28] An example of this reluctance and sacrifice that were part and parcel of accepting one's missionary call is found in the autobiographical story of Carol Lee Anderson, who worked as a missionary in Papua New Guinea. Carol Lee Anderson, *Do You Know What You Are Doing, Lord? A Jungle Journey in Search of God* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1998).
[29] Swanson, *Echoes of the Call*, 91–92.
[30] Richard Hibbert, Evelyn Hibbert, and Tim Silberman, 'The Journey towards Long-Term Missionary Service: How Australian Missionaries Are Being Called and Choose Mission Agencies', *Missiology: An International Review*, 2015, 5.
[31] Swanson, *Echoes of the Call*, 110–11.
[32] Many of the missionaries researched by Swanson refer to the story of Jim Elliot as an influential factor in the discernment of their own vocation. In Swanson's words, "(…) the way in which that story

'mythical place' in part due to the extensive layers of meaning that are attached through a reservoir of stories of missionary heroes that have gone before the contemporary generation of missionaries and have left their legacies in the form of expectation of being part of the fulfillment of the Great Commission. In the words of Swanson, 'The traditional missionary, returning with exotic tales, tribal trophies, and color slides from the shadowy jungles of Africa, New Guinea, or South America is cast in the role of mythic hero.'[33] Swanson affirms in this quote the influence of the discourse of tropicalism, as I have explained in the second chapter. He confirms therefore my hunch that the tropic regions of the earth were especially attractive to mission discourse and praxis due to the possibility to cast the missionary as the pioneer who penetrates the hardly penetrable rain forest, and either returns as a hero with stories and artifacts, or dies as a martyr and saint.

Although, for many missionaries interviewed by Swanson, the story of Jim Elliot and his friends was a paradigmatic story of heroism and sacrifice, the reality in which they found themselves differs considerably from these paradigmatic stories of what it meant to be a missionary. In reality, the possibility to interact with the local people of Ecuador was limited, the bulk of the job was menial work carried out in offices, and the fellowship experienced with Ecuadorian Christians oftentimes proved disappointing. Swanson recounts therefore various strategies on how to reconcile the awareness of missionary vocation with the reality on the mission field. In the first place, many missionaries use the strategy of joining short-term mission trips within Ecuador, in order to feel more connected to this elusive mission field.[34] The reality of participating in short-term mission trips within Ecuador corresponds better with the ideal type of a missionary than being occupied with work in an office. Partaking in these trips brings one closer to the ideal tasks of a missionary. Another strategy employed by these missionaries takes the form of a circular reasoning, since if one is called to be a missionary, and one works indeed as a missionary, in this case employed by the World Radio Missionary Fellowship, then one consequently does the work one is called to do.[35] This circular reasoning reconciles the missionary call with the actual work since the call and the concrete missionary work are subsumed into each other.

I consider the work of Swanson an immense help in order to shed light on the inner mechanisms of the missionary call by outlining how this call as a moral career, lived out through the theme of strangerhood, connects missionaries to the mission field. I consider his work as an indication that many missionaries are dissatisfied with the actual work conditions they are encountering on the ultimately

reverberated through a generation of young evangelicals in post-war America – stands as an important chapter in the saga of twentieth-century missions." Ibid., 83.

[33] Ibid., 95.

[34] Ibid., 117.

[35] Ibid., 121.

illusionary mission field. One could therefore wonder to what extent this discomfort could actually be read as a suspicion on the part of the missionaries that their approach to mission is not at home in contemporaneity and that perhaps another postcolonial approach to mission might be possible. Especially when the discomfort is caused by the lack of interaction with Ecuadorians and working as Americans in positions that could have been filled by the people of Ecuador themselves, this discomfort can be used as a source of reflection on the possibility to move towards postcolonial practices of vocation.

5.2.2. *The Missionary Call from an Inside Perspective*

After having delved into the work of Swanson, I now seek to supplement his work by paying attention to the definitions of missionary vocations as described by authors who are invested in proposing and defending the missionary call. First, I discuss various definitions of missionary vocation and I demonstrate how these definitions are assisting the construction of a geographically expansive perspective on mission. An overview of recent literature on the missionary call lead Hibbert, Hibbert and Silberman to conclude that: 'Much of the recent writing about "the missionary call" frames it under the broader rubric of guidance, portraying it as a person's growing conviction leading to a point of decision to serve God as a missionary.'[36] This explanation emphasizes the guidance and conviction that a person receives in order to be able to serve as a missionary. William Goff, authoring a chapter in an evangelical textbook on missiology, defines vocation this way: 'It is feasible to conclude that the missionary call is a specific role given to some to share Christ with the unreached peoples of the world.'[37] This definition has a significant overlap with the definition of David Sills. He describes the missionary vocation as 'God's method for moving His children to intercultural service and sustaining them in the work He designed for them before the creation of the world (Acts 17:26).)'[38] The vocation to mission is for Sills intricately connected with a conversion-centered approach to mission: 'It is a sustained burden to see hell-bound souls around the world redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.'[39] The vocation to mission is clearly distinguished from general involvement in Christian service and becomes therefore connected with the crosscultural dimension.[40] For Sills, the vocation to the 'mission field' needs to be properly understood and should not be based on the perceived needs in the 'mission field.' Only when one's vocation is

[36] Hibbert, Hibbert, and Silberman, 'The Journey towards Long-Term Missionary Service', 3.
[37] Goff, 'Missionary Call and Service', 335.
[38] Sills, *The Missionary Call*, 197–98.
[39] Ibid., 198.
[40] "Many future missionaries were faithfully serving God as deacons, Sunday school teachers, and lay leaders in church positions when God surprised them with a call to missions." Ibid., 22.

accurately lived out, vocational awareness is an effective means to keep the missionary on the 'mission field.' Thus, vocations which are merely based on perceived needs are, according to Sills, not sufficient enough to sustain a missionary call in the long run.[41]

In the work of Goff and Sills, a geographically expansive perspective on mission is constructed because of the juxtaposition of vocation with a conversionist and crosscultural approach to mission. Goff cites the 'unreached peoples of the world' as a factor that propels people for missionary service. As I have described in the second chapter in the section on the frontier, the frontier mission uses the rhetoric of the 'unreached peoples' as a way of continually pushing the geographic frontier forward. The 'unreached peoples' on the one hand need to become reached in order to fulfill the Great Commission. On the other hand, the frontier needs to be continuously pushed in order to provide an ongoing rationale for the missionary call, with the ironic result that the 'unreached people' can never be reached completely, because that would annihilate the rationale for mission. The perpetual presence of the 'unreached people' serves therefore as the perennial 'other' who needs to be encountered on the mission field through responding to one's missionary vocation. In line of the critique leveled in the second chapter, the conflation of the missionary call, 'unreached peoples' and the expansion of the frontier is highly problematic in a postcolonial framework of mission.

I consider discussions on the missionary call a form of intra-evangelical dialogue. This dialogue arises from the application of the missionary call, a concept that originated together with the modern missionary movement, to the changing contexts of the present. The ways in which vocation is lived via praxis needs therefore to be continually related themselves to the glorified history of the movement, and on the other hand, need to be applicable in the contemporary time. Bruce Waltke argues that the way evangelicals are often attempting to find the will of God is closely connected to the pagan practice of seeking the will of God through divination.[42] He posits that many practices of evangelical Christians geared towards finding the will of God, such as looking for signs and casting lots, are actually close to non-Christian practices of seeking the will of a deity. As a consequence, finding the will of God in this way is a form of divination, since the will of God is apparently hidden from humans and takes the usage of supernatural means to discover. In the search for the will of God, an exchange takes place in the form of offering prayers and committing oneself to God as a warranty for receiving personal guidance.[43]

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[41] Need based vocations are according to Sills grounded in the perceived material and spiritual need on the "mission field." Yet this type of vocation is in his eyes not sufficient because other missionaries and development workers might already work to alleviate the needs and the arriving missionary might consider him/herself superfluous. Ibid., 23.

[42] Bruce K. Waltke, *Finding the Will of God: A Pagan Notion?* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2002).

[43] Ibid., 22–40. Although Waltke treats in general the tendency to search for the will of God, the first

Another criticism from within the evangelical world itself is leveled by Walter McConnell, who is critical about the 'standard understanding of a missionary call.' This standard understanding forges a faulty connection between one's personal vocation and a specific ethnic people group.[44] While McConnell indeed holds the opinion that it is possible that people feel called by God to serve as missionaries in a specific ethnic group, he has difficulty discerning a foundation for this popular practice in Biblical texts.[45]Additionally, the work of McConnell provides us with a typology that distinguishes three basic approaches to the missionary call. For the sake of clarity, I have labeled these approaches as either maximalist or minimalist versions of the missionary call. The term 'maximalist' denotes an approach that seeks to include as many people as possible in the missionary enterprise. By contrast, the term 'minimalist' designates the tendency to reduce the influence of the missionary vocation by considering the vocation to mission on the same level as vocation to serve in secular professions. The maximizing position distinguished by McConnell attempts to coax as many people as possible into foreign mission. One should have received a specific call to serve in one's homeland. If one hasn't received a call to stay, and if there are no prohibiting reasons, such as one's health situation, one is by default expected to serve as a foreign missionary. For practical reasons, this position is difficult to maintain. However, as a rhetorical feature, this position could prove useful to recruit people for missionary service. Still, the most frequently advocated position is probably the middle position, which stresses that every person involved in mission should be able to narrate their personal vocation. This specific vocation has the ability to propel people into action and lead them to the mission field. Additionally, the experience of a concrete vocation reduces the risk of missionary attrition. Third, the minimizing position consists in an erasure of a difference between working in a regular profession and involvement in mission. Mission is therefore perceived as a profession which can be chosen in the same fashion as any other job.[46] The first two positions are in one sense opposites of each other because the first position considers the homeland as the object of vocation, while the second position sees foreign countries as the place to which one is called. On the other hand, they are similar in that they both discern a direct involvement of God in the form of instilling a person with a specific and concrete vocation. The third position contrasts with the first two positions since it erases the differences between vocations towards either a secular or sacred profession.

The first position constructs a mission field by recruiting as many people as possible towards the mission field. I consider this position to be geographically

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example that he cites is of a women who is in the process of deciding whether she should become involved in mission work. Ibid., 3–4.

[44] Walter McConnell, 'The Missionary Call: A Biblical and Practical Appraisal', *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 43 (2007): 213.

[45] McConnell, 'The Missionary Call'.

[46] Ibid., 210–11.

expansive since the default position for all Christians is to orient themselves to service on the mission field. The second position enables an expansive position because the awareness of having received a personal vocation is constitutive of crossing borders to further the cause of Christianity. The third position however, does not form a particular incentive towards crosscultural boundary crossing since it equates the worth of both secular and religious vocations. Two of the three perspectives on vocation I have reviewed, enable therefore a geographically expansive perspective within mission. When these ideas are enacted, they can form powerful constituents of transnationalism and can therefore have far-ranging geographically consequences.

5.2.3. *Vocation and the Mission Field*

In the second chapter, I have already explored in detail how the 'mission field' conjures up an 'other' through organizing difference in spatial categories. The organization of difference is enabled by connecting vocation to the mission field, as is the case in the individual, expansive model of vocation I have surveyed.

The constituting factors of the construction of the 'mission field' in tandem with vocation need therefore to be illustrated. According to the *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*: 'this motivation [vocational awareness, EDH] often is the only anchor that will hold the new missionary steady during the dark testing times of culture shock and other problems on the field.'[47] Other authors have suggested as well that a strong sense of vocation is necessary in order to endure difficulties that arise on the mission field. Vocational awareness is considered by them to perform a stabilizing function in the face of problems during missionary service. James Stamoolis argues, for example, 'It is only the strong sense of call, most often in the midst of extremely difficult circumstances, that enables the missionary to stay.'[48] The missionary vocation is regarded as a strengthening factor because it provides a sense of determination to carry on, even in the midst of severe difficulties.[49] The lack of a clear missionary vocation is also empirically studied as a factor in missionary attrition. An extensive study carried out called ReMAP (Reducing Missionary Attrition Project) initiated by the World Evangelical Alliance studied 14 countries and found various reasons for attrition, some having to do with personal circumstances, some with organizational reasons, and some due to spiritual reasons. A lack of vocational awareness ranks surprisingly low, as number 18, among the reasons for missionary attrition in the old sending countries, such as the United States and Canada. Also surprisingly in light of the alarm being sounded over missionary attrition is that normal retirement is the first item on the

[47] Gailey, 'Motive, Motivation', 664.

[48] James J. Stamoolis, 'The Nature of the Missionary Calling: A Retrospective Look to the Future', *Missiology* 30, no. 1 (2002): 5.

[49] Goff, 'Missionary Call and Service', 339.

list of attrition in these countries.[50] Yet, the figures for the newer sending countries show an altogether different image. A lack of vocational awareness ranks in these countries second, and for Ghana and Nigeria, it is actually the most important cause for attrition.[51] The connection between a weak sense of vocation and a lack of endurance in mission service seems to be supported by empirical research, although this factor mainly plays a role for the newer sending countries. For the older sending countries, a weak sense of vocation hardly plays a role, and authors such as Goff and Stamoolis seem to write mainly with this audience in mind. Vocation is, for authors such as Stamoolis and Goff an aid to prevent early attrition of the missionary. I consider the 'call to the mission field' therefore a rhetorical feature that infuses a specific location with theological significance since the experience of difficult circumstances 'in the field' does not negate one's missionary call, but instead strengthens vocational awareness. The connection between vocation and perseverance on the 'mission field' leads to problems since it robs the missionary of an important critical instrument to evaluate her/his endeavors and her/his own suitability.

The subject of vocation is therefore a tool to establish a literal 'mission field' through a discursive projection. The 'mission field' is a rhetorical construct that is enacted through the interpretation of certain locations *as* the 'mission field.' However, through ingrained patterns of normalization, the 'mission field' acquires the status of a *real* location which can be cultivated through mission work. Vocation is a key element in securing emotional ties to the 'mission field' and helps thereby to normalize a rigid distinction between home base and mission field. The dismantling of this particular conception of vocation is thereby a decolonial act, since it engages in questioning missionary patterns which reproduce and enact colonial patterns of missionary deployment.

5.2.4. *Charles Taylor on Vocation*

The discursive practices of vocation researched thus far point to the possibility of vocation being employed within a framework of mission in which the missionary has a special status through the awareness of having received a divine call. The structure of divine calling upholds a geographically expansive perspective on mission. One might even speculate that Orientalism or Tropicalism are employed as tropes to signify the strangeness and the dangerousness of the location in which one exercise one's vocation. A hint of Orientalism might be detected in the description of the plight of a missionary, who had to come home early because of illness. In the words of the editor of this study on missionary attrition: 'Magdalena

[50] Peter W. Brierley, 'Missionary Attrition: The ReMAP Research Report', in *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*, ed. William David Taylor (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1997), 93.
[51] Ibid., 94.

spent three years in a tough Muslim context and has returned to her home country riddled with intestinal parasites and other sickness.'[52] The word choice reveals here that work in a Muslim context is tough, and that one is in grave risk not just of becoming ill due to unfamiliarity with the particular illnesses in that context, but rather of coming home 'riddled with intestinal parasites.' The spatial ramifications of this type of vocation have thereby the possibility to juxtapose the safe homeland with the dangerous, illness-infected foreign country. The tropes of diseases to which missionaries are prone on the mission field are a clear conveyor of difference and otherness.

In the past sections, I have unearthed the discursive power of vocation as a concept that played a defining role in the advent, and possibly in the decline of the modern missionary movement. I have indicated as well the problems with this vocational theology, given the possibility to be complicit in geographically expansive perspectives of mission. But to what extent is this vocational theology enabled by wider cultural developments and legacies? While the idea of missionary vocation is bound up by the emergence of the modern missionary movement, the vocation to a monastic or clerical context has much older roots. In order to understand the cultural constraints and pressures that constitute the subject of vocation, I turn to the work of Taylor. I use *A Secular Age* as a tool to uncover the influences of both the premodern and the modern condition[53] on the conceptualization of vocation. Taylor analyzes in *A Secular Age* the characteristics of the premodern and the modern condition and describes the role of vocation in both. In this section, I will outline how these two conditions determine the way vocation in the missionary movement has been and, to a certain extent, continues to be imagined.

For Taylor, the premodern condition is characterized by living in an open and enchanted world in which the supernatural and the natural are intertwined. In contrast, the modern condition is distinguished by its disenchantment, which produces a buffered self.[54] A buffered self is insensitive to influences from forces from the non-natural world, and stands therefore in opposition to a porous self. Taylor distinguishes between ordinary flourishing on the one hand and renunciative vocations on the other. He defines ordinary flourishing as the life of the laity that is not bound to claims of perfection regarding their moral life. Instead, the laity was carried' by those with renunciative vocations.[55] The renunciative vocations are defined by their abnegation of ordinary life and the total dedication to the spiritual

[52] William David Taylor, ed., *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1997), xiii.
[53] Taylor works only with the pair premodern / modern, showing no appreciation for the philosophy of postmodernism, which he degrades to "a certain trendy 'post-modernism'." Taylor invalidates postmodernism by asserting that the claiming the demise of the grand narratives is in itself a grand narrative. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 716–17.
[54] Ibid., 25–26.
[55] Ibid., 61–62.

life. The clergy, but also wandering saints and hermits, fall into this category. The distinction between the two is sharpened by the awareness that the renunciative vocations are imagined as constituting a higher order. Structure versus anti-structure is a defining feature, whereby ordinary flourishing represents structure and renunciative vocations represent anti-structure. Taylor posits that societies that are organized around a 'higher religion' are also characterized by a distinction between ordinary life and a life of renunciation. He observes in these societies

> a spread between the dedicated and the less committed, between highly demanding forms of devotion and more perfunctory practice, between paths of renunciation and those in which religious ritual serve more the needs of prosperity and flourishing.[56]

The distance between the two forms of flourishing indicates the presence of distinct speeds[57] in society. Renunciative vocations challenge the ordinary structures of power and property by pointing towards a greater good that surpasses ordinary life. However, these higher vocations are by their very nature not able to replace the normal order in society. If they would indeed be able to replace the normal order, they would themselves become the normal order. Moreover, a society cannot, if only for practical reasons, be grounded on the basis of the renunciative vocations. As a consequence, the tension between the two remains. An equilibrium should therefore be established in order to support their coexistence.[58] Two options exist for bridging the gap. In the first place, people who are living an ordinary life could be coaxed into striving towards more renunciation in their life. The opposite solution consists of a moderation of the demands of a renunciative life. However, these two solutions will, in the premodern condition, never fully relax the tension between the two. Indeed, a growing dissatisfaction grew in Latin Christianity with the existence of these two different speeds. Although Taylor has no exact explanation of the growing dissatisfaction with the hierarchical and dual system, he nevertheless considers the dissatisfaction crucial toward the abandonment of the enchanted cosmos and the emergence of humanism.[59] In any case, one of the onsets for change seems to have come from within the church and more specifically from below, driven by a Christocentric spirituality in which the desire arose to identify oneself with the Christ event.[60] The dismantling of the distinction between the renunciative vocations and ordinary life seems therefore to have originated from within Christian communities themselves.

[56] Ibid., 62.
[57] The concept of "speed," as used by Taylor, indicates the difference of structuring society in terms of expectations, role taking and human flourishing. He distinguishes in particular between the renunciative life, associated for example with monasticism, and the ordinary walks of life.
[58] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 49.
[59] Ibid., 63.
[60] Ibid., 64.

In contrast, within the modern condition, the two speeds are altogether abandoned, and as a logical consequence, the tension between them vanishes. The modern condition is characterized by the conviction that 'all callings are equal in the sight of God.'[61] All types of vocations are equated because the attribution of an ontological status to any form of hierarchy has disappeared. Any differentiation between types of vocation is therefore functional and temporal, but not ontological. As a result, all members of society are supposed to labor together for the common good of society.[62] Although members of society might engage in different forms of service, the hierarchical distinction between different types of service is abandoned. In the secular and humanist conceptualizing of these ideals, the two goals of the organization of society are security and prosperity.[63] Within the organizing humanist grid of the modern condition, Christians are challenged to work out the consequences of the idea of vocation. The abandonment of different speeds leads in this instance to a synchronization of the Christian life. The demand is placed therefore upon all Christians to be completely committed to their Christian identity and lifestyle. The pursuit of a Christian life is therefore connected solely with the ordinary life.

5.2.5. *Vocation as Negotiation*

With the distinction between the premodern and the modern condition in mind, it is now possible to interpret how these elements are played out through the ongoing debate about the role of vocation for mission. I consider these debates as a negotiation of both modern and premodern elements. The societal model of mission[64] incorporated elements of the premodern condition since the role of the missionary closely resembled the role of those living out a renunciative vocation. But on the other hand, the theology of the modern missionary movement strongly opposed the idea of different speeds. Every Christian was supposed to dedicate her/his life totally to the Christian cause. This inherent tension needed to be resolved. In the modern missionary movement, a missionary gave up her or his job, or never even started working a regular job, in order to be sustained by the church community by performing the common good for the community. In the case a missionary moved to another country, a profound form of disconnectedness and uprooting took place. I consider therefore someone who devotes her/his whole life to the enterprise of mission as resembling the renunciative vocation(s).[65] Nonconformity

[61] Ibid., 165.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 166.
[64] The society model of mission stressed the individual involvement of Christians in mission, both by financially supporting the cause of mission as well as joining as missionaries. Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 210–12.
[65] Lifelong commitment to crosscultural mission has gradually given way to less intense forms of

to expected patterns in wider society is combined in these instances with a religious legitimization for these actions. A life-long involvement in crosscultural mission therefore amounts to a highly demanding form of vocation. Tension arises in determining how the Christian life should be lived for those who are not engaged in these highly demanding forms of vocation. Interpreted in terms of engagement in cross-cultural mission, one solution is to demand in ordinary life contributions to the missionary endeavor. This entails that one's involvement in supporting missionaries whether financially, spiritually and/or practically can become a guideline in determining the value of one's ordinary life. However, uneasiness remains in the assessment of the value of those who are not explicitly involved in cross-cultural mission. In the context of the three positions regarding the missionary vocation distinguished by McConnell, the maximizing position diminishes the value of the ordinary flourishing. Involvement in foreign mission becomes the default mode. The tension is partially dissolved, but practical considerations prohibit the intended grand scale participation in crosscultural missions. The maximizing position described by McConnell has deep roots in the history of foreign missions. Robert Speer, in 1901, turned the missionary vocation 'inside out' by arguing that a specific call is not needed in order to be involved in mission work but that the call applies to every Christian. He uses the analogy of a drowning man: if one witnesses another person drowning, does one need a special vocation to save a drowning person? No, one leaps in the water and saves the man.[66] The middle position, which holds that every person should be able to report a personal vocation to serve as a crosscultural missionary, matches the premodern stance on vocation. The minimalizing position, whereby the vocation to a secular job is considered at the same level as the missionary vocation, mirrors closely the modern condition. An anonymously authored book issued in 1984 by OMF International [Overseas Missionary Fellowship], one of the heirs of the modern missionary movement,[67] exemplifies the negotiation between the premodern and the modern. It describes the tension as follows:

> By using the word "calling" only for those people who are appointed by God for a special service, we assert that there are two levels of Christians. Moreover, we are then prone to think that Christians from the second level can live their lives with less dedi-

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engagement, although the "career-missionary" has not disappeared altogether. Even though the invested time might be shorter compared to a "career-missionary," engagement as missionary still represents a break with cultural expectations. See for data regarding short term mission and the interplay between short term mission and "career missionaries": Robert J. Priest et al., 'Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement', *Missiology: An International Review* 34, no. 4 (2006): 431–450.

[66] Quoted in Swanson, *Echoes of the Call*, 77–78.

[67] OMF International is a merger of China Inland Mission and Overseas Missionary Fellowship, which was founded by Hudson Taylor in 1865. http://www.omf.org/omf/home/about_omf (accessed 11 March 2014). See for the history of the China Inland Mission: Alvyn Austin, *China's Millions: The China Inland Mission and Late Qing Society, 1832-1905* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

> cation and obedience. Once we realize that calling consists in the first place in the following of Jesus, then the same conditions for discipleship exist for each of us. We all will acknowledge that God has the right to ask each of us whenever He wants to go where He wants, and to do whatever He wants us to do.[68]

OMF denied the existence of two different speeds with regard to the missionary vocation. The distinction between those with a renunciative vocation and those who live out an ordinary life is considered, on theological grounds, untenable. The solution, requesting complete dedication from all believers, comes close to 'demanding too much renunciation from the ordinary person.'[69] The very fact that the multi-speed system is denounced reveals the necessity to interact with this position and to point out the theological improbability of this viewpoint. I infer therefore that at least some of the supporters of OMF adhered to this position. The premodern viewpoint on vocation is in this quotation critiqued and a modern viewpoint on vocation is championed. I detect the same mechanism at work in another account on missionary vocation, although the employed strategy differs: 'The term *missionary call* has often been misunderstood as placing the missionary on a superior level of spirituality. Those who have received and lived out that call will quickly confess that such an understanding is spurious.'[70] In this account, the multi-speed system is denounced by pointing towards the lack of spirituality on the part of the missionary. The missionary therefore is not set apart from the ordinary life by virtue of her/his spirituality or dedication. Instead, the spirituality of the missionary is diminished in order to level her/his spirituality with the spirituality of the remainder of Christians. As a strategy, this is the opposite of the strategy detected in the former quotation which attempted to raise the spiritual level of all Christians. Yet, the result is the same: the abandonment of the multi-speed system in favor of the equality of all in ordinary life.

I conclude that missionary vocation, both in the modern and the premodern position, is fraught with tension. In the premodern framework, the vocation of the missionary remains problematic because the hierarchy of vocations clashes with the total dedication requested from every Christian. In the modern mind set, the vocation of the missionary is problematic because this framework does not allow

[68] Original in Dutch, translation by myself. "Door het woord 'roeping' alleen van toepassing te achten op die mensen die door God apart gesteld zijn voor speciaal dienstwerk, zeggen we niet alleen dat er christenen zijn van twee niveaus, maar we zetten bovendien de deur open voor christenen van het 'tweede niveau' om te leven met de gedachte, dat ze wel toe kunnen met een mindere mate van toewijding en gehoorzaamheid. Als we ons eenmaal goed realiseren dat de roeping in de eerste plaats bestaat uit het volgen van Jezus, zijn we allemaal onderworpen aan dezelfde voorwaarden voor discipelschap, en zullen we allemaal erkennen, dat God het recht heeft om op elk tijdstip van ons te vragen te gaan waar Hij wil en te doen wat Hij wil." N.N., *Als God de weg wijst* (Singapore: Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1984), 9–10.

[69] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 81.

[70] Goff, 'Missionary Call and Service', 334.

for a hierarchy of vocations. Even in the most moderate accounts of a cross-cultural missionary, I would suggest that, on an intuitive level, a remnant of the renunciative vocation will always persist. Because of the lingering memories concerning the renunciative vocation of the missionary, a constant negotiation must take place. The missionary is either robbed of her/his special and spiritual status or a total dedication is expected from all believers. Since the possibility of a hierarchy of vocations is closed off, a missionary cannot have a special spiritual status that contrasts with the spiritual life of ordinary believers. An equal level of commitment to mission is expected therefore from both missionaries and non-missionaries.

In this chapter thus far, I have sought to demonstrate how vocation to mission as a contested concept is intricately connected with both geographical imaginations and its material disseminations. Vocation is a powerful constituent of transnationalism that has far-ranging geographical consequences. I have employed the work of Taylor in order to highlight the internal tension in the Christian idea of vocation. In the premodern order of society, a distinction between the higher vocations and ordinary life was an organizing feature of society. Yet the Christian faith demands total commitment of all believers, thereby nullifying the possibility of the multiple speed system. Interpreting the missionary vocation via Taylor, it is apparent that the tension between full dedication in the missionary enterprise and the commitment of the other believers warrants constant negotiation.

I have reviewed how vocation within evangelical, crosscultural and individual ways of thinking is intricately bound up with an expansive viewpoint on mission. These perspectives on mission are directly related to the shaping of the idea of the mission field. In this sense, although the subject of vocation is theologically charged, it enters the arena of geography by infusing specific localities with meaning. The infused meaning in these instances is a specific vocation to cross-cultural mission, which is sometimes even further specialized with the vocation to a specific region or group of people. If vocation becomes connected to the idea of the 'mission field,' a colonial fantasy of the empty land, lying bare for cultivation, enters the imagination. Yet the bare land is a fiction since the land is always already teeming with history and inhabitation. I suggest therefore a thorough reworking of vocation in order to disconnect it from its colonial fantasies.

5.2.6. *Gendering Vocation*

Before we delve into the exploration of the four generative themes of vocation, an important task remains, namely the gendering of vocation. With this term I mean the necessity to explore to what extent notions of vocation are imbued with elements that make vocational awareness more difficult to attain for female-identified persons. The exploration of this subject will lead us inevitably to the topic of vocational awareness resulting in ordination, but will not be confined to this subject.

I will however use the lens of ordination because this topic has received considerable attention in order to gender imbalances arising through a male-centered perspective on vocation. For example, the experienced difficulties of seeking ordination in a patriarchal church and societies sometimes lead women to second-guess their vocation instead of challenging the climate in which they encounter challenges when acting upon their vocation.[71] Taking up the discussion of gender and vocation will also allow us to incorporate perspectives from the Two/Third World, where vocation seems not to be a theological topic that has engendered creative theologizing. If the topic of vocation is treated, such as in the intriguing article: 'Prophetic Spirituality of Vocation and Mission in Jer 1: 4-10,' it remains difficult to access those articles since they are published in journals to which Dutch universities don't have subscriptions.[72] One of the other reasons I suspect that the topic of vocation has received little attention from the Two/Third World is due to the restrictive character of vocation for women. I am extrapolating here from the work of Esther Mombo, who tirelessly advocates for the inclusion of women in churches in East Africa and who is a member of the African Circle of Concerned Women Theologians. She writes:

> I feel that there is need to critique and rethink the traditional hierarchical perception of Christian ministry where non-ordained forms of ministries are regarded as insignificant, and hence given to women. (…) I also would like to stress the importance of ordination as a calling. Not everybody is called to be ordained. Women have to transcend these stereotypes. For women who have appropriated the fact that they are called to serve God in any capacity, ordination would not bother them.[73]

In this statement the root problem regarding vocation could very well be contained: vocation is an exclusive category that has been used to boost and upholster patriarchal leadership in the church. One of the easiest ways to challenge the hierarchical patterns in church leadership is to devalue the all-importance of the call towards vocation and instead focus on the importance of the contribution of the totality of the congregation, including the role of women. The voice of Esther Mombo is not an isolated occurrence of someone who speaks about the difficulty women face in the recognition of their vocation. For example, in the context of Tonga in the Pacific, women ministers, especially those who are 'young, unmarried, educated and critical,' face additional challenges because of the confluence

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[71] Joy Ann McDougall, 'Weaving Garments of Grace: En-Gendering a Theology of the Call to Ordained Ministry for Women Today', *Theological Education* 39, no. 2 (2003): 149–165.

[72] M. David Stanly Kumar, 'Prophetic Spirituality of Vocation and Mission in Jer 1: 4-10.', *Indian Theological Studies* 51, no. 2 (2014): 151–168. Unfortunately the author nor the journal itself responded to my request for the full-text of the article.

[73] Esther Mombo, 'Epilogue', in *If You Have No Voice, Just Sing! Narratives of Women's Lives and Theological Education at St. Paul's University*, ed. Esther Mombo and Heleen Joziasse (Limuru: Zapf Chancery, 2011), 113–14.

of a highly stratified Tongan society and the patriarchal enactment of Christianity.[74]

Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro also detects the struggle of women's ordination in the context of the church in Sri Lanka and the urge to appropriate their vocation to ordained ministry. She adopts an argument that focuses on the subversion of patriarchal power through warning women theologians not to be co-opted in considering ordination the end-goal of their struggles. On the contrary, being ordained as a woman puts one in a dangerous position, since the ordained position makes it all the more easy to consider one's status as elevated above the non-ordained members of the church and thus be sucked into what she calls the 'sexist and patriarchal social caste in the church.'[75] The correlation between vocation, patriarchal structures in the church, influence of patriarchal wider culture, and ordination becomes clear in the work of Orevillo-Montenegro. The work of Orevillo-Montenegro contributes to my argument in this section by allowing me to radically destabilize the notion of a 'fixed' vocation to either ordination or, mutatis mutandis, mission work. One's sense of vocation should be connected with the following of Christ in His commitment for justice and compassion, and one's sense of vocation should never contribute to the upholstering of patriarchal structures.

The final contribution on this topic hails from Zimbabwe. Francisca Chimhanda argues for the necessity to raise consciousness regarding the vocation of women in the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe. The Catholic Church in Zimbabwe is known for its patriarchal character, and unfortunately many women have internalized their lack of options within the church.[76] Because of the difficulty for women to affirm their ecclesial vocation, Chimhanda argues for the necessity for women to live out their baptismal vocation. The baptismal vocation is a form of vocation which can be uniquely inclusive, and follows therefore the example of Christ. Christ himself was counter-cultural through his affirmation of the vocation of women. The transforming power of the baptismal vocation stands in contrast with the 'female genius' that is ascribed to women by Pope John Paul as a way of affirming the special obligation and vocation of women in the church. Chimhanda however considers this form of vocation a 'womb-shaped vocation' and thus a form of 'biological reduction.'[77] I consider the work of Chimhanda valuable since she grapples with the problem of affirming the ecclesial vocation of women in the

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[74] Asinate Samate, 'The Challenge of a Call to Ministry: A Tongan Women's Experience in a Patriarchal Setting.'', in *Weavings: Women Doing Theology in Oceania*, ed. Lydia Johnson and Joan Alleluia Filemoni-Tofaeno (Suva: Weavers, South Pacific Association of Theological Schools and Institute of Pacific Studies, 2003), 166.

[75] Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, 'Sri Lankan Ordained Women's Experience and Asian Feminist Theologizing', *CTC Bulletin* XXII, no. 3 (2006): 61.

[76] Francisca Chimhanda, 'Raising Consciousness Regarding the Dignity and Vocation of Women in the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe: A Historical Developmental Process', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 34, no. 1 (2008): 301–332.

[77] Ibid., 8.

light of the 'womb-shaped vocation' which is hoisted on women through official church documents. I consider her desire to hark back to the baptismal vocation valuable, since the sacrament of baptism offers a point of contact with the inclusive and countercultural practices of Jesus.

The struggle of vocation for women experienced first-hand by Chimhanda illustrates therefore the principle of the 'politics' of vocation. This political-societal aspect of vocation 'refers to the ways in which people negotiate the conflicts between identity claims that are salient to them and the constraints they encounter within social institutions of various kinds.'[78] The politics of vocation can be discerned on various scales, they can be acted out in the context of the family, but can also be enacted within Christian denominations. The politics of vocation, in the context of the work of Chimhanda, but also Orevillo-Montenegro, Esther Mombo and Asinate Samate, refers to the struggle to enact one's vocation in the midst of the patriarchal structure of the church.

Because of the dire consequences of hampering the flourishing of women's vocation, I consider it important to explicitly declare that the vocation should maintain its critical and liberative dimension. Whenever vocation has been solely connected to the priesthood or ordination, it remains difficult for women to find their vocation. Therefore, we have to search for a liberative praxis of vocation. To this end, feminist theology may be especially helpful.

This perspective will inform the reading of the official statements issued by churches and ecumenical organizations. I perceive it as a danger to take the often beautifully worded statements at face value. Many of these statements stress the vocation of the whole church to be involved in the *missio Dei* and consider mission therefore the prime vocation of the church. Yet, we have to ask ourselves the question: who is included in the concept of the church? How inclusive is the vocation of the church in reality? As gained from the insights of the women theologians above, a huge discrepancy is manifest between the inclusive language about the vocation of the church and the subsequent exclusion in practice of people with marginalized identities from ordination. The struggle to overcome patriarchal models of being church is too often sidelined from the discussions on vocation. I consider it a danger that the language of the vocation of the church is couched in exalted theological categories that stay the same throughout time, while the social hierarchies behind the language of vocation changes and is not acknowledged.

Not only need vocation be gendered it is of paramount importance to take up gender in an intersectional framework, as I have advocated in the third chapter. In this way, one can take into account the multiple axes through which one's vocation runs the risk of becoming marginalized. The concrete vocation of the church in mission in a concrete context is beautifully illustrated by the work of Tsvakai

[78] Laura M. Leming, 'Women, Religious Agency and the Politics of Vocation', in *Vocation and Social Context*, ed. Giuseppe Giordan, Religion and the Social Order 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 154.

Zhou. She writes about the vocation of the Lutheran church in the context of Zimbabwe.[79] She harks back to the work of Luther by pointing to the vocation of the church to be involved in wider society for the benefit of society. Without employing the word as such, Zhou uses an intersectionality perspective in which she considers the double bind in which female prisoners who want to integrate back into society are placed: they are both marginalized by virtue of their gender and by virtue of their status as ex-prisoners. Zhou illustrates therefore the necessity not only to employ a concrete liberative perspective on vocation, but also illustrates the necessity to employ an intersectional framework. It is only through taking account of the multiple vectors that are influencing the concrete lives of people, only through taking an intersectional perspective into account, that one's vocation can be discovered. The article of Zhou is therefore a perfect example of the results that arise from vocational awareness that is not only gendered, but also intersectional.

5.2.7. *Gender and the Missional Church*

This section not only argues for the necessity to connect gender and vocation and to prioritize the perspective of those who are denied an ecclesial vocation. In addition, this section attempts to steer the conversation of gendered vocation back again to missiological terrain. Although I have heard on multiple occasions the complaints that the missional church movement is dominated by men and employs masculine scripts, a lack of resources regarding this topic exists. A case in point are the masculine tropes that are employed throughout the book of *Untamed: Reactivating a Missional Form of Discipleship*.[80] Although the missional church movement is by no means the only factor shaping language and practices on mission, as I have indicated in the first chapter, the movement currently has gained a considerable amount of clout in mission-minded circles.

When the missional church movement employs the concept of vocation, it is in connection with the mission of the church to represent the reign of God, as becomes clear from the title of the chapter 'Missional Vocation: Called and Sent to Represent the Reign of God' in the now classic book *Missional Church* by Darell Guder and Lois Barrett.[81] Although the topic of vocation plays an important role, especially for Guder, I have not been able to find instances where the politics of vocation is connected with the unequal gender relationships in today's world. Guder defines vocation primary through the sacrament of baptism. This means that

[79] Tsvakai Zhou, 'The Public Vocation of Lutheran Churches and the Rehabilitation of Zimbabwean Female Ex-Prisoners', *Dialog* 50, no. 2 (2011): 186–92.
[80] Alan Hirsch and Debra Hirsch, *Untamed: Reactivating a Missional Form of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010).
[81] Guder and Barrett, *Missional Church*.

every believer has received her/his vocation by virtue of her/his baptism. The baptismal vocation has a wide range and is interpreted through the vocation of the whole community of God. The vocation of the community of God is considered to be apostolic and a vocation to be a witness in the world. For Guder, there is therefore an intimate connection between vocation and mission: vocation is understood as the vocation to be a missional witness.[82] The specialized vocation of those who are called to leadership and ordination in the community is preceded by the baptismal vocation of all believers and it can therefore not be interpreted in isolation with the communal vocation. Guder himself explicitly reckons with the scheme of a special and general vocation, denoting the difference between the ordinary and the out-of-the ordinary. Guder comes with a two- tier structure of vocation remarkably close to the description of vocation as given by Taylor.[83] The two- tier structure of Guder signifies the inherent tension present in these vocational models: on the one hand, the priesthood of all believers and subsequently the vocation of the totality of the church is affirmed. On the other hand, and simultaneously, the special category of the vocation of the clergy / leadership functions as a special addendum or add-on to the structure of the general vocation. In light of our review of Taylor, it should be clear that I want to develop a theology of vocation through the abolition of the different 'speeds' in favor of the radical equality of inclusive vocation.

As I see it, another problem with the emphasis of Guder flows from the distinction between the special and the ordinary vocations. I would add that in practice, this hierarchy of vocations leaves little room for a critical gender analysis. It is telling therefore that the gender factor doesn't seem to surface in the works of Guder I have reviewed. Guder himself warns adamantly against forms of theological reductionism that have plagued theology and mission in the past, such as the reductionism that takes place when the mission of the church is separated from the action of the church.[84] However, a form of reductionism takes place when the missional vocation is removed from the context in which vocations are actualized. The contemporary context in which individuals engage with their vocation and in which the vocation of the church is carried out, is characterized by the context of a society steeped in inherited patriarchal patterns. I would recommend therefore more serious engagement with those realities in order to not import patriarchal patterns within the actualization of vocation.

[82] Darrell L. Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015); Darrell L. Guder, 'Missio Dei: Integrating Theological Formation for Apostolic Vocation', *Missiology* 37, no. 1 (2009): 63–74.
[83] Guder, *Called to Witness*, 145.
[84] Guder, 'Missio Dei', 69.

5.2.8. *Feminist Missiology and Klesiology*

This analysis both of the topic of (clerical) vocation in the context of lived women's experiences and the lack of gendered vocation in literature on the missional church signals the necessity to thematise the intersection of vocation, mission and gender.[85] The intersection of vocation, mission and gender is all the more necessary given the frequent employment of masculine tropes in traditional missionary discourse, as pointed out by Kwok Pui-lan.[86] The subsequent themes that will be discussed in the constructive proposal of re-imagining vocation in inclusive ways, from below, are elements at home in a feminist approach. For example, the emphasis on community in vocation will be developed alongside the lines of the inclusivity of multi-ethnic and multi-racial communities. This perspective opens up the possibility to define communities of faith not primarily from a clerical perspective, which might prove to hinder the full vocational participation of women, but instead to define communities from below, with ample room for women's voices. As a consequence, a gendered perspective on vocation will always be connected with an intersectional approach, in which the marginalization of women in the vocational process intersects oftentimes with the other aspects of marginalization such as location, socio-economic status or ethnicity. As I have outlined in this section, a feminist klesiology[87] inserts the often silenced category of gender in the discussions of vocation and adds as a consequence a critical perspective. This critical perspective has the ability to question if the inclusive statements of various denominations and ecumenical bodies are materializing equally inclusive in practice.

5.3. NARRATIVE

Various authors have recognized the fruitfulness of a narrative approach in mission theology. Among the most popular and influential is the theology of Christopher Wright, who has authored the monograph: *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*.[88] Wright proceeds from a biblical theology in which

[85] Russell, 'God, Gold, Glory and Gender'.
[86] Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*.
[87] Klesiology is a new term that is introduced by Rhys Kuzmič in his insightful discussion of the work of Karl Barth on vocation. Klesiology, as a technical term, is constructed analogue to such loci as ecclesiology, and denotes the theology of vocation. Rhys Kuzmič, 'Beruf and Berufung in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics: Toward a Subversive Klesiology', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7, no. 3 (2005): 262–78.
[88] Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. Girma Bekele, 'The Biblical Narrative of the Missio Dei: Analysis of the Interpretive Framework of David Bosch's Missional Hermeneutic', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35, no. 3 (2011): 153–58; Adeney, 'Why Biography?'

the centrality of mission in the biblical material is emphasized. The attention towards narrative can be understood against the backdrop of the popularity of narrative theology in general.[89] As I have outlined in the introduction, the particularity of the story that is told about mission determines the way in which vocation takes its place in the story. The basic premise in this section is therefore that vocation takes place in the context of a narrative. If the narrative in which vocation is experienced, tried and evaluated disappears, the context for understanding vocation is diminished. Vocation does not take place in a vacuum but is sustained by a context. The nature of narrative needs therefore to be explored further. I will use the work of MacIntyre for this purpose, since he explains the narrative structure of reality in such a way that allows me to forge a connection with a narrative approach in mission.[90] In addition to the idea of narrative, I will work with the idea of missionary literacy, a concept I have coined in order to describe the possibility and proficiency to act upon and acquire knowledge of the nature of mission.

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre outlines, while drawing on Aristotle, the basic structure of a contemporary virtue ethic. MacIntyre strives to envisage the human life as a whole since he searches for the 'arena' where virtues can be enacted. This unity of life is necessary since the virtues are considered dispositions that will be exercised in various areas of life. A narrative model is most suitable for the goal of MacIntyre since the narrative mode is connected with the human urge to tell a story about one's life and to use stories as a framework that makes one's actions intelligible. Three elements that are primarily important for providing the frame for a narrative are setting, history, and intention. Narrative history is for him 'the basic and essential genre for the characterization of human actions.'[91] In order to understand these human actions, which are part of narrative history, one has to turn to conversation, since conversation is, as a speech-act, characterized by various genres and as such is an enacted narrative.[92] A speech act in and of itself, while being understandable, is not yet intelligible, since the necessary context for understanding is lacking. Context is therefore an important constitutive in order to render actions intelligible and meaningful. Meaning is negotiated within the genre of conversation. This dialogical character of conversation holds *mutatis mutandis* meaning for other human transactions. Behavior thus doesn't exist apart from intentions, beliefs and settings. If an action is intelligible, one can consequently account for this action. MacIntyre makes an important turn in his exposition, when he emphasizes that 'man' is restricted in her freedom to enact her own individual

[89] See for example: Gerard Loughlin, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). His theology is an attempt to rethink Christianity from the perspective, thereby advocating for a thoroughly postmodern perspective, since Christianity is the enactment of a story and is thereby "bottomless." Ibid., 21.
[90] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*.
[91] Ibid., 194.
[92] Ibid., 196–97.

narrative, since her choices and actions are intractably interwoven with the actions and choices of others.[93] MacIntyre smashes the illusion of the unbounded, unrestricted and autonomous self. Instead, he stresses the unity of the self and connects the unified self with the unity of each individual narrative, 'which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end.'[94] The unity of narratives does not preclude the occurrence of unpredictability. The unpredictability is derived from an interwovenness with other narratives, which means that events that take place within the lives of others also have bearing upon one's own life. The narrative of life, in addition, is characterized by its teleological character, signifying the overarching goal individuals strive to attain, however varied these goals may be.[95] Humans are tied to community, and the community is the place where meaning is enacted. The central thesis then that MacIntyre has sought to defend is as follows: 'man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal.'[96] Recapitulating, MacIntyre has argued that the narrative dimension of humanity shows that humans are not bounded wholes, but are influenced by their surrounding communities in multiple and myriad ways.

5.3.1. *MacIntyre and Vocation*

In the section above, I have been primarily concerned with presenting MacIntyre's argument concerning narrative. This section will engage in dialogue with his ideas and outline the possibilities his ideas present for a theology of vocation. In order to do so, I will present one of the seminal quotes of MacIntyre, with the goal to uncover how this quote ties into the possibilities to make a connection with vocation. MacIntyre writes on vocation:

> I can only answer the question "What am I to do?" if I can answer the prior question "Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?" We enter human society, that is, with one or more imputed characters – roles into which we have been drafted – and we have to learn what they are in order to be able to understand how others respond to us and how our responses to them are apt to be construed. It is through hearing stories about wicked stepmothers, lost children, good but misguided kings, wolves that suckle twin boys, youngest sons who receive no inheritance but must make their own way in the world and eldest sons who waste their inheritance on riotous living and go into exile to live with the swine,[97] that children learn or mislearn both what a child and what a parent is, what the cast of characters may be in the drama into which they have been born and

[93] From the perspective of the mid-2010's, the explicit androcentric language of MacIntyre is highly problematic. The male-centered perspective of MacIntyre is therefore countered in my text by intentionally using female pronouns.
[94] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 191.
[95] Ibid., 201.
[96] Ibid.
[97] If this story is an allusion to Luke 15, the parable of the prodigal son, one should note that the gospel narrative has the youngest son waste his inheritance on licentious living.

> what the ways of the world are. Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words. Hence there is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources.[98]

In this quote, MacIntyre outlines the role of narrative in understanding societies. This quote makes no distinction between fiction and fact, but attributes both to real-life stories and fictitious stories the power to shape the world. The reverse holds true, too. Story-deprivation puts children and adults alike in the unfortunate position wherein we lack the possibilities to make sense of their surrounding world and to find their place in this world. Narrative is thus a constitutive element of any knowledge of society. And a deprivation of constituting stories leaves people, in the most literal sense of the word, unscripted. If the argument of MacIntyre holds true for the structure of society as a whole, it *mutatis mutandis* holds true for the ground structure of mission. Mission cannot exist without a narrative in which a variety of characters and roles are enacted. Mission needs stories in order to become embodied mission. Through the immense joy of celebrating the Eucharist in an interracial and intercultural setting, fighting against discrimination and poverty, hosting prayer meetings after disasters strike, finding interreligious understanding, hearing stories about funny and frustrating misunderstandings when learning an unfamiliar language, miraculously obtaining a visa just in time, and multiple examples could be added, a community of faith learns what it means to be involved in mission. The stories told are determining the way one perceives the nature and goal of mission encounters. Who are the actors in the stories on mission? How are the gender roles distributed? Which nationalities do the main actors in the story possess? Which racial identities? From which class and segments of society are the main characters? Do they play active or passive roles? In these stories about mission, what counts as success, what counts as failure? What is the role of geography in these stories? In other words, it matters whether the setting for mission is primarily determined by one's own surrounding, or is predominantly interpreted through connection with exotic, far-flung places.

Involvement in mission means, in a very fundamental way, to be involved in storytelling. Stories are told and shared across the barriers of language, culture, race, ethnicity and class. To this end, becoming a skilled storyteller requires courage and wisdom and the gift of discernment, in order to determine which stories are appropriate and edifying. I consider the discernment of storytelling to be subsumed under the heading of missionary literacy, a concept that I will further develop below. In the most fundamental sense, the narrative about mission is about the participation in the mission of God: the *missio Dei*. The origins of the idea of the *missio Dei* can be traced to 1934, when it was first coined by Karl Hartenstein

[98] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 201.

in order to distinguish the *missio Dei* from the *missio ecclesiae*. The idea subsequently played an important role in the 1952 meeting of the International Mission Council in Willingen. The Trinitarian gist of the *missio Dei* emphasizes that the church participates in the sending of God. The *missio Dei* was not without problems at 1952 in Willingen nor in 1968 in the World Council of Churches meeting in Uppsala, where more secularized versions of *missio Dei* were advocated.[99] Recently, the *missio Dei* has been come under scrutiny[100] not primarily because of its Trinitarian foundation, but mainly because of the risk that it runs to become a disembodied concept without reference to concrete, graspable realities.[101]

Under the heading of *missio Dei*, a bewildering amount of contradictory ideas and practices can be subsumed. The reason for the versatility of the *missio Dei* trope is that the concept has acquired the status of a truism: that mission is ultimately the mission of God has an almost axiomatic quality.[102] What role can the *missio Dei* play in order to acquire meaning in the narrative structure of reality MacIntyre proposes? The short answer, relying on MacIntyre, must be that the reality of the *missio Dei* needs to be connected to the human vicissitudes in daily life, without shifting to a form of *missio ecclesiae*. When the *missio Dei* is disconnected from the very concrete and lively stories as narrated in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, in which God is depicted as a sending God, the *missio Dei* runs the risk to become disembodied. If the *missio Dei* trope becomes disconnected from human experience it runs the risk of becoming a buzzword or a too often repeated refrain. This is the case when common phrases such as 'sharing in the mission of the triune God' or 'stressing the priority of God in mission' lack connection to concrete realities.

In light of the work of MacIntyre, I consider the narrative structure of reality echoed within mission encounters, which ultimately bear witness to the encounter with God in Christ. The stories and the accompanying images that they evoke determine to a large extent the parameters of mission. A change in the story about the nature of mission results in a change in the idea of mission itself. From this perspective, it remains of paramount importance to be careful in the selection and usages of the tropes, images and storylines that are used about mission. In her article, 'The Quest for Images of Missionaries in a 'Post-missionary' Era,' Sherron Kay George recognizes the need for a new and imaginative set of images to discuss

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[99] Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 289–91.

[100] See for a comprehensive overview of the interpretation history of the concept: Engelsviken, 'MISSIO DEI'.

[101] Philip L. Wickeri, 'Mission from the Margins: The Missio Dei in the Crisis of World Christianity', *International Review of Mission* 93, no. 369 (2004): 182–98; Wickeri, 'The End of Missio Dei - Secularization, Religions and the Theology of Mission'.

[102] See for more information on the history and usage of the idea of the *Missio Dei*: Flett, *The Witness of God*.

mission encounters. She suggests: 'The Bible offers the suggestive images of penitent sinner, beggar, friend, neighbor, follower, disciple, participant-observer, listener, and learner, which might mark the continuing conversion of the missionary today. These images flow from the triune God's self-emptying, self-giving, other-receiving, and other-empowering mission.'[103] The images put forth by George attain their force when they are connected to concrete life events which exemplify how the roles of beggar, friend or learner are played out in the concrete vicissitudes of life.

The connection between mission theology, missionary vocation and images of the missionary task is explained vividly by Stanley Skreslet.[104] The usage of tropes in missionary discourse clearly shows one's theological conviction of the goal and means of mission. To give a concrete example, in a missionary sermon in 1812, the role of missionaries was described through the following image: 'you will be burning and shining lights in regions of darkness and death.'[105] This image clearly shows the power of the juxtaposition of light and darkness, whereby the missionaries are cast in the role of light bringers, and the missionized as under the influence of the forces of darkness and death. This juxtaposition reveals the powerful potential of images, and at the same time shows how graphically expressing missionary vocation can be a tool to uncover the theology beneath these images. Stephen Bevans agrees with Skreslet, when he argues that images are 'concentrated theologies of mission, ways of understanding the church, ministry, the significance of Jesus Christ, and the salvation that he offers.'[106] Bevans discusses eight different images: treasure hunter, teacher, prophet, guest, stranger, partner, migrant worker, and ghost. While some of them are fairly self-evident, such as the teacher and the partner, some are more surprising, such as the treasure hunter and the ghost. In light of the postcolonial character of this dissertation, it should be clear that images of mission which display a superiority complex on the part of the missionary, such as the missionary as a beacon of light, should be denounced. The narrative dimension that I have sought to advance in this section takes the narrative power of images and metaphors seriously, and seeks therefore to use the two main elements of a postcolonial theology of mission that I have put forth, marginality and vulnerability, within a narrative framework. If marginality and vulnerability will be an integral part of the story of one's vocation, one runs less of a risk of succumbing to the insidious idea of superiority that might accompany the idea of vocation.

We have seen thus the necessity and importance of scripted stories in mission

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[103] Sherron Kay George, 'The Quest for Images of Missionaries in a "Post-missionary" Era', *Missiology* 30, no. 1 (2002): 1.
[104] Stanley H. Skreslet, *Picturing Christian Witness: New Testament Images of Disciples in Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2006).
[105] Ibid., 4.
[106] Stephen B. Bevans, 'Seeing Mission through Images', *Missiology* 19, no. 1 (1991): 46.

in order to establish a narrative framework for mission. However, one note needs to be placed with regard to the predictable nature of the scripted stories. I do not condone the instances where MacIntyre's work could be read as succumbing to the status quo. Instead, I would argue that the stories we use should be bold and imaginative, in order to rethink and reimagine a different future in a scarred post-colonial world. A fragment of the earlier lengthy quote reads: '*what the cast of characters may be in the drama into which they have been born and what the ways of the world are*.' This quote should not be taken as an indication for a quietist or determinist outlook on life. Scripted stories should therefore not become stifled, inflexible and rigid. I interpret scripted stories as stories that are proceeding from a narrative mold that is already prefabricated. For example, within the evangelical narrative of receiving a vocation, an element of the script is that the person who receives the vocation feels a great sense of reluctance to fulfil his/her specific vocation in that specific location (i.e. a location in a hot and humid climate by someone who cannot stand any heat). The sense of reluctance is finally overcome and the specific location turns out to be a specific blessing. Multiple tropes can be played out in stories of vocation, especially when an abundance of biographies and other narratives are available for consumption of church members who actively supported mission.[107]

MacIntyre considers the individual person as the bearer of a particular social identity that mediates the nature of the world and the limitations of the world. One finds oneself in the midst of an interwoven complex of life and takes it as the moral starting point of each individual life. A narrative approach acknowledges therefore that identities are historically and socially mediated, and contrasts therefore with the opposing view that identities are first and foremost individually sought, lived and enacted. The particularity of each person and its particular embedding in the world can never be escaped: a disembodied self is an illusion. MacIntyre thinks against the grain by challenging the idea that identities are primarily constructed by the individual self. Yet, an individual is not bound to always accept the moral limitations posed by its community, but has the obligation to acknowledge and evaluate them. MacIntyre writes:

> Hence what is good for me has to be the good for one who inhabits these roles. As such, I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations. These constitute the given(s) of my life, my moral starting point. This is in part what gives my life its own moral particularity.[108]

As such, MacIntyre stresses the 'given' which characterizes each individual and the moral responsibilities following from this starting point and its concomitant

[107] Jeffrey Cox, 'Master Narratives of Imperial Missions', in *Mixed Messages: Materiality, Textuality, Missions*, ed. Jamie S. Scott and Gareth Griffiths (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 3–18.
[108] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 205.

roles and obligations. His viewpoint is particularly valuable in a cultural climate in which the choices of a disembodied self are stressed to the extent that every individual is solely responsible for crafting her/his own future and happiness.

Yet, the emphasis on the 'given,' together with MacIntyre's insistence on the integrity of the narrative self, are problematic since these statements do not reckon sufficiently with the possibility of severe breaches and ruptures in individual narratives. Breaches are found in individual stories for a myriad of reasons, such as the violation of vulnerable life, which I have described in the chapter on vulnerability. From a postcolonial perspective, the integrity of the self of the subaltern has been severely compromised through various colonial strategies of dominance.[109] Narrative coherence can be used as an aggressive concept to gloss over the incoherent, incomplete, blocked and repressed narrative identities.[110] I consider it therefore necessary to supplement the work of MacIntyre with a theology that advances the necessity of a narrative characterized by openness: a narrative that allows for the oftentimes incoherent, piecemeal and contradictory articulations of personal narratives. I find these articulations in the work of Hahnenberg, to whom I will now turn.

5.3.2. *Open Narrative*

In the section above, I have been working towards the necessity of establishing narrative as an interpretive category in discussing vocation. However, I have not yet expanded more closely upon the theological nature of narrative, but I have found it necessary to elaborate further on the openness of narrative. I turn therefore to the work of Hahnenberg, who in his book *Awakening Vocation* argues for the consideration of the story of Christianity as an open narrative: a story that leaves room open for alterity. The perspective of the other is welcomed since stories exist by virtue of the other.

One of the prime concerns of Hahnenberg is therefore to warn against the detrimental nature of closed narratives. A closed narrative means that a particular story has the potential to oppress others, succumbing to 'narrow definitions and miserly expectations.'[111] In its most fundamental sense, a closed narrative has guarded itself against all experiences of alterity and interruption. Against a closed narrative, Hahnenberg posits the life-giving experience of an open narrative. The story of Christ is multi-faceted, and was from its inception told in various ways for various audiences by highlighting elements that took on specific meanings in specific contexts.[112] The multi-faceted story of Christ has sparked a Christian

[109] Spivak, '"Can the Subaltern Speak?" [revised Edition]'.
[110] Lois McNay, 'Having It Both Ways: The Incompatibility of Narrative Identity and Communicative Ethics in Feminist Thought', *Theory, Culture & Society* 20, no. 6 (2003): 7–8.
[111] Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 172.
[112] Ibid., 167.

movement, which is, with the emergence of World Christianity, more than ever characterized by profound diversity and multiple trajectories.[113] Vatican II can be considered as a landmark event in the history of the Catholic Church wherein it was urged to shed centuries of 'monolithic Eurocentrism' in order to embrace a truly global perspective.[114] Only occasionally Hahnenberg refers to the open narrative in tandem with Christianity as a world religion, but from the perspective this thesis has sought to advance, an open narrative is necessary to interpret the advance of World Christianity. Closed narratives are particularly harmful when they are scripted along the lines of a Eurocentric perspective, which does not reckon with the deep plurality and multitude of paradigms and trajectories lived out within World Christianity.

The foundation of the open narrative rests upon the continuous interruption by the other. Hahnenberg takes his clues from Lieven Boeve for describing the nature of interruption. The distinction between an open and a closed narrative lies primarily in the possibility of the openness towards the interruption of the other. Especially for Boeve, this interruption is interpreted as the heart of Christianity: God interrupts our lives for good reason. As a consequence, we can be open to the interruption of the human other in our lives. The interruption allows for a double meaning: both divine and human interruptions are acknowledged. Consequently, the development of the narrative of Christianity is open: the involvement of humans causes this openness. Ultimately, the narrative of Christianity can never be completely open (as in: undetermined) since Christianity is bound by its allegiance to the narrative of Christ. I use the work of Hahnenberg / Boeve primarily to show the necessity for a narrative of vocation that remains open to the interruption/ real presence of the other and does not succumb to worn-out and overly familiar tropes in order to receive credibility. Instead, the encounter with the other consists in the possibility that Eurocentric narratives become subverted. Personal vocational narratives are therefore in their most ideal sense to be regarded as open narratives. The tropes / images that are used can shift and are allowed to be interpreted by others who seek vocation. This means also that vocational narratives can only be interpreted in communities, which will be the following *leitmotiv* of imagining vocation.

Hahnenberg himself acknowledges the danger that an open narrative could be only open-ended, being mainly a watered down and tepid abstraction. He doesn't want to go down that road, but makes it clear that the narrative of Christianity is and remains centered around and grounded in the person of Christ. For Hahnenberg however, the openness of narrative is not based only within an acknowledgment of lived experiences in the context of postmodernity, but finds its roots in the

[113] Walls, 'Christianity in the Non-Western World: A Study in the Serial Nature of Christian Expansion'.
[114] Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 180.

Biblical stories themselves. The arguments of Hahnenberg derive mainly from interaction with a broad range of Catholic and Protestant literature, and as such, Hahnenberg does not include Evangelical literature. Yet, the ideas of Hahnenberg regarding the nature of the open narrative might be helpful in challenging the closed narratives, in which the missionary call is described in ways that are scripted to the extent that the narratives becomes predictable and thus closed. A closed narrative can be defined as a narrative in which the story of an individual person is unduly restricted and molded in terms of the overarching and already familiar narrative. In order to allow and appreciate individual differences in vocational awareness, an open narrative is therefore needed. Affirming the openness of vocational narratives allows for the surprising interference of the agency of God within the lives of humans. This interference has the possibility to break through lives that are closed off and can transcend scripted, confined and closed narratives. Returning to Hahnenberg, it becomes clear that the fundamental openness constitutes a community that is both confirmed and confronted. The open community is confirmed in its reliance on the story of God who is at work in the world. Simultaneously, the open community is confronted since it becomes challenged by other narratives that cross paths with the open community. The balance between confrontation and confirmation lies in the perspective of the narrative of Jesus Christ which provides the 'primary framework for understanding and acting within the world.' The confrontation serves to call beyond the security of a metanarrative that is too neat and tidy and leaves room for the challenge that the confrontation with other narratives provides.[115]

To recapitulate, this section on the openness of narrative has attempted to show that, by employing the work of Hahnenberg, the narrative dimension of a theology of vocation needs to be safeguarded by the openness of the narrative. The openness of the narrative of vocation safeguards against predictability, but instead leaves room open for the interruption of the other. The openness of the narrative also helps to understand the multiple possible trajectories resulting from the process of vocational awareness. A growth of vocational awareness can therefore be helpful in challenging perspectives on vocation that are static or Eurocentric. As such, the openness of vocational narratives might help us in the transition from one missionary paradigm to another, because it makes us aware that vocational narratives change when ideas about mission change. I understand vocation therefore as finding one's place within the story/stories of mission. I consider vocation in connection to the *missio Dei* as the process of spiritual discernment in which one gradually learns to take and articulate one's own place in the story of mission.

[115] Ibid., 196.

5.3.3. *Missionary Literacy*

In the section above, I have outlined how the concept of vocation is tied up with a narrative perspective, explaining how narratives are always in a state of flux and transition, caused by changing perspectives on mission and changing perspectives of the world.

What is needed to read, understand, and interpret narratives of vocation? In order to make sense of vocational narratives, I propose the concept of 'missionary literacy.' An open narrative that nurtures, sustains, and challenges vocation is subsumed in the idea of this literacy. I use the idea of literacy to construct ways to help develop, sustain, and nurture a sense of vocation. Coining this new terminology mirrors the broader category of religious literacy, which is generally understood as knowledge and understanding of religion, and is in its turn a cognate of the concept of literacy as such.[116] As missionary literacy, I define the capacity to engage and understand the (open) narrative of mission.

One should take note at this point that missionary literacy does not relate to the more literal understanding tied to the ability to read and write of actual missionaries. Missionary literacy can therefore be used interchangeably with missional literacy, if one feels so inclined. The term is explicitly coined as a broad and inclusive term, not denoting the abilities of specific missionaries, but the ability of the wider Christian church to read the signs of the times and to locate oneself within the story of mission. This emphasis is in line with the overall goal of my research to locate mission within the common Christian reality as opposed to the specialized reality of a few chosen and called missionaries.

Under literacy, both knowledge and attitude are subsumed. What does this mean concretely? In the first place, missionary literacy entails awareness of the global character of Christianity and the worldwide spread of Christianity. The developments within World Christianity form the backdrop against which to understand current endeavors in mission in a transnational framework. Secondly, missionary literacy entails the proficiency and skill to locate oneself within the open story of mission. Missionary literacy can consequently only be established within a narrative framework: a framework in which stories are told, lived and experienced. Missionary literacy is a broad and inclusive concept, since the idea is explicitly aimed at the whole of the Christian community, not just those who practice mission professionally. It refers therefore principally to communities of faith. The inclusiveness of the concept of missionary literacy is closely connected with a general ecumenical consensus in which reflection on the nature and role of profes-

[116] See for a comprehensive overview of the state of literacy research: Michael L. Kamil et al., eds., *Handbook of Reading Research* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

sional mission workers has given way to the involvement of the totality of Christian communities in mission.[117] The advocacy for missionary literacy flows naturally from the insight that the church is missionary by her very nature[118] and that all members of the church are expected to participate in the *missio Dei*. Missionary literacy is consequently considered to be the ability to perceive oneself as part of the narrative of mission. Yet, the very openness of missionary literacy entails the non-prescriptive nature of the particular stories people of faith find themselves a part of. As has been affirmed by Bosch, multiple paradigms of mission are acted out simultaneously.[119] The radical plurality of the contemporary world prohibits that missionary literacy refers only to one particular strand of thought on how mission should be carried out. I use the concept therefore in a rather formal way: the idea of missionary literacy provides a way of outlining to what extent one has knowledge of or can place oneself within narratives of mission. For the concept of vocation, this entails that missionary literacy indicates the adroitness in which somebody can identify her contribution, role and function in participating in a Christian community of mission.

The unspecified character of missionary literacy as a concept does not stand in the way of outlining the specifics of the desired forms missionary literacy can take. In the context of this dissertation, I have described the parameters for mission encounters in the first chapter. To recapitulate succinctly, mission is carried out in the postcolonial context of World Christianity, it takes a transnational perspective and problematizes therefore the rigid distinction between the local and the global. Missionary literacy, by virtue of being grounded in the realities of World Christianity, requires a global perspective and consequently challenges provincialism and parochialism. In the context of vocational awareness, missionary literacy also entails the proficiency to understand the intersection of gender and vocation. Concretely this means the ability to understand how vocation narratives either exclude or include the experiences of women-identified folks. In line with the generative theme of community, the proficiency at missionary literacy is not determined by one's individual skill and dexterity, but is rather a communal effort at reading and interpreting vocationally. Secondly, connected with the emphasis on spirituality, I would like to posit that missionary literacy entails the reading of and engagement with the bearings of the divine in the life of the community of faith. The spiritual element of literary proficiency explicitly aims at connecting the work of the Spirit with the life of the community. It is precisely where the activity of the Spirit is acknowledged that the possibility of vocational awareness lightens up. Lastly, missionary literacy emerges from 'the' poor. In light of the privileged perspective of 'the' poor, it is expected that one's literacy will be intricately connected to this privileged perspective.

[117] See: 'Together towards Life'.
[118] 'Ad Gentes: Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church', 1965.
[119] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*.

5.4. COMMUNITY

5.4.1. *Introduction*

In the former section, I have proposed to consider a narrative approach as one of the foundational building blocks in a theology of vocation. I have explained how vocation can be understood as finding one's place within the narrative of mission. The section on narrative serves as the first building block of a total of four elements. These four elements are the building blocks for a theology of missionary vocation in the postcolonial context of World Christianity. As the second building block, I propose the theme of community. As I have already outlined in the section on narrative, narratives are enacted in communities. In the words of Hahnenberg, the relationship between narrative and community is self-evident: narrative cannot remain disembodied. In his words: 'We are interested in reflecting on how the call of God comes to each of us through the mediation of people – the Christian community, a community both called and calling.'[120] In the final analysis, the topic of narrative in light of vocation is therefore more at home within ecclesiology and not primarily within epistemology. Vocation finds its home in communities of faith, which can either nurture or neglect a cultural climate in which vocations can grow and develop. In discussing vocation in community, two themes warrant further investigation. In the first place: what is the relationship between the national and the international? In other words, how can vocation be enacted in local communities, without losing sight of the transnational / planetary dimension of World Christianity? The other theme that presents itself is the relationship between the community and the individual. How does an emphasis on the communal dimension of vocation relate to the individual? One model of answering these questions is found in the idea of 'symbolic concentration,' i.e. the idea that an individual who has received a specific missionary vocation (in another location, thus the global dimension) represents as such the totality of the local community. The model of symbolic concentration operates from the problematic perspective that mission is connected with the special role of an individual in mission. This model therefore offers not enough possibilities to consider the missional dimension of the Christian community as a whole. I will therefore argue instead for the preferential option of nurturing vocation in multi-ethnic and otherwise diverse Christian communities in order to connect vocation with communities in World Christianity.

5.4.2. *Communal Focus in Official Documents*

In this section, I employ a variety of official documents and declarations that connect vocation with the mission of the church and point to its communal dimension.

[120] Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 174.

The communal aspect is defined in this paragraph as the vocation given to all Christians as a natural consequence of being Christian. The connection of mission, church and vocation enjoys a broad ecumenical basis. The communal and individual dimensions are negotiated in a variety of ways in the documents I will review.

Ad Gentes, the influential and fundamental document concerning the missionary nature of the church produced by the second Vatican Council, is concerned with establishing the missionary character of the church. The document has famously asserted that 'the Church is missionary by its very nature.'[121] In *Ad Gentes*, the church is interpreted primarily as sent by the Father. The identity of being sent takes precedence over the church as institution which is itself involved in sending out people. All humans are called to share in the life of God, not just as single individuals, but as one people joined together. In the words of *Ad Gentes*: 'But it pleased God to call men to share His life, not just singly, apart from any mutual bond, but rather to mold them into a people in which His sons, once scattered abroad might be gathered together (cf. John 11:52).'[122]

The theological line of the first section of the document is not sustained in the later paragraphs. Those paragraphs interpret vocation clerically by stressing the involvement of the bishop in allotting clergy and laity their missionary vocations towards their respective areas of service.[123] Individual missionary vocation is characterized by a strong pneumatological dimension, but is on the other hand institutionalized through the work of mission institutes and organizations within the church.[124]

Evangelii Gaudium, the first apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, focuses emphatically on the missionary task of the Christian community.[125] The document adopts the framework of the *missio Dei* and recognizes changing contexts in mission. The document explicitly denounces heroic ideals of mission.[126] Heroic ideals of mission enable an expansive agenda of mission since they value adventurist progression of territory. The territorial sense of mission is therefore abandoned. Instead, Pope Francis argues that all social peripheries must be reached with the

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[121] 'Ad Gentes', para. 2.

[122] Ibid. I consider the androcentric language in light of the section on gendering vocation highly problematic and a case in point for the argument that it is of paramount importance to bring the category of gender into the analysis of vocation.

[123] Ibid., para. 20.

[124] Ibid., para. 23. See for further information on the development of mission theology in *Ad Gentes*: Ross Langmead, *The Word Made Flesh: Towards an Incarnational Missiology* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004), 167.

[125] Stephen B. Bevans, 'The Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World', *International Review of Mission* 103, no. 2 (2014): 297–308.

[126] 'Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World (24 November 2013)', 2013, para. 12, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

message of the gospel.[127] *Evangelii Gaudium*, which was written half a century after *Ad Gentes*, promulgates therefore a different idea on the vocation of the church. In the words of Bevans: 'What once was considered a vocation for a few who worked in exotic places now has relevance for all ministers in all churches.'[128] The missionary vocation is not primarily clerical and is not connected with overseas or foreign mission. Every Christian is called towards discernment of the role and possibilities given by God in her/his obedience to the 'missionary mandate' of Jesus.[129] Pope Francis argues that discernment is a crucial element for all Christians to become involved in the *missio Dei*. Pope Francis articulates furthermore the hope that through the discernment process, Christians receive guidance towards the most fruitful way to step out of their comfort zones and to move instead to various social peripheries for the sake of the gospel.

How is the communal dimension of mission imagined in ecumenical documents? In the first place, the language of *Mission and Evangelism* (1982) stresses the necessity that the church aims at fulfilling her vocation. The language of fulfillment is used to exhort the church to give heed to her calling through both evangelistic outreach and social service. Fulfillment points to a vocation which is already known and is unchangeable. Instead of vocational language that is flexible and attuned to specific situations, the document employs a concept of vocation that assumes that the evangelistic vocation of the church is known and should be carried out undauntedly by the whole of the church. *Mission and Evangelism* distinguishes between the vocation of the whole of the church and the possibility of individual callings, a subject which will be explained in detail in the paragraph on community and individual.[130]

The WCC document on Mission and Unity Today formulates the vocation of the church as follows: 'Mission is central to Christian faith and theology. It is not an option but is rather an existential calling and vocation. Mission is constitutive of and conditions the very being of the church and of all Christians.'[131] The use of the word existential points to a profound awareness that the life of the church is fundamentally connected to mission. The existential calling refers to the constitutive element of mission for Christianity. Mission is the calling of the church. The use of vocational language in this document does not separate Christians from each other, but unifies Christians because vocational language refers to one common call. Yet, the concrete ramifications for Christian individuals and the interplay with the community remain unclear.

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[127] Ibid., para. 20.
[128] Stephen B. Bevans, 'New Evangelization or Missionary Church? Evangelii Gaudium and the Call for Missionary Discipleship', 2014, 25, http://vd.pcn.net/en/images/pdf/NEW_EVANGELIZATION_OR_MISSIONARY_CHURCH_Verbum_SVD_2014.pdf.
[129] 'Evangelii Gaudium', 19.
[130] 'Mission and Evangelism', paras 4, 6, 16, 25.
[131] 'Preparatory Paper No. 1: Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today', para. A.9.

A second document produced by the 2005 CMWE Conference equally places emphasis on the whole church. '1. We properly speak of God's mission (Missio Dei), a mission of tikkun olam (justice for God's creatures and healing for God's creation) in which the whole church is called to participate.'[132] This document conceives the mission of God as a mission of justice. The totality of the church has received a vocation to participate in this mission of furthering justice. The calling of the whole church is subsequently affirmed in *Together towards Life*:

> 'The missionary God who sent the Son to the world calls all God's people (John 20:21), and empowers them to be a community of hope. The church is commissioned to celebrate life, and to resist and transform all life-destroying forces, in the power of the Holy Spirit.'[133]

The interplay between the individual and the community is not the primary focus of *Together towards Life*, but the document affirms in clear language the calling of the whole church to be 'vibrant messengers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.'[134]

The following document under consideration is the Cape Town Commitment. The Cape Town Commitment is the result of the third Lausanne Conference, which was held in Cape Town in 2010 and can be considered to represent the contemporary evangelical movement.[135] Similar to other documents I have reviewed, the vocation of the whole church is affirmed in the Cape Town Commitment. The surprising twist surfaces in the fact that the calling of the church took place in a concrete circumstance: in and through the Lausanne gathering itself. This element is not present in the other documents I have reviewed. In the words of the document itself: 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. God's Spirit was in Cape Town, calling the Church of Christ to be ambassadors of God's reconciling love for the world.'[136] The pneumatological focus in this phrase is a consistent theme throughout the whole document. The communal focus of the Cape Town Commitment is not only extended to the church, but the document connects the calling of the church with the vocation of Israel as recorded in the Hebrew Bible:

> 'God calls his people to share his mission. The church from all nations stands in continuity through the Messiah Jesus with God's people in the Old Testament. With them we have been called through Abraham and commissioned to be a blessing and a light to the nations.'[137]

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[132] 'Preparatory Paper No. 7: Mission in the 21st Century', 2005, para. C.1. Underlining in original.
[133] 'Together towards Life', para. 2.
[134] Ibid., 8.
[135] Robert Schreiter, in the capacity as a "sympathetic outsider," has written a theological interpretation on the Cape Town Commitment. Schreiter, 'From the Lausanne Covenant to the Cape Town Commitment'.
[136] 'Cape Town Commitment: A Declaration of Belief and a Call to Action', 46.
[137] Ibid., 12. The statement continues: "With them, we are to be shaped and taught through the law and

This quote shows that the Cape Town Commitment considers the vocation of the church to be intertwined with the story of Israel as narrated in the Old Testament. As a consequence, the vocation of the church is not an isolated event, but should be read in the light of vocation narratives in the Old Testament. For my present purposes, it is important to note that a communal vocation can be discerned through a communal event in which the Spirit is acting.

In this section, I have reviewed two documents originating from the Catholic tradition, two documents which find their origin in the ecumenical movement and one document written by the global evangelical movement. An overview of these writings has allowed me to compare and connect the communal dimension of vocation. As has become clear from a comparison of the documents, an ecumenical consensus seems to have emerged regarding the vocation of the church. In all these documents, the totality of the church has received a missionary vocation and is consequently urged to share in the mission of God. The language employed by these documents is characterized by a clear universality in the statements regarding the nature of the church, without connecting these statements with the vicissitudes of daily life experienced by Christians. *Evangelii Gaudium* poses an exception, since Pope Francis is concerned with the discernment process of the individual Christian. The Cape Town Commitment, in addition, has connected vocation not with the individual life of Christians, but with the Holy Spirit who was present in Cape Town and who called the assembly in Cape Town to witness in mission. The goal of this section was not only to present a cross-section of the treatment of vocation in the most relevant mission documents, but also to find elements that have the strength to take our discussion further. Pope Francis clarifies the connection between the vocation of the whole church and the discernment process of the individual believer. Pope Francis, at the same time, bids farewell to any expansive paradigm of mission, by denouncing approaches of mission which are grounded in heroic ideas and territorial expansion. For this reason, I consider the contribution of Pope Francis to be closest to my own articulation of vocation. In the first place, Pope Francis denounces an expansive framework of mission but instead urges Christians to locate themselves at the social peripheries of life. Secondly, Pope Francis attends to the vocation of the individual in light of the vocation of the church. Secondly, Pope Francis attends to the vocation of the individual in light of the vocation of the church.

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the prophets to be a community of holiness, compassion and justice in a world of sin and suffering." Nevertheless, the connection with the story of Israel should not be asserted in a vacuum, but should be assessed within a careful discussion of both continuity and discontinuity. This comment shows how the Cape Town Commitment considers the vocation of the church to be part of the encompassing story of the covenant relationship of God with Israel.

5.4.3. *Vocation and Multi-ethnic Communities*

In the former paragraph, we have seen how the broad ecumenical consensus has closely aligned vocation, mission and the church.[138] In other words, the church receives a missionary vocation. Ecclesiology and missiology presuppose each other, but their relationship cannot easily be defined and described.[139] In this section, I am primarily interested in exploring the question of how the relationship between community and vocation can be imagined. I take, once again, my initial clue from Hahnenberg, since he places vocation within the realm of ecclesiology. In his words:

> None of this [the practice of openness in the context of vocation, EDH] can remain disembodied. Communal structures of support and accountability, a shared vocabulary, regular rituals, time with friends and a place of fellowship, tasks to accomplish together – this is stuff of the church.[140]

For Hahnenberg, discerning vocation through practicing openness places us within the force-field of the church. Although advocating for the connection between vocation and communal life, the vital importance of the work of God in the world at large should not be downplayed.[141] I ask therefore the fundamental question which ecclesial / communal context will provide the most beneficial points of contact for rethinking vocation in light of the postcolonial context of World Christianity. In light of this question, we need to ask another, equally as important question: What exactly is the nature of the church community?

Within missiology, some influential voices have placed the emphasis on the local church community. Significantly, Bosch emphasizes the priority of the local church. In his words: ‘The church-in-mission is, primarily, the *local* church everywhere in the world.’[142] Bosch borrows the primacy of the local element from the rediscovery of the local church in Catholic thought throughout the 20th century.[143]

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[138] This does not mean however, that this form of ecumenical consensus has not been contested. Most famously, Hoekendijk worked with a perspective that favored secularization and almost bypassed the church in favor of the reign of God. See for an overview: Kirk, *What Is Mission?*, 30–35.

[139] Cf. Bevans and Schroeder, who label ecclesiology one of their six constants, as Christians always need to grapple with the question: ‘What is the nature of the Christian church?’ Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 33–34.

[140] Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 190.

[141] The line of openness for the work in the world is prominently present in the work of Hoekendijk, the WCC conference in Uppsala in 1968 and in the recent WCC statement on mission “Together towards Life.”

[142] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 378.

[143] “The fundamentally innovative feature of the new development was the discovery that the universal church actually finds its true existence in the local churches; that these, and not the universal church, are the pristine expression of church (cf LG26); that this was the primary understanding of church in the New Testament and also the way in which, during the early centuries of our era, the church was perceived; (…).” Ibid., 380.

Mission is for Bosch primarily interpreted as the partnership and relationship between two churches, which are both local and part of the one, universal church:

> In the midst of the new circumstances and relationships there is still room for and need of individual missionaries, but only insofar as all recognize that their task is one that pertains to the *whole* church (cf AG 26) and insofar as missionaries appreciate that they are sent as ambassadors of one local church to another local church (where such a local church already exists), as witnesses of solidarity and partnership, and as expressions of mutual encounter, exchange, and enrichment.[144]

I have quoted Bosch at length to show that for Bosch, the possibility of missionary action hinges upon the relationship between two local churches. Missionary endeavors are enabled by two local churches which both acknowledge that they are connected to each other by virtue of being part of the universal church. The adoption of this viewpoint would mean that sustaining and nurturing missionary vocation would primarily take place within the local church community in order to proceed towards a mutual sending out of people. Yet, I consider the work of Bosch in this regard to be constrained by a rather static concept of what local entails, and I consider his remarks to be indicative of the time frame in which Bosch wrote his *magnum opus*. The same standpoint is found in the Manila Manifesto, which dates from 1989, two years prior to the publication of *Transforming Mission* in 1991. The Manila Manifesto states:

> We believe that the local church bears a primary responsibility for the spread of the gospel. (…) A church which sends out missionaries must not neglect its own locality, and a church which evangelizes its neighbourhood must not ignore the *rest of the world.*'[145]

In this statement, the local dimension of the church and the remainder of the world are contrasted with each other. Yet, in light of the progressing knowledge about hybridization and transnationalism, the simple dichotomy between the local and the global crumbles, and gives way to new articulations that stress the endless permutations of hybridized localities.

This development gives rise to the question: to what extent is 'local' the appropriate characterization of the church in an increasingly globalized world in which a multitude of transnational ties and allegiances are discerned? The plea for the primacy of the local church in mission seems therefore to be in need of considerable nuance when the very concept of local becomes destabilized.[146] The question regarding the interplay of the local and the global serves to consider

[144] Ibid.

[145] 'Manila Manifesto', 1989, 8, http://www.lausanne.org/manila-1989/manila-manifesto.html. Emphasis added.

[146] See for a further exploration the work of Emma Wild-Wood, who seeks to advance a "mission focused intercultural ecclesiology." Wild-Wood, 'Mission, Ecclesiology and Migration', 52.

which interplay between the community and the individual is most beneficial in fostering and nurturing vocation. In light of the plea for narrative, the narrative of mission that church communities act out among themselves receives central focus. I would therefore extend this argument and posit that fostering vocation will be most beneficial in multi-ethnic communities that are aware of their transnational ties and allegiances.

Multi-ethnic church communities, which are open about their translocal / transnational origins, ties and allegiances allow for narratives beyond crude dichotomies between the global and the local. In a multi-ethnic church community, geographically expansive ideas of mission become nullified, due to the intimate meetings of missionizers and missionized. Vocation and mission will, consequently, avoid becoming parochial and devoid from interaction with the wider world. Furthermore, Christian communities will open themselves up to find their place in the story of World Christianity. In line with Pauline thinking, if the church presents itself as a multi-ethnic body of believers, the church shows itself to be 'a visible and attractive sign of the kingdom, and thus as a sign of the very nature of the triune God.'[147] Recently, the study of multi-ethnic churches from the perspective of ecclesiology has gained momentum. Research focuses primarily on the situation in the United States, but mission studies seems to lag behind in adopting this framework.[148] Andrew Walls has laid, however, an important framework for advancing further upon multi-ethnic churches in mission, by elaborating upon the Ephesian moment in church history. The Ephesian moment indicates the removal of the separation wall between Jews and Gentiles, as is described in the letter to Ephesians. Walls extends this crucial moment to the continued inclusion of various ethnic groups in the Christian community.[149] As a multi-ethnic body of believers, the default idea (for the American context, but holds *mutatis mutandis* force for the Dutch context) of the church as the 'white church,' the unmarked church, becomes untenable.[150] The expression 'unmarked church' means the type of church which most easily comes to mind when one conjures up the image of 'church' without any further qualifying adjectives. The context in which vocation is articulated, narrated, checked, encouraged, discouraged and acted upon becomes profoundly different from church contexts which are not focused on creating and fostering (racially and ethnically) reconciling communities.

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[147] Lisa Washington Lamb, *Blessed and Beautiful: Multiethnic Churches and the Preaching That Sustains Them* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2014), 37.

[148] Efrem Smith, *The Post-Black and Post-White Church Becoming the Beloved Community in a Multi-Ethnic World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012); Kenneth A. Mathews and M. Sydney Park, *The Post-Racial Church: A Biblical Framework for Multiethnic Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2011); Kathleen Garces-Foley, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide : The Multiethnic Church on a Mission* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[149] Walls, 'The Ephesian Moment: At a Crossroads in Christian History'.

[150] Lamb, *Blessed and Beautiful*.

5.4.4. *Community and Individual*

In the section above, I have articulated my position on vocation, which tries not merely to balance the global and the local, but opts for placing the desired locus of vocation primarily within multi-ethnic church communities that are aware of their translocal ties. In this section, I will take these ideas a step further and will try to explain more acutely how the interplay between community and individual can be imagined. A wide- ranging diversity on the subject of the connection between the individual and her surroundings exists. This diversity ranges from the clerical Roman Catholic ideas which stress the authority of the bishop in vocational matters[151] to the pressing question for some Evangelicals: 'What if my spouse does not feel called?'[152] The official statements on vocation and community that we reviewed earlier in this section stressed the encompassing nature of the vocation of the church. This emphasis is theologically significant, but offers little guidance for securing a role for individuals. The problem with only emphasizing the vocation of the church is twofold. First, little room is devoted to outlining how individual Christians have the possibility to align vocation with their personal life. Second, the possibility of vocation in individual lives becomes hardly visible as long as the life choices of individuals are described only within the bounds of the general vocation of the church.[153] Yet, following the lead of Hahnenberg, I would like to argue that the acknowledgment of a personal vocation is indeed possible. In the words of Hahnenberg:

> (…) what faith-filled people are saying when they say that they 'have been called' to this or to that is not that they have found some hidden plan but that they have felt a profound resonance between their deepest sense of themselves before God and a particular path forward.[154]

In other words, individuals-in-community need to know whether the overarching narrative of the church-in-mission holds true for their own lives. This particular path forward that Hahnenberg proposes, will consequently be shaped and modelled by the possibilities provided in a particular faith community. As I have defined vocation earlier in this chapter as 'finding one's place in the story of mission,' the personal dimension of vocation should be imagined along the lines of person-in-community as opposed to a crude individualism. In the next marker of vocation, I will outline another aspect of the nature of community, by connecting

[151] "The only call that mattered for a candidate coming into the priesthood was the call of the bishop that occurred in ordination. It was not the inner experience of the individual but the external mechanics of the institution that determined a vocation." Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 47–48.
[152] Sills, *The Missionary Call*, 113–14.
[153] Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 126.
[154] Ibid., 231.

vocation to a presence of the suffering, oppressed and marginalized.[155]

If vocation is defined as finding one's place in the story of mission, it follows that vocation should not be defined as something that one either has received or has not received. Vocation is an integral part of being together in a learning, reflexive community of faith in which one learns about the ways and stories of mission and where the desire will grow and be nurtured to play a part in the *missio Dei*. As such, vocation is a dynamic concept and not a static situation pointing to either possessing a vocation or lacking a vocation. This concept of vocation contributes to solving the question of the 'one and the many.' In other words, it solves the discrepancy between the vocation of the whole church on the one hand, and the specialized / individual calling of just a few to go to the 'mission field.' The problem of the 'one and the many' comes to the fore in *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*. In the words of *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* is indeed a 'specific calling to individuals or communities to commit themselves full-time to the service of the church, crossing cultural and national frontiers.'[156] The solution proposed by *Mission and Evangelism* is to bring the argument of the 'symbolic concentration' into the discussion. In their words: 'the churches should not allow this specialized calling of the few to be an alibi for the whole church, but rather it should be a symbolic concentration of the missionary vocation of the whole church.'[157] Symbolic concentration means that the missionary activity of the whole church is concentrated in the actual persons who are devoting themselves full time to special services. As a consequence, they are not operating primary as individuals, but on behalf of the whole church. However, the landscape of mission is changing and, in the declaration *Together towards Life*, issued in 2013, the plight of individual missionaries slides into oblivion, and vocation of individuals is not mentioned.[158] The question of the 'one and the many' is therefore not so much resolved, as much as it is annihilated: within the vocabulary employed by *Together towards Life*, hardly any room exists to discuss specific roles and vocations. I would rather propose that resolving the question between the 'one and the many' is achieved by pointing toward the possibility that every individual has the privilege and opportunity to gradually discover one's vocation by nurturing and fostering one's vocation in community.

In the first place, vocation is not tied to the 'crossing of salt water'[159] but originates through gradual certainty and discovery of the role one might be able to play in a / the story of mission. The role of local congregations is important, since the question matters: of what congregation do you find yourself a part? Is this congregation effectively working towards racial reconciliation, towards gender equality

[155] Ibid., 233.
[156] 'Mission and Evangelism', para. 40.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Noort, '"So What?'
[159] Keith R. Bridston, *Mission, Myth and Reality* (New York: Friendship Press, 1965).

and towards radical justice? In the context of World Christianity, it matters enormously within which Christian community one finds oneself. Is this a community that tells stories about the life-affirming mission of God? Is this a church that connects itself in equal standing with other locals who bear the brunt of globalization forces? In a multi-ethnic and diverse congregation, one can enter a communal process of learning centered on the discovery of the depth of Christ's love (cf Ephesians 2). When one connects with multi-ethnic communities, one is thus allowed to shape one's sense of vocation in a distinct and different way, since the stories that are told in this type of congregations are different from stories told in congregations that cater mainly to dominant groups in society.

5.5. SPIRITUALITY

In the former section, I explored the role of community in vocation and argued to discern missionary vocation through multi-ethnic communities. In the present section, I explain the role of spirituality. Jan Jongeneel and Skreslet argued in their respective handbooks on missiology that mission would be void without a spiritual dimension.[160] In the words of Jongeneel, mission and mission theology are 'doomed to die' without 'missionary ascetics' to sustain both the discipline of missiology and mission practice.[161] The strong words used by Jongeneel seem to be indicative of general consensus that appears to exist in the discipline of missiology regarding the necessity to infuse mission with spirituality. Kirsteen Kim, in her pneumatologically focused discussion on mission, argues that mission activity will spiral downwards into activism without any genuine connection to the ultimate source, God, from which all mission activity flows.[162] In addition, the dimension of spirituality features prominently in the reflection on mission by ecclesial bodies. I will review at this point a proposal that aligns spirituality and mission to offer a contrast to the position I intend to take. The popular book by Susan Hope, which reflects upon the Church of England's document *Mission Shaped Church*, considers spirituality as its key focus.[163] Significantly enough, Hope connects mission spirituality with a sense of calling. In her words: 'To sum up, then, being conscious of 'calling,' of what-we-are-for-and-about, is a key motif in apostolic spirituality.'[164] Hope discerns a 'general call' towards mission, i.e. a vocation in which all

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[160] Skreslet, *Comprehending Mission*, 178.

[161] Jongeneel, *Missiological Encyclopedia: The Theology of Mission / Missionary Theology in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 2:17. Note that Jongeneel prefers the word ascetics over spirituality. Ascetics consists of contemplation, prayer, a missionary lifestyle in which holiness and the imitation of Christ are displayed.

[162] Kim, *Joining in with the Spirit: Connecting World Church and Local Mission*, 256.

[163] Susan Hope, *Mission-Shaped Spirituality: The Transforming Power of Mission* (London: Church House Publishing, 2006).

[164] Ibid., 12.

Christians share and in which they are called to be witnesses to the work of God in the world. Apart from the 'general call,' Hope identifies a 'specific missionary call,' which she interprets as a special calling towards specific people groups. Hope articulates a novel argument when she insists that the specific call towards clearly defined people groups isn't connected with the expansive, outward-focused model of mission that was foundational in the modern mission movement. Instead, Hope connects the specific missionary call to people groups in Britain, which she subsequently defines as various sub sets of the population, such as the elderly.[165] Consequently, her work plays upon familiar tropes of the missionary movement (vocation to specific people groups), but a reversal takes place: the outward dimension (expansion towards 'unreached' people groups) is replaced by an inward dimension (specific 'forgotten' groups within Great Britain). Although Hope takes a surprising turn in her juxtaposition of vocation, mission and spirituality, her direction is not the same as the position I seek to advocate in this section. The connection between general and specific calls toward mission was analyzed in detail in the earlier parts of the chapter, through my engagement with the work of Taylor. Taylor convincingly shows that the distinction between two vocations (religious and lay) leads to the establishment of various speeds in society and the implicit or explicit preference of one vocation over the other. The distinction between a religious and a secular vocation can also be applied to missionary vocations that proceed from an expansive framework. The result of the distinction will, in the final analysis, be that those who consider recipients of a specific vocation interpret their spiritual life and praxis on a different plane compared to those who operate under a general call towards mission. My discussion of the nexus between mission, spirituality and vocation will therefore not take the direction of discerning two types of vocation, as is the case in the work of Hope. Instead, as I have already put forth, I seek to define vocation as 'finding one's place in the story of mission.' As a consequence, the connection between vocation and spirituality will be sought in the resources and possibilities offered by an articulation of spirituality that aids the gradual discernment process in which one can discover one's place in the story of mission. In this section, I will employ three elements which, taken together, will be helpful in articulating my perspective on the indispensable role spirituality plays in the discernment process of mission. In the first place, I will discuss the role of the Spirit as a life-affirming force, being able to orient and focus towards the story of mission. This discussion gives rise to the articulation of spirituality as orientated to creation, as opposed to spirituality as an other-worldly or inwardly-focused force. Thirdly, in close connection to the second element, I will focus on the prophetic element of the spiritual dimension of vocation, arguing that vocational spirituality cannot be removed from challenging the status quo.

Before beginning the discussion of these three themes, one ought to keep in

[165] Ibid., 9.

mind that the discussion on spirituality should not be conceived as an isolated discussion, disconnected from the other themes I have outlined. Instead, I detect the presence of spirituality in the disposition that leads to the formation of community and the disposition in which one discerns the role one is about to play in the story of the mission of God. Through enacting and living within a (narrative) community of faith-filled people one finds oneself in the force field of spirituality. This broader understanding of spirituality is in line with research by C. Kourie and T. Ruthenberg, who primarily interpret spirituality as the lived experience of the Christian life.[166] These authors consider spirituality as denoting a much broader set of experiences compared to previously used terms, both in the Catholic and Protestant vernacular, such as 'piety,' 'quiet time' and 'devotion.' The influence of Vatican II is one of the seminal factors cited by Kourie and Ruthenberg to contribute to the development of an inclusive spirituality. Vatican II is considered to have opened up the horizon for a broader definition of the Christian life, interpreted not primarily within a clerical framework, but instead oriented towards the totality of the life of the Church.

Spirituality is always experienced in a concrete context. As a consequence, certain forms of spirituality can be life affirming, but other forms of spirituality might be able to, wittingly or unwittingly, lead to the harming of vulnerable life. Especially in a dissertation that takes postcolonial perspectives into account, spirituality can never be loosened from its concrete ramifications in the aftermath of colonialism. In the article 'Spirituality of Liberation: a Conversation with African Religiosity,' Vuyani Vellem argues that spirituality originating from the West as expressed within the modern missionary movement was co-opted by dominant expressions of empire.[167] Consequently, the 'expansion of Western Christianity became historically intolerant, authoritative and violent in other parts of the world, especially in Africa and more particularly in South Africa.'[168] In other words, the expansion of Western Christianity in South Africa turned sour and violent, and African ways of coping in the 'underbelly of modernism'[169] included developing and articulating a 'spirituality of sanity.'[170] A 'spirituality of sanity' functions as the antidote for the dehumanizing aspects of colonial rule. Vellem therefore argues not in order to withstand the inclusion of African spirituality in frameworks originating from the West, but instead to acknowledge African spirituality within its

166 C. Kourie and T. Ruthenberg, 'Contemporary Christian Spirituality: An "Encompassing Field"', *Acta Theologica* 1, no. 1 (2014): 76–93.
167 Vuyani S. Vellem, 'Spirituality of Liberation: A Conversation with African Religiosity', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 70, no. 1 (2014): 1–7.
168 Ibid., 2.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.

own context. African spirituality should gain equal recognition as a form of spirituality compared to the spirituality of the West.[171] In a similar vein, Desmond Van der Water calls for the necessity of 'revisiting our own spiritual wells,'[172] in an article in which he advances the basic agenda of a postcolonial missiology. Following the work of Vellem and Van der Water, I am therefore calling for a spirituality that decolonizes. In this respect, I find myself in disagreement with Kourie and Ruthenberg, who advocate the position that 'contemporary Christianity's universal character is congruent with the global perspective of our times.'[173] Against this optimistic view, one could wager the argument that a pervasive colonial legacy might act as a usurpation of other, non-Western forms of spirituality. A truly decolonizing stance on spirituality allows the proliferation of voices such as Vellem and Van der Water, who argue for the necessity of allowing the spiritual resources of those formerly colonized to receive equal value and validation.

5.5.1. *Pneumatological Priority*

In this section, I will sketch the contours on how the interpretation of *Together towards Life* is one of the primary sources for discovering the role of the Spirit in mission spirituality because of its ecumenical scope and continued emphasis on pneumatology. *Together towards Life* considers spirituality 'the source of energy for mission' and holds that 'mission in the Spirit is transformative.'[174] In other words, mission is fueled by spirituality. Mission, guided by the Spirit, leads to transformation. The pneumatological focus of *Together towards Life* is displayed in its call to follow the lead of the Spirit wherever the Spirit is at work in the world, working towards healing, justice and fullness of life for all.

The pneumatological emphasis should not be interpreted in opposition to the Christologically focused 1982 World Council of Churches document, *Mission and Evangelism*, although the emphasis of *Together towards Life* indeed signals a willingness to take new directions beyond a primary focus on Christology.[175] *Together towards Life* takes the doctrine of creation as its starting point for reflection on mission, and seeks therefore to restore the integrity of creation and to participate in the work of the Spirit wherever care for creation is extended. Regarding the relationship between Christology and pneumatology, *Together towards Life* isn't inclined to take position either for the standpoint that pneumatology should be primarily interpreted through Christology (paragraph 16).[176] Nor does *Together*

[171] Ibid., 1.
[172] Van der Water, 'Social Struggle and Faith-Based Activism in "Black Empowerment" Times. An Agenda for Postcolonial Mission-Sounding the Horn on Some African Perspectives', 12.
[173] Kourie and Ruthenberg, 'Contemporary Christian Spirituality', 84.
[174] 'Together towards Life', para. 104.
[175] Jongeneel, '"Mission and Evangelism" (1982) and "Together Towards Life" (2013)'.
[176] 'Together towards Life', para. 16.

towards Life affirm explicitly the position that the Spirit is also the source of Christ and freely roams the cosmos (paragraph 17).[177] The document reads therefore as a consensus document, in which both the Western traditions and the Orthodox tradition are juxtaposed, without taking a firm stand on either of the two positions. The fullness of life is described as a criterion for mission (paragraph 102). At first sight, the fullness of life would be connected to Christology since the fullness of life can be interpreted as a reference to Christ as the source of the fullness of life. Yet, Bard Maeland points out that the reference to fullness of life appears to be 'depersonalized' and that the connection with Christ is left implicit.[178] These two considerations suggest that *Together towards Life* is deliberately undecided with regard to the relationship between Christology and Pneumatology, and that it is up to the reader to determine which interpretation suits her/his theological framework. *Together towards Life* therefore cannot push us further in this issue, and so I turn toward the work of Amos Yong. Yong warns against an anemic theology of the Spirit, in order not to fall into the trap of a practical binitarian theology.[179] Yong, on the one hand, proposes that the *missio Spiritus* can never be divorced from the mission of Christ.[180] On the other hand, in accordance to Trinitarian formulations which distinguish between the works of the three persons of the Trinity, Yong leaves room for activity of the Spirit, connected but also distinct from the 'economy of the Son.'[181] A Trinitarian framework connects back to the *missio Dei*, and functions as a safeguard against placing the focus on the inner workings of the Spirit disconnected from the encompassing Trinitarian agency in the *missio Dei*. Kim likewise warns against a separation of pneumatology from Christology, i.e. a separation of the workings of the Spirit in the world apart from the work of Christ. The pressing need for a full Trinitarian account is evident in the fact that the Spirit was sometimes thought to be working independently of Christ. This position is most famously described in the words of Stanley Samartha, who argued that the 'two hands of the Father [i.e. the Spirit and Christ] in practice work sometimes independently from each other.'[182] I follow the line of thought of Kim, whose affirmation of the filioque safeguards the necessity to relate the work of the Spirit to the work of Christ. How does this affirmation play itself out in practice?

Concretely, I consider it of central importance to connect the discernment of the work of the Spirit in the whole of creation with a spirituality of discernment.[183] In an earlier article, aptly entitled 'God inside Out,' Bevans argues for the primacy

[177] Ibid., para. 17.
[178] Bard Maeland, 'A Free-Wheeling Breath of Life? Discerning the Missio Spiritus', *International Review of Mission* 102, no. 2 (2013): 145.
[179] Yong, 'Primed for the Spirit', 364.
[180] Ibid., 359.
[181] Ibid., 364.
[182] Kim, *Joining in with the Spirit: Connecting World Church and Local Mission*, 34.
[183] Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 293.

of the Spirit in mission, suggesting that 'the church will live out its mission worthily only to the extent that it allies itself with and is transformed by the Spirit. Only in this way can the church live in fidelity to her Lord, who himself was allied to the Spirit in his mission and was transformed by the Spirit's power.'[184] Concretely, the vocation process is therefore guided and oriented towards the work of the Spirit in creation. Through attuning oneself, in community, to the *missio Spiritus*, one will gradually acknowledge, receive and discern one's vocation in life. An individual's vocation will therefore never be disjointed from the preceding and initiative-taking work of the Spirit. Bevans suggests a continual process of orientation toward the activity of the Spirit, and stresses primarily the involvement of the totality of the church. In line with the challenge of Hahnenberg, who stressed the importance of outlining accounts of vocation that are geared towards the individual, and not merely towards the church as a whole, I consider it possible to extend Bevans's proposal to the life of individual Christians. More specifically, the primacy of the Spirit in mission, the *missio Spiritus*, leads to the challenge to align one's life to the transforming power of the Spirit, actively joining in with the work of the Spirit in reconciliation. In this respect, the process of vocational discernment and joining together with the work of the Spirit are intricately intertwined and can hardly be distinguished from one another. The process of discerning one's vocation is the process of discerning the workings of the Spirit in the wider world and actively seeking out ways to participate in the life of the Spirit.

5.5.2. *Orientation to the World*

The second characteristic of rethinking vocation from the perspective of spirituality is the outward orientation provided by spirituality: an orientation towards the world. In 1979, Bosch was hesitant to embrace missional spirituality because he considered spirituality to be an other-worldly affair. In his booklet *A Spirituality of the Road*, Bosch eventually embraced spirituality as pilgrim spirituality: a spirituality that is oriented towards the transient nature of the Christian life.[185] The reluctance expressed by Bosch signals a misconception of spirituality that can only be overcome by focusing on how spirituality is actively connected to the world. Recent articulations of mission spirituality have indeed coupled mission spirituality with dedication toward the world. The inclusion of creation care in the five marks of mission serves as a case in point.[186] Ross Langmead has developed the

[184] Stephen B. Bevans, 'God inside out: Toward a Missionary Theology of the Holy Spirit', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 22, no. 3 (1998): 102.
[185] Bosch, *A Spirituality of the Road*. Significantly enough, "spirituality" does not figure as an indexed word in *Transforming Mission*. If indexed, it would appear at page 575. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 575.
[186] Bookless, 'To Strive to Safeguard the Integrity of Creation and Renew the Life of the Earth (II)'; DeWitt, 'To Strive to Safeguard the Integrity of Creation and Sustain and Renew the Life of the Earth

concept of ecomissiology: the holistic approach of mission directed at transcending anthropocentrism. Ecomissiology gives rise to ecospirituality.[187] Spirituality, interpreted through a pneumatological lens, is oriented toward an understanding of creation in which the Spirit is at work. Ecospirituality is therefore an invitation toward closer engagement with creation as the locus of the *missio Spiritus*. A second line of thinking orients spirituality to the joining with the Spirit toward the establishment of Spirit-filled communities. As the Spirit connects individuals with each other in the body of Christ, the ensuing spirituality is therefore not focused on isolation or self-preservation, but is oriented towards communion and mutuality.[188] The first line converges in the work of Bevans, because he voices a plea for thinking about God 'inside out,' i.e. maintaining the primacy of discovering the work of God in the world through the agency of the Spirit. The final sentence of his *God inside Out* expresses the wish that the church will turn inside out, following the lead of the Spirit: 'Thinking missiologically about the Holy Spirit can turn the church inside out, perhaps making it more responsive to where God is really leading it in today's world.'[189] In statements like this, Bevans is clearly influenced by the work of Johannes Hoekendijk, who famously coined the phrase of the church-inside-out.[190] Hoekendijk, much criticized for his idea of considering the world, rather as the church, as the arena for the mission of God, and his subsequent embrace of secularization, still attracts a following in his vehement and scathing critique of all forms of eccleciocentrism.[191] I consider Hoekendijk to be a prophetic voice, whose vigilance serves as an iconoclastic impetus against complacent articulations of church and world. The emphasis on the centrality of the work in the Spirit squares with a re-appropriation of Hoekendijk's work based on the emphasis on the salvific and liberating activity of God in the world.

How do we connect an orientation to the world determined by a robust pneumatology, to an articulation of vocation? I suggest that the pneumatological spiritual dimension is primarily eccentric,[192] in the sense that pneumatological spirituality is outwardly directed, to the world, the arena in which the Spirit is at work. Vocation, as a process of discernment and guidance, becomes intertwined with the

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[187] Ross Langmead, 'Ecomissiology', *Missiology: An International Review* 30, no. 4 (2002): 505–518; David M. Rhoads and Barbara R. Rossing, 'A Beloved Earth Community: Christian Mission in an Ecological Age', in *Mission after Christendom: Emergent Themes in Contemporary Mission*, ed. Ogbu Kalu, Peter Vethanayagamony, and Edmund Kee-Fook Chia (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2010).

[188] Madge Karecki, 'Mission Spirituality in Global Perspective', *Missiology: An International Review* 40, no. 1 (2012): 25, 27.

[189] Bevans, 'God inside out', 105.

[190] Ibid., 102.

[191] Bert Hoedemaker, 'The Legacy of J.C. Hoekendijk', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 19, no. 4 (1995): 166–70.

[192] "Eccentric" is used in the literal meaning of the word, i.e. directed outwards. Bevans, 'God inside out', 102.

interpretation of the work of the Spirit in the world. Both Yong and *Together towards Life* orientate the *missio Spiritus* primarily toward the doctrine of creation. The fundamental orientation towards the role of the Spirit within creation serves as a way marker to consider the world the arena of mission, while subsequently orienting oneself to the worldly-directed calling of God.

5.5.3. *Prophetic Dimension*

We have seen how joining in with the *missio Spiritus* directs us towards the world, as opposed to a spirituality which is mainly directed inwards. In this section, I will suggest that this 'eccentric' orientation of the missionary vocation also directly challenges the status quo, and is characterized by a prophetic dimension. The prophetic dimension of the missionary vocation has enjoyed an upsurge of interest in missiology, which is mainly to be attributed to the work of Bevans, together with Schroeder. The inception of their work on prophetic dialogue is found in their 2004 landmark work *Constants in Context*,[193] and was further articulated in the 2011 monograph *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today.*[194] Most recently, the volume edited in 2015 by Cathy Ross and Bevans is centered on the idea of *Prophetic Dialogue*.[195] The modus operandi of Christian mission in the contemporary time frame is both prophetic and dialogical: mission is held in creative tension with both an active resistance against evil in the world and the gentle conversation with other contexts and truth claims. One of the reasons the idea of prophetic dialogue continues to gain influence might be its interaction between dialogue and the prophetic element: dialogue always retains its prophetic edge, and is therefore not supposed to be a mere coddling of one's dialogue partner. In the same way, prophetic actions are never carried out without dialogical sensitivity. Although the concept of prophetic action within missiology continues to catch on, the nexus of prophetic action, vocation and mission enjoys a more ambiguous legacy. The Lutheran legacy of vocation provided a strong critique against the two-tier system, in which a clear hierarchy existed between vocation to the clerical life and the life of the laity. Jürgen Moltmann considers therefore the vocational theology of Luther to be his third great insight, next to his ideas on the world and the sacraments.[196] Luther indeed paved the way for the possibility of aligning vo-

[193] The final section of the book is devoted to "mission as prophetic dialogue." Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 348–95.
[194] Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*.
[195] Cathy Ross and Stephen B. Bevans, eds., *Mission on the Road to Emmaus: Constants, Context, and Prophetic Dialogue* (London: SCM Press, 2015).
[196] Jürgen Moltmann, 'Reformation and Revolution', in *Martin Luther and the Modern Mind: Freedom, Conscience, Toleration, Rights*, ed. Manfred Hoffmann, Toronto Studies in Theology 22 (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 186.

cation with service in the world. He opened up the possibility of attributing positive value to this service, in line with the orientation towards the world, as was the attention of the former section. The positive dimension of Luther's klesiology, in line with the appraisal of Moltmann, needs to be retained. On the other hand, the limited possibilities that Luther's klesiology offers toward a robust critique of the status quo needs equally to be taken into account.

To this end, Hahnenberg discusses the criticisms raised by Karl Barth, Moltmann and Miroslav Volf respectively. One common thread in the critiques is that the perpetual tension between the call towards the world and the call towards the gospel has oftentimes been solved in the direction of prioritizing the worldly calling at the expense of the evangelical call.[197] The lack of attention towards the prophetic dimension of the Lutheran concept is notable as well in recent (missiological) articulations on vocation, for example in the work of Kathryn Kleinhans,[198] Scott Harrower[199] and Andrew Pfeiffer.[200] Their efforts in bringing a prophetic element to vocation are limited. The tendency to equate the particular point in life where one finds oneself in the present with one's vocation inhibits expressing the aim of transformation of unjust structures in society. This does not mean however that self-critical stances are totally absent. For example, Kleinhans critiques the way Lutheran klesiology has oftentimes either been 'domesticated or ignored.'[201]

Yet, it is not only Lutheran theology that has difficulty maintaining a critical edge. A lingering legacy of Catholic thinking signals the tendency to approach the question of vocation with the clergy in mind and. Consequently, theologies of vocation were developed that were mainly ecclesiologically focused and oftentimes attempted to understand the minutiae of finding the plan of God in the hiddenness of concrete life circumstances.[202] As a consequence, Hahnenberg discerns within mainline Catholicism an understanding of vocation that is both institutionalized and interiorized.[203] Hahnenberg warns against too much of an interiorization of a spirituality of vocation. According to him, 'today, Catholics continue to talk about vocation in ways that are both overly institutionalized and overly interiorized,' and instead pleads for 'a broader and more holistic vision.'[204]

While taking this legacy in mind, and while striving to incorporate a prophetic element in the spirituality of vocation, I turn once again to the work of Bevans and Schroeder on prophetic dialogue, to research what insights I can glean from their

[197] Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 25.
[198] Kathryn Kleinhans, 'The Work of a Christian: Vocation in Lutheran Perspective', *Word & World* 25, no. 4 (2005): 394–402.
[199] Scott Harrower, 'A Trinitarian Doctrine of Christian Vocation', *Crucible* 5, no. 2 (2013).
[200] Andrew Pfeiffer, 'Christian Vocation and the Mission of God: A Missing Link?', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 48, no. 3 (2014): 160.
[201] Kleinhans, 'The Work of a Christian', 397.
[202] Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 96–99.
[203] Ibid., 90.
[204] Ibid.

discussion on prophetic mission. Bevans and Schroeder discern four elements of the prophetic mission of the church, structured along the axes of speaking forth and speaking against on the one hand, and on the other hand making a distinction between witnessing with speech and without. Thus combined, four profiles of the prophetic witness of the church can be discerned. In the first place, speaking forth without words is subsumed under 'witness,' speaking forth with words is considered to be 'proclamation,' while speaking against but without using words is interpreted as 'being a contrast community.' Finally, speaking against while using words equals 'speaking truth to power.'[205] These four dimensions provide a structure to orient the prophetic witness of the church. Bevans and Schroeder make in passing a connection to vocation, when they consider that speaking out in the name of God occurs when 'people refuse to live lives worthy of their calling.'[206] The prophetic dimension allows one to assume accountability and to remind those within the Christian community when they are straying away from their callings. This particular prophetic function will only be effectual when practiced within a community, in particular within a community where the members have opened up about how they are orienting and discerning their life in the light of God's vocation. In my search for the connection between vocation, spirituality and the prophetic mission of the church, I emphasize therefore the community-focused dimension of 'calling out.' Calling out entails paying attention to community members who have difficulty aligning their vocation to the pressing demands experienced both from outside and within. The prophetic dimension of vocation is, thusly interpreted, characterized by an interpersonal element, but can also be applied to the element of discernment of one's own alignment of one's vocation with one's concrete actions in the world. Consequently, the prophetic dimension, as a critical force that seeks to align values with actual performances, needs to be effectual in one's personal life. Discernment plays a pivotal role in prophetic spirituality.

I turn now to the role of discernment in *Together towards Life*, in order to elaborate on the possibility of discernment of the spirits. *Together towards Life* calls for withstanding evil forces, empowered by the Spirit. *Together towards Life* broadens its pneumatology by reckoning with a multitude of spirits: evil forces in the world are real. The spiritual and pneumatological focus of *Together towards Life* is solidly grounded in contemporary reality since the document addresses the pervasive injustice caused and exacerbated by unbridled capitalism.[207] The Spirit, mission, and the prophetic dimension of 'speaking truth to power' are therefore interwoven in *Together towards Life*. In the words of the document:

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205 Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 43–48.

206 Ibid., 42.

207 Kenneth R. Ross, 'Together towards Life in the Context of Liquid Modernity', *International Review of Mission* 103, no. 2 (2014): 240–255.

> The Spirit empowers the church for a life-nurturing mission, which includes prayer, pastoral care, and professional health care on the one hand and prophetic denunciation of the root causes of suffering, transformation of structures that dispense injustice, and pursuit of scientific research on the other.'[208]

The prophetic witness is empowered through the Spirit, and speaks to the concrete injustices caused by spirits that denounce and harm life.

In summation, the prophetic dimension of vocation is empowered by the *missio Spiritus*, and is oriented toward speaking out against concrete injustices, as well as the discernment process of vocation. In this latter sense, the prophetic dimension serves as a force of discernment enacted to illuminate any deviations from the vocational path. The prophetic voice, attuned to the *missio Spiritus*, serves therefore as an important correctional force towards articulations of vocations which align themselves too closely to the status quo and lack therefore the imagination to work towards a more just and equal society.

5.6. 'THE' POOR

5.6.1. *Vocation, Discernment and 'the' Poor*

In this section, I am striving to forge a connection between the insights revealed in the epistemic priority of 'the' poor and the consequences these insights yield for rethinking vocation. Earlier in this chapter, I defined vocation as 'finding one's place in the story of mission.' I have subsequently explored the narrative dimension of vocation, the communal aspect of vocational mission and the necessity to root vocational discernment in spirituality. The narrative dimension describes vocation as the search for ways in which one can participate in the *missio Dei*. The advancement of missionary literacy is a necessity given the often confusing storylines of mission which are acted out in the present. Following the insights gained by exploring the narrative dimension, the dimension of community sought to safeguard vocation within a community of believers, and defined this community along the lines of a multi-ethnic community. A multi-ethnic community can contribute to both a diversity of stories told about mission and a variety of perspectives from which those stories are told. As a consequence, connecting vocation with community will, in all likelihood, prevent vocation from a connection to the mindset of expansion, since the consequences of an expansive paradigm will be discernable in the stories told by those whose personal and communal histories have made them aware of the colonial legacy. The third pillar of vocation that I have put forth is spirituality, in which I describe the path of discernment in finding one's

[208] 'Together towards Life', para. 7.

place within the story of mission. The presence with / being 'the' poor[209] and marginalized is a prerequisite for shedding colonial forms of mission and connects us to the heart of the mission of the church. In order to advocate for the presence with 'the' poor and marginalized, a careful definition of 'the' poor and marginalized needs to be developed. In addition, the theological incentives for connecting vocation and 'the' poor need to be more clearly articulated.[210]

The two most recent and significant official statements on mission make it clear that mission and the marginalized and 'the' poor are intricately connected. *Together towards Life* connects the partnership with 'the' poor and disadvantaged with the possibility of subverting lingering colonialist legacies. In the words of the document:

> Evangelism by those who enjoy economic power or cultural hegemony risks distorting the gospel. Therefore, they must seek the partnership of the poor, the dispossessed, and minorities and be shaped by their theological resources and visions.[211]

In other words, an honest engagement with the agenda and life of those who experience marginalization helps the church as a whole to overcome Eurocentric perspectives and this experience enables the flourishing of the totality of the church. These sentiments are echoed in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* issued by Pope Francis in 2013. The missionary vocation of the church is, in this exhortation, inherently connected with 'the' poor and exploited. Pope Francis explains: 'If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbors, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, 'those who cannot repay you' (*Lk* 14:14).'[212] The recent assertion by Pope Francis signifies the willingness to retain the connection between the evangelistic goal of the church and the presence with those who experience marginalized identities.

The missionary vocation, carried out by / with those who are considered poor, is therefore connected to the heart of the mission of the church. From various perspectives, for example by Roberto Goizueta, it is argued that the question of pov-

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[209] The phrasing of 'presence with / being 'the' poor' designates the desire to overcome the dichotomy between those who are called to be with 'the' poor and those who are actually themselves poor. The phrase should be read as 'either the presence with 'the' poor or actually self-identifying as poor. I will elaborate upon the typographic way of expressing 'the' poor in the next section.

[210] The reader should note here that this section does not treat voluntary religious poverty, but is rather concerned with involuntary poverty. See for an overview of religious poverty, Yuji Sugawara, *Religious Poverty: From Vatican Council II to the 1994 Synod of Bishops* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1997).

[211] 'Together towards Life', para. 98.

[212] 'Evangelii Gaudium', para. 48.

erty is not primarily a question of ethics. Although the history of theology suggests, as Bosch has pointed out, that poverty was primarily connected to the ethical response request of the church, the advent of liberation theology fundamentally changed the theology of poverty. The primary transformation is the location of the topic of poverty within epistemology.[213] The breakthrough of liberation theology in this respect can be summarized with the words of Gutiérrez, who defined liberation theology as 'an expression of the right of the poor to think out their own faith.'[214] The epistemological aspect is revealed both in the theological self-expression of 'the' poor and the knowledge of God who is revealed among 'the' poor. In the expression of Goizueta, to connect to 'the' poor is to 'believe in and worship a God who is revealed on the cross, among the crucified peoples of history.'[215] Following the lead of liberation theology, it becomes gradually clear that knowing God amounts to knowing the God who is manifested and revealed in His identification with 'the' poor.[216] In terms of vocation presence with 'the' poor means that this presence is foundational in knowing the God who calls.

5.6.2. *On Essentialization*

The instrumentalization of those who find themselves in a position of poverty and scarcity is a problematic phenomenon. I have, implicitly, tried to avert the problem of instrumentalization in the section on community, since I have pointed to the necessity, not only of inclusive communities, but of transformed communities: communities which are seeking vocational discernment in and through a transformation that a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural faith community can propel. As the reader may have noticed, I have chosen to write 'the' poor between inverted commas, and I have chosen to use a wide variety of designations for those who are marginalized, find themselves in situation of deprivation, are located at the 'underside of history,' etc. The usage of 'the' poor seems to receive an almost ontological status because of the frequent use of the article 'the' in connection with the noun 'poor.' Although Bosch seems to work with a strict distinction between those who are poor and those who are not poor, he deliberately sheds a Eurocentric perspective on poverty. In his words: 'they [the poor] now refused to be defined by the West, the rich, or the whites. The poor were no longer merely the *objects* of mission; they had become its *agents* and bearers. And this mission is, above all,

[213] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 437.
[214] As cited in Bosch, Ibid., 436.
[215] Roberto S. Goizueta, 'Knowing the God of the Poor: The Preferential Option for the Poor', in *Opting for the Margins: Postmodernity and Liberation in Christian Theology*, ed. Joerg Rieger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 144.
[216] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973).

one of liberation.'[217]

However, the uncritical usage of 'the' poor as a catchphrase runs the risk of a double reduction. In the first place, this phrase reduces 'the' poor to a distinct category: 'the' poor are reduced to 'them.' As such, by becoming relegated to the domain of 'them,' a disconnection is revealed between the 'them' and the 'us.' Moreover, this usage reduces 'the' poor to an imagined and constructed idea. The temptation of essentialization, homogenization as well as the widening of the distance between us / them leads to the necessity of articulating a new designation for 'the' poor. A modified designation reflects the deliberate attempts of a just representation of 'the' poor. Given the weight that the phrase 'the preferential option for the poor' carries in the history of theology, total abandonment of the phrase would signal a significant break with the legacy of liberation theology. Instead, by modifying the typography of the phrase I deliberately honor the legacy that is passed down from the last decennia.[218] Concretely, I propose to write 'the' poor between inverted commas. This typographical designation will serve as a reminder that 'the' poor are not a homogenous, essentialist group and that 'the' poor defy any form of essentialization. As such, I hope to have shown how typographical changes can be indicative of a wider agenda of advocating for epistemological justice. I find myself therefore in agreement with Kwok Pui-Lan, who has argued that the preferential option for the poor 'requires much unpacking if we are to avoid a monolithic construction of 'the poor'.'[219]

In advocating for the de-essentialization of 'the' poor, I take my inspiration from Joerg Rieger. He advocates vehemently for openness towards the margins, without presuming to speak *for* those who experience forces of marginalization. He is concerned about the phenomenon that even well-meaning attempts to formulate theory and press for action are steeped in mind sets of control and determination by those who possess conventional forms of power. Rieger identifies three levels of problems. In the first place, the status quo is often not challenged by taking a 'preferential option for the poor.' In the second place, the incorporation of the issues connected with those who experience marginalization often takes place when sanctioned by, and on the terms of those who occupy centrist positions. The third problem, consequently, is concerned about the generalization and homogenization resulting from lumping people together in one crude group. In Rieger's words:

[217] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 436.

[218] In a similar move, Stephan Bevans and Roger Schroeder have professed to reverence the work of Bosch by moving beyond and engaging with topics, such as reconciliation, which do not feature prominently in the work of Bosch. Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, 'Missiology after Bosch: Reverencing a Classic by Moving beyond', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 29, no. 2 (2005): 69–72.

[219] Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, 146.

> The problem with these generalizations has nothing to do with the familiar liberal argument that we should not “label” people and should consider them as “individuals” instead. The problem has to do with the fact that these generalizations are produced by positions of control – these generalizations are indeed not just aftereffects but direct manifestations of the power structures that repress these groups – and thus miss the reality of the people, hinder real options for the margins, and repress people even further.[220]

Generalization is not only problematic since it blurs the individual differences within groups, but is most of all harmful when those categories are designed by those with the power to define those categories.

Moreover, I am inspired by the work of the feminist theologian Namsoon Kang, who herself has made a similar typographic choice which reflects her aversion against any form of monolithic description of the word *Asian*. In her article ‘Re-Constructing Asian Feminist Theology: Towards a Global Feminist Theology in an Era of Neo-Empire(s),’ she opts for the designation of *Asian* in italics. As a result, current ideas about what constitutes *Asian* are destabilized. She is able to retain the usage of the word *Asian* itself and therefore does not alienate herself completely from conventional usage of the term.[221] She strongly opposes the discussion of Asian identity in a monolithic, ahistorical and essentialist way, but instead wants to draw attention to the diversity of experiences that are, sometimes falsely, harmonized under the moniker of Asian. She considers the monolithic rendering of the adjective of Asian to be a form of reverse orientalism, in which inhabitants of countries on the Asian continent constructed an overarching and stable identity of what the Asian identity signifies. As a result, they continue the idea of a monolithic and stable identity which was foisted upon the Asian continent by the process of othering effective in Orientalism.[222] Just as Kang has chosen to still work with the concept of *Asian*, I have chosen to retain the idea of ‘the’ poor. The resources gained from an intersectionality analysis, have showed that it is possible to be poor and still be privileged in other areas. For example, experiencing poverty while black will be different from being poor while white. The added burden of racism in raced societies will make it more difficult to access resources that might help to alleviate poverty. Similarly, poverty intersects with other axes such as gender orientation, sexual orientation, and ability. Intersectionality also has the ability to draw attention to the spatial distribution of poverty, thereby distinguishing how the experience of poverty varies in different locations.

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[220] Joerg Rieger, ‘Liberating God-Talk: Postcolonialism and the Challenge of the Margins’, in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera Rivera (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 211.

[221] Namsoon Kang, ‘Re-Constructing Asian Feminist Theology: Toward a Glocal Feminist Theology in an Era of Neo-Empire (S)’, in *Christian Theology in Asia*, ed. Sebastian C.H. Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 205–226.

[222] Namsoon Kang, ‘Who/What Is Asian?’, in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera Rivera (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 101–17.

Furthermore, as I have explained in the context of the Alliance of Vulnerable Mission, the simple binary between rich countries and poor countries no longer holds on the level of the individual. In a climate in which inequality is on the rise,[223] and in which a small minority owns the majority of capital, the question of the distribution of resources becomes more pressing than ever.

5.6.3. *Vocation as Presence*

Since missionary vocation is no longer interpreted primarily in a geographical way, various new possibilities are apparent in one's perception of vocation. In the first place, vocation can be considered as a presence. Hahnenberg distinguishes the *whither* of vocation, the call to something or someone, from the presence in the midst of suffering. In his words: 'The *whither* of vocation is neither an abstract role nor a particular career; it is – first and foremost – presence to the suffering, the oppressed, the marginalized, and the forgotten.'[224] The *whither* of vocation signifies the various concrete directions vocation can take. Hahnenberg further radicalizes this statement by pointing to the concrete presence with 'the' poor. In his words:

> It is precisely through presence with and on behalf of those who suffer that every Christian can come to a deeper recognition of her or his unique way of responding to God's call. The invitation to be with and for the poor is not the end of the discernment process. It is the beginning. For God speaks through the suffering of others.[225]

The radical nature of this statement consists in shifting the locus of finding the vocation of an individual person away from her/his own piety towards the broader horizon of the world. This idea, however, does not signify a downplaying of one's own spirituality, but rather locates the individual spirituality within the presence with / being the poor. The approach of Hahnenberg functions as an important corrective to a 'divinitative' approach to vocation. As I have discussed in tandem with an expansive paradigm of vocation, a 'divinitative' approach to vocation tries to determine the will of God by focusing on the interpretation of signs in order to discern which direction God wants an individual to take. The 'divinitative' approach is at odds with an emphasis on the presence with 'the' poor. The focus on the individual Christian is relativized further by the relational nature of being there *for* others. Being there *for* others can never be disconnected from *being with* others. Hahnenberg writes on this issue:

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[223] Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2014).
[224] Hahnenberg, *Awakening Vocation*, 233.
[225] Ibid., 195.

> Ultimately, the call to be *for* others is always a call to be *with* others, particularly with those who suffer unjustly. For it is in the sad but sacred darkness of solidarity with the poor that our senses are heightened, and we come to hear more clearly the voice of God.[226]

Vocation as presence is therefore primarily a presence with those who are currently marginalized. Attention to 'the' poor safeguards against a theology that is too clean and too clear-cut: vocation can never be 'abstract, individual and internal.'[227] As a consequence, the concrete and often gruesome facts of life should be encountered and reckoned with.[228] Missionary vocation can never succumb to a form of 'bourgeois religion,' since in the engagement with 'the' poor, the current status quo will be questioned.

5.6.4. *Orientation towards Praxis*

According to Bosch, describing the relationship with 'the' poor no longer solely in terms of ethics, but in theological and epistemological terms has significant consequences for mission. The renewed focus on 'the' poor is according to him 'a reaffirmation of an ancient theological tradition.'[229] As a consequence, the focus on 'the' poor has led to an 'increasingly unified theological perspective.'[230] The missionary vocation therefore never takes place in a void space, but is received and interpreted in concrete connection with 'the' poor. The act of engaging with the brokenness of life, both at home and abroad, can lead to the realization of one's vocation in life. As a consequence, the attentive listening to the concrete circumstances of 'the' poor, will lead to a discovery of the multifaceted nature of poverty and marginalization. Multiple sources attest to the diversity of poverty. For example, Johannes Baptist Metz identifies three distinct forms of poverty. In the first place, he discerns the poverty of the commonplace. 'The poverty of the commonplace is the form of poverty that is characterized by monotonous lives which lack the ability to improve upon their situation in life.'[231] In the second place, he recognizes the 'poverty of misery and neediness.' Christ shared in this particular form of poverty. In the last place, Metz describes the poverty resulting from a superiority complex. This dimension of poverty is not connected to the lack of material possessions, but is connected to a lack of fulfillment, community and authenticity. As a consequence, poverty is interpreted in a broader framework compared to an excessive focus only on material poverty. In a similar manner, Gutiérrez has de-

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226 Ibid. Emphasis in original.
227 Ibid., 201.
228 Ibid.
229 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 436.
230 Ibid., 437.
231 Johannes Baptist Metz, *Poverty of Spirit* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998 [1968]), 37.

scribed three forms of poverty. In the first place, poverty is for Gutiérrez the economical and material side of poverty: the inability to provide even for the basic necessities of life. Secondly, poverty as a spiritual condition signifies those whose lives are a testimony to being open towards God. Thirdly, poverty can be understood as the deprivation of dignity and quality of life.[232]

If vocation is defined as finding one's place in the story of the mission of God, enacted in communities of faith and discerned through an intimate awareness of the love and presence of God and in presence of 'the' poor, it follows that vocation is oriented towards praxis. As Goizueta has made clear, the option for 'the' poor is irrevocably connected with the lived and experienced faith of 'the' poor. To orient oneself towards 'the' poor is, fundamentally, to pray together to the same God and to learn to love and embrace the revelation of *who* Christ is with and for those who are poor and marginalized.[233] If the preferential option for 'the' poor is indeed to be enacted and to be perceived as a presence, it follows that it entails practicing the same spirituality as those who are marginalized and at the underside of history. As a consequence for vocation, the discernment of vocation takes place in the experience of lived faith together with those who are poor, excluded and marginalized. To recapitulate, the option for 'the' poor, which I have articulated in this section, leads to a transformed epistemology. The epistemology of the 'underside of history'[234] allows us to identify 'blind spots,'[235] i.e. areas currently out of reach for those who occupy centrist positions. As a result, advocating for the discernment of vocation in the accompanying presence of those who are marginalized, allows for broader perspectives regarding the ongoing marginalization mechanizations of the world. Consequently, the discernment process is guided by a more complete set of information, intuitions and awareness. However, caution should be applied in following this line of reasoning. I do by no means wish to exploit the presence of the marginalized. Instead, I point out ways to describe vocation in a way that is congruent with the profession of the church that God is a God of 'the' poor.

5.7. CONCLUSION

How does a theology of mission in times of World Christianity treat the subject of vocation? What possibilities are there to re-imagine a theology of mission when one takes into account the currents in World Christianity? I have shown that a

[232] Dwight N. Hopkins, 'More Than Ever: The Preferential Option for the Poor', in *Opting for the Margins: Postmodernity and Liberation in Christian Theology*, ed. Joerg Rieger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 133–35.
[233] Goizueta, 'Knowing the God of the Poor', 147–49.
[234] Rieger, *Remember the Poor*.
[235] Rieger, *God and the Excluded*.

theology of mission in times of World Christianity should forego all articulations of vocation that are grounded in territorial views of mission. For example, when an aspiring missionary feels called to a certain geographic region or to a specific 'tribe,' it signifies a territorial and expansive approach to mission. As a consequence, I have found that vocation and the modern missionary movement are intricately connected. The movement towards the 'mission field' is enabled by a strong sense of being called to mission. Various contemporary authors who are working with the concept of 'mission field' consider a strong vocation a necessity that helps to connect the missionary to the 'mission field' especially when difficult circumstances arise. My research pointed me therefore in the direction of a scrutiny of the 'mission field' itself, in order to articulate the colonial dimensions that lie behind the usage of this term. With the help of anthropological criticism of the notion of 'field,' I have been able to unearth the problematic and colonial ways of thinking that underlie the 'mission field.' The most important element of critique is that the 'mission field' enables the notion of a land that lies bare and that should be cultivated by the work of the missionaries, thereby disregarding local presence and agency. Missionary vocation as a contested concept is therefore intricately connected both with its geographical imaginations and its material disseminations. Vocation is a powerful constituent of transnationalism. I have employed the work of Taylor in order to highlight the inbuilt tension in the Christian idea of vocation. In the premodern order of society, a distinction between the higher vocations and ordinary life was an organizing feature of society. Still, the Christian faith demands total commitment of all believers, thereby nullifying the possibility of the multiple speed system. Interpreting the missionary vocation in the terms of Taylor, it follows that the tension between full dedication in the missionary enterprise and the commitment of the other believers warrants constant negotiation.

Another form of tension that I have detected is the discrepancy between the often inclusive ecclesial statements on vocation, and the obstacles that women oftentimes face when acting upon their vocation. I have therefore argued for the necessity to make vocation a gendered concept, and to apply intersectionality analysis in order to assess which axes of marginalization play a role in the possibility of living out one's vocation. Another dimension that needs to be discussed in an intersectional framework is disability, since the fourth chapter led me to argue to critically scrutinize if people with disabilities are considered less than by virtue of their inability to adhere to the norm of the strong, self-contained able body. Likewise, as we have seen in the first chapter, a tendency exists to apply pioneering work to those who are strong and able-bodied. I voice therefore my concern that preference for able-bodiedness should never be a determining factor in one's ability to recognize one's vocation and to live out this vocation.

Vocations are experienced and lived out in concrete circumstances. They are narrated stories: both to the self and to others. I consider therefore the category of

narrative a key element to interpret vocation, in order to highlight the story-character of vocation. Missionary literacy is consequently a key concept for interpreting the various conceptions on mission and their ramifications. I affirm the category of missionary literacy to argue that the discernment of vocation takes place in an environment that is attentive to the reality of mission. Missionary literacy is the basic ability to consider oneself as participating in the ongoing narrative of God's salvific activity in the world. The narrative dimension describes vocation as the search for ways in which one can participate in the *missio Dei*.

Following the insights gained by exploring the narrative dimension, the dimension of community sought to safeguard vocation within a community of believers, and defined this community along the lines of a multi-ethnic community. A multi-ethnic community can contribute to both a diversity of stories told about mission and a variety of perspectives from which those stories are told. As a consequence, connecting vocation with community will, in all likelihood, prevent vocation from being hoisted upon the mindset of expansion, since the consequences of an expansive paradigm will be discernable in the stories told by those whose personal and communal histories have made them aware of the colonial legacy. The third pillar of vocation that I have put forth is spirituality, in which I describe the path of discernment in finding one's place within the story of mission. I consider the predisposition that leads to the formation of community and the predisposition in which one discerns the role one is about to play in the story of the mission of God both to be saturated with spirituality. Through enacting and living within a (narrative) community of faith-filled people one finds oneself in the force-field of spirituality. This spirituality is characterized by a strong prophetic edge, in which vocation is discerned through the eyes of those who are marginalized or otherwise find themselves at the periphery of power structures. The pneumatological dimension of spirituality points to the role of the Spirit in furthering elements that are life-affirming while leading us to resistance wherever needed.

The fourth way-marker of presence with 'the' poor orients us towards the presence of God with 'the' poor. I have sought to tackle a monolithic construction of 'the' poor and suggested therefore writing the article between inverted commas. Avoidance of a monolithic rendering of 'the' poor is in this way safeguarded in typography. The emphasis on the experience of poverty in receiving and living out one's vocation destabilizes center and periphery once again. The emphasis on poverty helps to affirm the framework of One/Third and Two/Third Worlds, since this framework is able to account for poverty within what is commonly regarded as the West. Foregrounding the experience of poverty as a privileged locus for receiving vocation shows the necessity of broadening church congregations beyond their often middle-class base. It is with and as 'the' poor that individuals and communities gain knowledge of their vocation.

The claim that vocation is not mainly directed towards a location but is con-

ceptualized as a presence has huge implications in turning the ontological expansiveness accompanying cross-cultural mission efforts upside down. If vocation is a presence, it does not adhere any more to conventional expansive modes of imagining mission. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the impetus of vocation has no ramifications for the crossing of borders. On the contrary, being present is a radical activity that questions conventional ways of imagining center and periphery. Together with dismantling a geographically expansive way of framing mission, the way center and periphery are conceptualized will become problematized. Vocation builds upon the articulation of presence in the margins and presence in the borderland in the previous chapter. The emphasis on narrative will question any vocational narrative that centers exclusively on the construction of a 'mission field.' The focus on the instrumentality of multi-ethnic communities of faith questions, in roughly the same way, the construction of an expansive vocation since it centers on the experience of formerly missionized people and their story-telling. Prophetic spirituality actively engages with the perspective of the margins in order to obtain a perspective on injustice and resistance that is hidden from the dominant perspective. Lastly, the presence with 'the' poor signifies the willingness to discern one's vocation from the God who himself has articulated a preferential option for the poor.

6. Conclusions

6.1. POSTCOLONIAL MISSION IN WORLD CHRISTIANITY

This dissertation has defended the thesis that a viable way to imagine postcolonial mission encounters is through the awareness of a vocational narrative that comes into being through encounters, not only with one's own marginality and vulnerability but with the marginality and vulnerability of others. I have showed how a postcolonial missiology combines vocation, vulnerability and marginality in new ways in order to imagine mission anew: located in the borderlands through following the marginalized Jesus-Christ, leading to a fruitful and shared vulnerability which allows one to live one's vocation as a vulnerable presence at the margins. Mission, in this constellation, is vulnerable, vocational presence in the borderland.

I reached this conclusion through a critical assessment of the current context of mission theology by scrutinizing the ways in which current conversations and actions are complicit in tacitly upholding a worldview that is not in line with the recent discoveries of how an actively decolonial position can be imagined. I have proposed that the most viable way to embark on a decolonial journey is through vulnerable openness and presence, a presence which is in the borderland of society and which recognizes the missional vocation in the midst of marginality.

This dissertation has first sought to identify the context in which mission conversations are taking place within the Netherlands. Subsequently, problems were identified concerning the way these conversations were framed. In the first place, I have tracked the emergence of the missional discourse in the PCN. I greatly appreciate the new missionary élan that arose after the church merger in 2004, which resulted in the birth of the PCN. It is therefore my sincerest hope that my comments will be read as an attempt to reflect theologically on the contemporary mission of the church and as a plea to the PCN and Dutch churches in general to engage more deeply with the postcolonial context in which we currently find ourselves.

However, it is not only the framing of these conversations that are problematic. The very manner in which they are carried out - activities, language and perspective - are problematic also. As this thesis demonstrated, most missional activities are currently structured in a 'come-to-us' format, in many occasions without ecumenical cooperation. In addition, I found the discourse on pioneering problematic, embroiled as it is in colonial and oftentimes masculine hero-discovery language. The emphasis on local contexts leads to a disconnection with the transnational character of church and mission, especially when international mission is mainly carried out through collecting money to support projects abroad. The result of this disconnection to the transnational character of the church is that a truly postcolo-

nial praxis is not attained, since many forms of contemporary mission remain parochial. A truly postcolonial mission will be attained through a double integration: in the first place, the integration of the national and the international, and in the second place, the integration of Christians with a heritage in the Netherlands and Christians with a background of migration. Behind this conclusion lies the awareness that a truly postcolonial mission cannot come into being without a postcolonial church.

This dissertation has therefore focused on identifying World Christianity and the postcolonial condition as the defining elements that should shape contemporary mission. This focus was reflected in the research question, which sought to reimagine mission encounters in this context. In order to answer the research question, I have modified the perspective of World Christianity significantly in order to make room for a planetary awareness of the World. This new perspective embraces pluriformity, alterity and transnationalism, while at the same time challenging the language of the global with its concomitant problem of extending the logic of geographic expansionism. Within this new perspective, one need not abandon mission altogether, especially given the problems that arise when mission is replaced with development. The discourse of development is inherently caught up with the narrative of progress that is attained in the Western hemisphere and needs to be imported to less developed regions of the earth. The noun 'encounter' in the research question is therefore a signal that mission can only proceed on the basis of radical equality between the various conversation partners. This equality is not attained easily, and my espousal of vulnerability can therefore be read as one long argument for the practical implementation of this virtue. As such, the postcolonial character of this dissertation is realized in the continued insistence in destabilizing the rigid boundaries between inside and outside and, most poignantly, between the national and the international. The response to the rightfully perceived shame of the colonial legacy can never be close-minded parochialism and provincialism. Reflected in the Dutch proverbs, 'jezelf terugtrekken binnen de dijken,' literally meaning 'to withdraw behind the dikes,' is the withdrawal within one's own safe world and perspective. It is my argument that this form of withdrawal is detrimental to an engagement with our colonial legacy. I instead propose that the solution lies in an awareness of the colonial past and an integration of the colonial past in our *zelfverstaan*; the way we understand ourselves.

To 'reimagine' means in the context of this research question to provide compelling, comprehensive theological themes that are able to be carried out both on an individual level, on the level of churches deciding about the direction their mission efforts should take, and on the level of mission organizations which are plotting strategic courses of action for the future. The creative act of imagining is understood as a decolonial imagination, which actively needs to be trained in order to distinguish the mixture of remaining colonial attitudes and neocolonial mutations. The act of reimagining is closely connected to the image of the world as planetary. This foundational act of reimagining sees the world as profoundly interconnected and interdependent, and acknowledges the radical alterity that the

planet poses in light of human actions. The image of the world as planetary questions the rationality of the global, which is tied to a colonial logic of manageability [*beheersbaarheid*]. The creative act of imagining also takes place through *imagining* the self: the self as fundamentally vulnerable and in that capacity open to the empowering presence of the divine. This is necessary to counter ingrained and often unchecked privileges and attitudes which are hampering decolonizing mission.

The definition of mission that guided my research proved to be fit for answering my research question. I posed that mission results from interpersonal encounters in the postcolonial context of World Christianity characterized by the witness to the life-giving and life-affirming Triune God and is consequently characterized by mutually beneficial border crossing. Boundaries must be crossed in order to inhabit the borderland and leave behind by the nation-state as the primary ordering principle of mission. The Dutch context is decisively shaped by its colonial past and an actively decolonial stance will explicitly address the lingering colonial legacy. Thirdly, mission encounters are shaped by the willingness to forego the crude binary of national / foreign or national / international. Questioning this distinction has its roots in the acknowledgment that the machinations of empire not only decisively shaped colonized people, but additionally altered the very structure of the centers of empire.

It is expected that this way of defining mission will prove useful beyond the confines of this dissertation, since this postcolonial definition can be applied to articulations of mission which focus on other generative themes, such as the theme of reconciliation. I expect that this definition of mission can inscribe a postcolonial awareness within these articulations, since it helps to probe deeper to the causes of estrangement and the need for reconciliation. Furthermore, the emphasis on encounter can aid as a general corrective against articulations of mission that are more focused upon collecting and distributing funds than on the interpersonal encounter across human-made boundaries. The value of mission lies first and foremost in the vulnerable encounter, not in a managerial approach which prefers the distribution of funds over the fragile openness of true encounters.

My proposal to interpret mission through personal *encounters* aids to anchor mission practices in the heart of the life of the church. Although the idea of mission as integral to the Christian community is by no means new, my emphasis on vulnerability helps to secure mission as a spiritual practice for all members of those communities. In this dissertation I have not only advanced a way outward, a way towards the world, but also a way inward, a way in which missional spirituality can be cultivated through connection with the hybrid Jesus-Christ, and to align our vulnerability to His vulnerability. This dissertation has through its actively decolonial stance therefore been able to propose a decolonial spirituality, a spirituality of openness that simultaneously acts as a catalyst to address one's hidden ideas of racial superiority.

I have sought therefore to provide an analytical space where these missionary encounters can be both analyzed and, on theological grounds, interrogated. The

need to rethink missiology in a time of World Christianity does not lie in the presumed statistical shift of the center of gravity to the Southern hemisphere, because this oversimplified narrative constructs an almost ontological difference between the Southern and Western hemispheres.

My perspective on World Christianity is to a large extent influenced by the desire to question the essentialization of particular areas within World Christianity. Recognition that the current ordering of the world – especially the division into continents – has its roots in the colonial period, warns against an essentialization of these areas. A continental division that ultimately rests on the division of the 'West versus the rest' is problematic therefore because of the homogenizing that occurs when this dichotomy is used as a primary interpreting lens I take from Mohanty her insistence on creating a conceptual space for those communities that are marginalized when the fiction of the powerful and affluent West is perpetuated. Importantly, any conceptual framework that attempts to do justice to World Christianity should focus on the underrepresented communities. Most poignantly, this can take the form of the epistemological importance of indigenous populations within North America and Australia. In terms of the context of the Netherlands, this dissertation revealed that this focus on underrepresented communities should be directed on Christian communities which are largely made up of Christians with a history of migrations. These communities are oftentimes not considered as part and parcel of normative Dutch Christianity and are as a result sometimes exoticized. In order to do epistemic justice to the presence of migrant communities in countries commonly associated with the West, it is necessary to adopt different terminology that accounts for their presence. I find this terminology in the proposal to speak about the One-Third and the Two-Third World. This terminology does not focus on geography, but rather upon the unequal distribution of power. In addition, this designation reveals the fractures within World Christianity and allows for the splendid and irreducible complexity of World Christianity.

The postcolonial field of inquiry has proven to be an indispensable tool in the analytic toolkit in the study of World Christianity. The discursive field of postcolonialism reveals the instances of neocolonialism that permeate the current manifestations of global Christianity. It is in the complex interplay between colonialism, postcolonialism and neocolonialism that World Christianity needs to be interpreted. One of the key insights for this dissertation gleaned from postcolonial theory is that the Western metropolis should scrutinize its own history from the perspective of empire. The implementation of the history of migrants in the narrative of postcolonial history will prove that the distinction between the national history of a nation-state on the one hand and the more or less disjointed tale of migrancy on the other hand, is spurious. For missiology, this perception on national history problematizes an essentialized distinction between national and migrant churches.

6.2. SPATIAL METAPHORS

My critical discussion on spatial metaphors yields perhaps the most concrete results that can be used by various mission organizations and local churches in order to evaluate their mission practices in a postcolonial light. The innovative strength of this proposal lies in its bold use of postcolonial geography. Postcolonial geography and missiology are by no means strange bedfellows, but find a helpful concurrence in their research agendas since both disciplines are deeply invested in the study of spatial practices.

Borrowing the concept of tropicality proved to be especially useful, as tropicality is an environmental and geographic form of othering, in which essential characteristics are ascribed to people living in tropical climate zones. Tropicality as the twin partner of Orientalism, provides a more detailed description for the process of othering in the tropics than can be expected of Orientalism. Postcolonial geography proved to be useful to expand on my stance of World Christianity. Area studies, both within geography as within missiology, can ultimately be traced back to colonial ideas about manageability and the intention to search for essentialist traits or qualities that are contained within a given region. Instead, the proposed alternative is to imagine the world from the perspective of planetarity. Planetarity is opposed to the category of the global, since the global carries with it the relentless economic forces that play such a large role in neocolonialism. The category of the planetary is grounded upon the irreducible otherness of the planet. The planetetary perspective therefore questions the man-made distinctions of continents and countries. Instead, the planetary is the location of profound interconnectivity and interdependence. The engagement with the planetary dimension is not just an abstract feature, but points to very concrete courses of actions that can be undertaken to make mission practices more postcolonial. It urges churches in the first place to scrutinize to which extent they have fallen under the spell of the global, with its concomitant lure of perceiving the world primary through the lens of economic rationality.

The emphasis on planetarity answers in part the research question, since it gives an answer to a new way of imagining mission that is thoroughly postcolonial. Furthermore, this engagement critiques the usage of categories that are ultimately at home in a colonial framework. I have therefore scrutinized how the concepts of mission field, homeland and frontier are together upholding a perspective of the world that is out of place in a planetary framework. Those three concepts all clearly demarcate the world into different sections and ascribe an almost ontological difference to them. As such, they are involved in the spatial distribution of difference and otherness. The mission field and the homeland are two sides of the same coin, and when used together paint a powerful picture of a geographically expansionist mission. The frontier is closely connected to the spatial ordering of civilization and savagery. Additionally, the frontier is inherently expansive, since the frontier requires continually pushing forward in order to be considered a frontier. I recommend therefore to stop using this term within a decolonial framework of mission.

The same holds true for the mission field, or broader, the usage of field. I consider it a necessary step to abandon the usage of the (mission) field altogether, since this terminology inevitably conjures up images of a land that lies bare and is in need of cultivation by a missionary / pioneer. The verb 'to pioneer' is similarly bound up with colonial legacies of the male pioneering hero. Yet, I consider many of the current pioneer sites by the PCN to be prime examples of creativity and inclusivity and marked by the desire to put into praxis the life-giving example of Jesus-Christ in a new context. In other words, it is a missed chance to group innovative and bold new practices under the header of a worn-out term that is steeped into colonial memories. In addition, the emphasis on pioneering reveals the strong influence of Anglo-American literature and praxis, and I have argued forcefully in my dissertation to destabilize this influence in favor of localized theologies. I think it is therefore high time that the PCN recognizes the unique and contextualized contribution to mission praxis they are already making by their bold wish to establish 100 pioneer sites, and do themselves a favor by rephrasing the overarching terminology of pioneering.

The spatial metaphor of the border proved to be more complex because it contained both positive and negative implications for mission encounters. On the one hand, the crossing of borders can be a signal of an expansive mindset if accompanied by entitlement to this crossing. This entitlement can be indicative of white privilege, since white privilege considers every space accessible for white people. Border crossing as a constructive practice still can play a role in mission theology because this type of border crossing can be modeled upon Jesus-Christ the border crosser *par excellence*, whose engagement with the border and the borderland challenged centrist thinking. I conclude therefore that the engagement with the border primarily should consist in engaging with the logic of the border and the destabilizing of borders that prove to be detrimental to human flourishing. This contextual engagement should therefore to be read as a call to action. Since the border functions as an actively used metaphor within the discourse of mission, I urge mission practitioners to scrutinize their own ways of living with the border.

This scrutiny might be uncomfortable, since it might very well be possible that one's engagement with the border is expansive and retains the vestiges of white privilege. A fruitful engagement with the border can therefore be successful only when two factors are present: in the first place a willingness to engage with the discourse of racism, in order to determine which acts of border-crossing rests in white privilege. In the second place, one should actively search for the instances where borders still function as barriers that prevent the Ephesian vision of inclusivity to become enacted. Concretely, as I showed in the first chapter, the PCN engages not all cultural milieus of the Dutch society. The boundaries of these cultural milieus serve as barriers that can, through careful engagement with culture and meaning-making within these various cultural segments, be overcome. The renewed missional fervor that is currently exhibited in the PCN is a welcome sign that the church takes her commission seriously to be a witness across various cultural segments. My research has anchored the necessity for the missional witness

of the church much deeper than has currently been expressed: I have anchored the necessity for crossing borders within the heart of Christology, within the hybrid Jesus-Christ himself, who subverts the logic of the center and invites us to follow Him to the borderland.

6.3. MARGINALITY

The discussions on marginality served as a way to anchor this concept as a generative theme in a postcolonial mission theology through a Christological entrance. I have engaged with the work of theologians who themselves have experienced multiple forms of marginalization in their life and who use these experiences as a fruitful lens for reflecting on the marginality of Jesus-Christ. These authors embrace Jesus-Christ as the one who traversed the border of the human and the divine and located himself in various margins. Through the deployment of the authors Elizondo and Goizueta, it has been possible to take the social location of Jesus in Galilee as a key element for developing a missiology of marginality. Jesus identifies himself with Galilee, the borderland, and through the identification of Jesus, we acknowledge that Galilee forms a guarantee for the continuation of mission in the same way. A contemporary mission theology therefore finds inspiration from, and connects itself to, the borderlands of Galilee. From Koyama I gained an entrée in the marginality of Jesus-Christ through emotions. It is through being moved by the scandalousness of Jesus-Christ that one either accepts or rejects the opprobrious life of Christ. As such, this 'scandalousness' helps to uncover where centrist logic is subverted and turned upside-down. Mission from the margins is scandalous but follows the scandalous Jesus-Christ who has, through his crucifixion, gone to the utter periphery.

The problem I detected in the work of Koyama is that he employs a static and essentialist idea of center and periphery. The solution is therefore to adopt the proposal of Phan and to speak of the 'margin-center.' The margin-center shows that the margins have become the locus of Christ's redemptive love and that they as such have been transformed into a focal point. The logic of the margins remains intact. I use the work of Lee to argue that it is possible to consider the agency of Jesus-Christ in the margins as a new form of 'center.' Therefore, by adopting both Phan and Lee's proposals, one can speak either of the margin-center, creative core or focal point. Through the espousal of the creative core, it is possible to heal the wounds that are inflicted by a rigid dualism. Because Jesus-Christ as a hybrid figure transforms the meaning of divine and human, Jesus-Christ functions as a 'wounded healer' to the distorting and distorted logic of centrist positions. Healing takes place by the experience of the freedom that arises from being liberated from a suffocating identification with the logic of the center. Implementation of these Christological ideas would help the church to be aware of their own subject positions they are taking within debates about the Dutch public domain. The contribution to public theology can be through this proposed Christology that is able to

critically scrutinize the construction of contemporary centers and to focus attention instead to the various margins in which Jesus-Christ the wounded healer is already present.

A reappraisal of marginality is especially necessary in the postmodern condition. As postmodernity is characterized by depthlessness, the epistemological priority of the marginalized fades out of sight. Within late-capitalism, it is near impossible to discern how consumerist societies are sustained by the oppression of those on the 'underside of history.' However, I consider this a danger, as the phrase 'underside of history' can be used to commodify people who experience various forms of marginalization. Their life stories can never be reduced to an epistemological tool towards a greater good. The provocative question of Spivak, who asks whether the subaltern can speak, remains in this context as relevant as ever.

The deployment of intersectionality theory solved two problems that I encountered in the theological literature on marginality. In the first place, marginality is oftentimes considered to be binary in nature: one either is marginal or one belongs to the center. However, this idea does not do justice to the real and lived experiences of people who experience marginalization. Margins are distinct but interlocking, and it is possible to experience marginalization in one area (for example: disability) while experiencing privilege in another area (for example: racial identity). Intersectionality theory shows how various subject-positions produce interlocking positions of both privilege and oppression. Intersectionality therefore enables multi-axial and anti-essentialist accounts of marginality. Through employing intersectionality theory, I explained in more detail how the option for the margins is not predetermined, but needs to be discovered anew in various contexts. The construction of a monolithic center and a clearly identifiable periphery, especially when considered in spatial terms, is a result of colonial thinking. This colonial legacy makes it all the more pressing to abandon the outdated monolithic idea of the margins/periphery within theology and missiology.

The other problem solved through intersectionality theory is the commodification of 'the marginalized.' Commodification ensues when one considers 'the marginalized' as one group that one should attend to and uphold to in order to give one's theology credibility. When removing the us/them distinction in favor of a more complex account generated by intersectionality, the risk of commodification of 'the marginalized' is minimized.

Close attention to the logic which constructs marginality enables a critical scrutiny of articulations of World Christianity that covertly construct the West as the center of World Christianity. In addition, the employment of marginality as a foundational concept shows that a neutral and disembodied place to practice postcolonial theology is a fiction. The 'margin-center' therefore indicates a new focal point for imagining mission. Following his logic, this focal point extends to World Christianity. The 'margin-center' allows for an emphasis on intersectionality, since the 'margin-center' does not form a monolithic framework, nor does it succumb to an essentialist perspective. Instead, 'margin-centers' are mediated by a complex history. The 'margin-center' is already inaugurated through Jesus-Christ

the border-crosser *par excellence*, and its manifestation continues throughout the history of the church. By allowing the logic of the 'margin-center' to guide the history of Christianity, Eurocentric perspectives on this history will consequently be destabilized. The complex history of World Christianity is a history of the 'margin-center' that constantly seeks to materialize itself, even though it remains largely invisible from the perspective of empire. An advocacy for the 'margin-center' therefore amounts to a decolonizing stance. Mission rests assured in the promise of Galilee: the mission of Jesus-Christ will continue in the borderlands; in the same way the movement began.

6.4. VULNERABILITY

Intersectionality allows us not only to reimagine marginality through multiple axes, but also to imagine vulnerability as a multifaceted concept instead of a monolithic idea. The Christological design that I have defended informs the way in which I engage vulnerability within a postcolonial mission theology. Jesus-Christ turned the conventional idea of the center and margin upside down and instead lived an alternative, vulnerable life. Jesus-Christ displays in his life the vulnerability of not being contained by previously known categories. Jesus-Christ revealed his character through living his life in vulnerability, an example that is expected to be imitated by His followers. The theological anthropology of vulnerability as a shared human condition nullifies a distinction between those who are considered marginal and those who presume the power to depict others as marginal. Informed by the perspective of vulnerability, marginality becomes a shifting and unstable concept, since marginality is performed and assigned differently in each context. A theology of shared vulnerability therefore critiques the construction of vulnerability as something that is assigned to destitute persons by virtue of their marginalized status.

I have therefore sought to articulate a definition of vulnerability in mission which was theologically grounded, first of all, in the *pathos* of God and secondly in the incarnation of Christ. The literature review showed that, although the attention to vulnerability within mission studies is on the rise, not enough fundamental research has been carried out to the ramifications of vulnerability. I have therefore sought to transcend articulations of vulnerability that construct a dichotomy between Western mission workers and dependent receivers, which is the consequence of the theology proposed by the *Alliance for Vulnerable Mission*. Instead, I have emphasized the shared nature of vulnerability as openness toward each other and towards the divine. Vulnerability as openness actively strives to dismantle invulnerability in its myriad manifestations. Invulnerability is recognized as a deliberate strategy to fence oneself off against the perspective of both the divine and the human other. As such, strategies of invulnerability are closely connected to the autonomous, rational and self-contained ideal of Enlightenment thinking.

The advancement of vulnerability in missiology provides an alternative to the

ideal of invulnerable autonomy because this prohibits connectivity and consequently connection to the source of human flourishing. Invulnerability leads to ignorance because willful ignorance dismisses critical scrutiny and enables invulnerability. Vulnerability opens instead a window to the world and allows the perspective of the other to function as a mirror to reflect back hidden dispositions of superiority, thereby leading to a decolonial stance. The folly of invulnerability becomes even clearer when considering the insights of disability studies. The experience of disability undermines the ideal of a rational, autonomous, individual and invulnerable self. People with disabilities cannot ascribe to this ideal, but they are not exempt from a life full of human flourishing. This invulnerable ideal is therefore neither attainable nor desirable. The resources from disability studies put forward a strong case for the disastrous character of invulnerability, since the full humanity of people with disabilities is implicitly questioned. The resources developed within disability studies serve as an important building block to propose a theology of mutuality, in which human flourishing is realized through interdependence, openness and community.

Although emphasizing the necessity of engaging with vulnerability, I do not advocate a shallow adulation of this idea, since I recognize that human openness has been abused in the past and continues to be abused in the present. The work of Papanikolaou, in which he illuminates the mechanism of the violation of vulnerability, has been instrumental in reaching this conclusion. The violation of vulnerability leads to the destruction of the right form of vulnerability. The right form of vulnerability is a vulnerability that acknowledges community and interdependence as a source of human flourishing, and which acknowledges that the innate vulnerability of humans allows for either harm or blessing.

There are thus two trajectories that can be taken when one is confronted with one's existential, irredeemable and inalienable vulnerability.

Existential vulnerability → invulnerability → aggravated / wronged vulnerability.

Existential vulnerability → acknowledgment of vulnerability → Community / connectivity / planetarity.

In the first place, the encounter with one's own condition can lead to a cover up of one's own frail state and therefore leads to invulnerability. Unfortunately, the invulnerability of one person can easily lead to the wronged vulnerability of other persons. To illustrate, this takes place when one individual deliberately denies her involvement in the perpetuation of racist micro-aggressions, leading to the wronging of the vulnerability of the one who is the recipient of these micro-aggressions. The second response is an honest acknowledgment of one's own vulnerability. Consequently, this awareness leads to the possibility of community and connectivity, since the recognition of shared vulnerability enables openness and mutuality. In the final analysis, this recognition can lead to a planetary awareness: an awareness of inhabiting the planet together in ways that transcend a purely global

and thus economic imagination. The implication for the churches is that vulnerability has an ecological dimension as well. The acknowledgment of vulnerability, leading to a planetary consciousness, leads to a renewed attention to the vulnerability of non-human life and the ethical imperative to be mindful of this vulnerability.

From Papanikolaou I learned that two common responses to the violation of vulnerability are either unhealthy dependency or the pursuit of a hardened independence and invulnerability. In this dissertation I suggest that this mechanism is not only applicable to inter-human relationship on a small scale, but could also manifest itself on a much larger scale. From this observation it is only a small step to recall the violation of personhood that took place on a large scale during the colonial period and during mission encounters during that time. The violation of vulnerable personhood takes place through racial superiority and condescending attitudes towards the religious other. As a consequence, the unique personhood of the other is not properly recognized. It is therefore not surprising that the violation of vulnerable personhood during colonial mission encounters has resulted either in widespread dependency or hardened independence. Precisely at this point the necessity for 'disagreeable mirrors' comes to the fore in order to be able to see clearly the damage that has been done.

In light of the continued harm that is perpetrated through violating vulnerability, and in light of our advanced understanding of the circle of responses to vulnerability, we should search for ways to react adequately to our own vulnerability. I have argued that one's reaction to vulnerability should be connected to the meaning of *kenosis*. Jesus-Christ voluntarily shunned through the act of *kenosis* harmful forms of (patriarchal) power. As I learned from Coakley, the *kenosis* of Jesus-Christ should be interpreted with regard to the *human* nature of Christ. In the context of this research, this means that it is possible to follow the mindset of Christ (Philippians 2:5) and to actively undo ourselves from coercive power. The willing abnegation of coercive, patriarchal power is a prime example to be followed for Christians who not only want to acknowledge their innate vulnerability, but also want to practice vulnerability in daily life. This is only possible when one is vulnerable in relationship, in order to allow disagreeable mirrors to show oneself where one indeed clings to coercive power. For the followers of Jesus-Christ, the possibility of self-emptying opens up. This self-emptying is not to be understood as a negation of the self, but is instead an acknowledgment of human vulnerability in order to seek God's empowerment. This practice of self-emptying is described as power-in-vulnerability. The power-in-vulnerability depicts a subversive stance in which one deliberately empties oneself of abusive ideas of power.

The employment of disagreeable mirrors leads us to the importance of resistance: a willful emptying of abusive power. I learned therefore from the work of Gandolfo, with on the background Schillebeeckx, about the necessity of allowing contrast experiences to guide the search for justice. The communal focus of responding to vulnerability lies in telling the truth, not only by and for oneself, but within communities and for the benefit of the healing process that commences

when one finds acknowledgment of one's violated vulnerability.

At least four consequences for mission in a vulnerable mode can be distinguished, that not only form part of the answer to my research question, but are also applicable as way markers for living an honest life in openness, mindfulness of the human condition and relationality. First of all, mission carried out through an affirmation of one's intrinsic vulnerability points towards the concreteness of our bodily existence. Being vulnerable in the world defies the categories of national and international. Vulnerability is not enacted specifically in a foreign territory, since to do so would bring in mind the tropes of either Orientalism or Tropicalism, in which specific regions of the world are associated with the danger of the unknown. For mission this means that vulnerability in a postcolonial framework effectively takes place within a transnational, planetary framework.

Second, a mindfulness of vulnerability keeps the window of vulnerability open, and actively resists those forces within the world that aim to minimize this window. The window of vulnerability provides us with critical tools to interpret the signs of the times and forcefully speak out against such practices as the unlawful detaining of people who are labeled 'illegal' and practices of tightening border control. By implementing my ideas on the subversion of the logic of the border through lodging *in* the border, and by engaging closely with the myth of the border, the window of vulnerability can be kept open.

Third, mindful practices of vulnerability contain the possibility to address the colonial legacy in terms of either unhealthy dependence or invulnerability as logical responses to the condescending attitudes perpetuated in mission praxis. This dissertation does not propose a 'solution' to these consequences, but rather proposes a framework in which to analyze the way they came into being. It would be preposterous to suggest a solution to a constellation of events and attitudes as all-encompassing as a colonial mindset. Instead, I offer the possibility to cultivate the virtues of humility and silence.

Finally, a refusal to honestly assess one's own vulnerability leads to an aversion of difference. Instead, honoring one's own vulnerability and the frailty of the life of the other will ultimately lead to pathways towards human flourishing. Honest mission encounters are characterized by the vulnerability to accept the offer of the other as a 'disagreeable mirror' and to function as such a mirror for others. Vulnerability is therefore an essential characteristic of mission encounters in the postcolonial context of World Christianity.

6.5. VOCATION

Vocation does not erase vulnerability, but rather affirms it as the human context in which one's vocation is recognized. The denouncement of invulnerability also bears upon vocational theology since embracing vulnerability consequently means that one's vocation is also vulnerable. Concretely, this entails that one's vocation is not set in stone, cannot be owned, but can be surrounded by questions, afflictions

and uncertainty. Yet, I would argue that one's vulnerable vocation allows the openness towards the other and towards God to guide one's vocational process. Fluidity, rather than inflexibility, overconfidence and a form of vocational hubris, forms the context in which the vocational process unfolds. The emphasis on vulnerability means that vocation can never be imagined in an ableist framework. Physical and mental health will not be the ultimate criterion for living out one's vocation. The same holds true for the various marginalizations one might experience in life. The critical edge of vocation therefore has the possibility to subvert a centrist logic, since centrist logic values the vocational process of those with various forms of privilege. This dissertation offers a consideration of mission through the lens of marginality and vulnerability, resulting in the possibility of receiving one's vocation precisely *as* vulnerable and *as* marginal. Vocation consequently operates on an altogether different logic from a geographically expansionist logic. Postcolonial vocation bids farewell to the male tropes of the pioneering missionary. Instead, postcolonial vocation searches for the contributions of women to vocation. Women oftentimes are excluded from vocation praxis, even though most vocational expressions explicitly describe the missional vocation of the church. Especially the conflation between pioneering, the mission field, and the missionary call are problematic aspects.

In light of these concerns, the discussion on vocation and mission is directly determined by the contextual need to engage in a decolonial position. In order to apply this agenda to the topic of vocation, it is of paramount importance to research the history of vocational mission. I have shown that a theology of mission in times of World Christianity should forego all articulations of vocation that are grounded in territorial views of mission. For example, when an aspiring missionary feels called to a certain geographic region or to a specific 'tribe,' it signifies a territorial and geographically expansive approach to mission. As a consequence, I have found that vocation and the modern missionary movement are intricately connected. The movement towards the 'mission field' is enabled by a strong sense of being called to mission. Various contemporary authors who are working with the concept of 'mission field' consider a strong vocation a necessity that helps to connect the missionary to the 'mission field,' especially when difficult circumstances arise.

Missionary vocation is therefore intricately connected both with its geographical imaginations and its material disseminations. As a consequence, the enactment of missionary vocations is a powerful constituent of transnationalism. The work of Charles Taylor is fundamental in understanding the inner structure of vocation, as it explains the presence of vocation as an ordering principle in premodern and modern societies. The Christian faith demands total commitment of all believers, thereby nullifying the possibility of a system which acknowledged various forms of vocation. Interpreting the missionary vocation through the insights of Taylor shows that the tension between full dedication in the missionary enterprise and the commitment of the other believers warrants constant negotiation.

Four foundational dimensions can aid a decolonial missionary vocation. In the first

place, narrativity is a key element to interpret missionary vocation, since narrativity provides stories about what it means to participate in the *Missio Dei*. In the context of a multiplicity of vocational stories, some stories will find themselves at home in a geographically expansionist framework of mission, while some vocational stories will actively support a decolonial position. I have therefore proposed missionary literacy as a key competency for postcolonial mission. Missionary literacy denotes the ability to assess stories about vocation and scrutinize them regarding their decolonial potential. The constructive potential of missionary literacy is expressed as the ability to consider oneself as participating in the ongoing narrative of God's salvific activity of the world. This narrative dimension describes vocation as the search for ways in which one can participate in the *missio Dei*. I defined vocation therefore as 'finding one's place in a/the story of mission.' This definition acknowledges the presence of narratives of vocation that are fundamentally open to the interruption of both the human and the divine other.

Following the insights gained by exploring the narrative dimension, the dimension of community sought to safeguard vocation within a community of believers, and defined this community along the lines of a multi-ethnic community. A multi-ethnic community contributes to both a diversity of stories told about mission and a variety of perspectives from which those stories are told. As a consequence, connecting vocation with community will, in all likelihood, prevent vocation from being hoisted upon the mindset of expansion, since the consequences of an expansionist paradigm will be discernable in the stories told by those whose personal and communal histories have made them aware of the colonial legacy.

The third dimension of vocation that is integral for a decolonial theology of vocation is spirituality. Spirituality connects the praxis of vocation to the heart of the *missio Dei* by focusing on the living relationship with the divine, a relationship that is enacted through power-in-vulnerability. I describe the path of discernment as finding one's place within the story of mission. There is a spiritual element to finding one's place in a community where one can discern the role one is about to play in the story of the mission of God. This spirituality is characterized by a strong prophetic edge, in which vocation is discerned through the eyes of people who experience marginalization in its multiple forms. The pneumatological dimension of spirituality points to the role of the Spirit in furthering elements that are life-affirming while leading us to resistance whenever vocational narratives become closed or restricted to geographically expansionist versions.

The fourth dimension – presence with 'the' poor or being poor – orients us towards the presence of God with 'the' poor. I have sought to tackle a monolithic construction of 'the' poor through my emphasis on the definitive article; 'the.' This element connects back to insights on the chapter on marginalization, and engages with a non-monolithic perspective on poverty. However, I have sought to preserve the fundamental insight of liberation theology of God's preferential option for the poor. As a consequence, vocation can never be discerned within a framework of privilege and from within a centrist perspective. As I have explained

in my discussions on vulnerability, one needs the presence of 'disagreeable mirrors' to expose one's hidden prejudices and implications with injustice. The same holds true for the presence with 'the' poor since, from the perspective of poverty, the distinction between life-giving and life-denying forms of vocation can be made.

These four building blocks together form a decolonial theology of vocation; a vocation that can be considered as a presence. Together they provide an answer to the research question, which sought to develop a missional theology in the post-colonial context. These four building blocks are to be read in tandem with the results of the preceding chapters on marginality and vocation and indicate the necessity to locate vocation on the margins, in the borderland, while shunning invulnerability and espousing vulnerability instead. The claim that vocation is not directed towards a location but is about *being present* has considerable implications in turning the ontological expansiveness accompanying cross-cultural mission efforts upside down. If vocation is a presence, it shuns geographically expansionistic modes of mission. Nevertheless, this does not mean that one's vocation never leads to the crossing of borders. On the contrary, being present is a radical activity that questions conventional ways of imagining center and periphery. Not only does being present dismantle an expansionist way of framing mission, it also problematizes the way in which center and periphery are conceptualized. Vocation therefore builds upon my articulation of the margin-center. The emphasis on narrative will question vocational narratives that center exclusively on the construction of a 'mission field.' The focus on the instrumentality of multi-ethnic communities of faith interrogates the construction of an expansionist vocation since it centers on the experience of formerly missionized people and their storytelling. The prophetic spirituality actively engages with the perspective of intersectional marginality in order to obtain a perspective on injustice and resistance that is hidden from the dominant perspective. Lastly, the presence with 'the' poor signifies the willingness to discern one's vocation from the God who himself has articulated a preferential option for the poor.

In order to articulate a robust postcolonial missiology, as I set out to do in this dissertation, we need to combine the following conclusive elements: marginality, vulnerability and vocation. When taken together, as the title of my dissertation shows, they point to a vulnerable vocation at the margins. The intersectional missionary vocation takes place at multiple margins, in the borderland, because Jesus Christ located himself at the borderland. Through locating oneself in the borderland, one remains vulnerable because one is not located in the center, thereby subverting older spatial metaphors of mission. This vulnerability challenges the invulnerability contained in mission and vocation, and instead leads the way towards openness, mutuality and reciprocity through following the vulnerable Christ.

6.6. FURTHER RESEARCH

This thesis has been written between 2010 and 2016, a significant period within mission studies, characterized by the publication of multiple landmark declarations on mission. In 2010, the Edinburgh centenary conference took place, as well as the third Lausanne Conference, each of which resulted in a declaration that outlined future directions for mission. *Together towards Life* was published in 2012; *Evangelii Gaudium*, the first exhortation by Pope Francis, in 2013. These documents show the vibrancy of reflection on mission in the contemporary world. However, the past few years have shown only a gradual upsurge of interest in the articulation of explicitly postcolonial missiologies. The same holds true for the advancement of intersectionality analysis in mission: only towards the end of my research period were a couple of articles published on this topic. I look forward to a period when it becomes routine for mission theology to articulate postcolonial theology along the lines of intersectionality analysis. In light of the ongoing reflection on mission theology, I will articulate three areas, one for each thematic chapter, which can hopefully be fruitfully explored in future publications.

The chapter on marginality scrutinized the works of Elizondo, Goizueta, Phan, Jeong, Koyama and Lee. These authors themselves use their complex location and hybrid identities as a constructive source of theologizing. Yet, these theologians all are connected with North America. There is, however, a pressing need to stimulate constructive theological work from the perspective of first, second or even third generation migrants to the Netherlands. The development of theologies from a hybrid Surinam-Dutch or Indonesian-Dutch perspective would have helped tremendously to ground this dissertation more firmly in the specific postcolonial context of the Netherlands. I hope to see these theologies develop in the near future, but in order for this to be possible, the mutual recognition between theologies developed in the diaspora and theologies from the perspective of national churches need to be expanded. One promising development is the commencement of a Master Program for ministers with a background of migration. It is my hope that the theologies developed at this program will be made available as sources of creative theologizing.[1]

The chapter on vulnerability could benefit from a deeper exploration of the connection between invulnerability and racial superiority, since constructions of invulnerability and ignorance help to maintain positions of white privilege. Research from this angle is carried out in critical race theory, but needs more robust articulation within the discipline of missiology. I expect that missiology would benefit greatly from these resources in order to tackle lingering racist dispositions within contemporary mission practices. The Dutch colonial legacy could, in this respect, be more explicitly addressed, especially in terms of how this legacy has influenced race relationships. Resources that are specific to the Dutch colonial era,

[1] https://cvandaag.nl/eerste-opleiding-voor-christelijke-migrantenvoorgangers-aan-vu/ (accessed March 30, 2016).

for example, the Dutch relationship with Surinam and Indonesia, are urgently needed to contextual anti-racist work in the Netherlands.

Finally, the discussion of the term of missionary literacy could be developed further, possibly outside the realm of vocation and within the realm of narrative theology. In what way could missionary literacy be developed further in order to buttress involvement of the totality of the community of faith? How could we develop resources that boost missionary literacy and spur action? Missionary literacy provides a concrete guideline for mission organizations and parachurch organizations to scrutinize their communication in a critical manner. In turn, this critical scrutiny helps these organizations to evaluate the extent to which their work contributes to the fostering of a climate within which missionary literacy can flourish.

Dutch Summary

Deze dissertatie heeft de stelling verdedigd dat kwetsbaarheid en marginaliteit onmisbare begrippen zijn om postkoloniale missie in de context van het wereldchristendom opnieuw te doordenken. Ik ben daarbij geholpen door het begrip roeping, dat ik interpreteer in het licht van deze begrippen als een radicale aanwezigheid in de context van gemeenschappen die conventionele begrippen van centrum en periferie omkeren. In de navolging van Jezus-Christus, de grensganger die de goddelijke en menselijke natuur in zich verenigde, in het grensgebied, opent zich de mogelijkheid op om geroepen te worden om je plek in te nemen in het verhaal van de *missio Dei*.

Deze studie situeert zich in de wending naar het wereldchristendom, een manier van bestudering van het wereldwijde christendom die transnationale verbindingen benadrukt en daarmee het Westen als centrum van normatieve theologiebeoefening in vraag stelt. In plaats daarvan stelt deze visie de gemeenschappen centraal die niet of nauwelijks deelnemen aan het mondiale theologische debat en zoekt het naar wegen om te komen tot een vorm van theologiebeoefening waarbij de *subaltern* daadwerkelijk kan spreken. Ik gebruik daarom postkoloniale literatuur waarin gewaarschuwd wordt voor de schadelijke gevolgen van een binair onderscheid tussen binnenland en buitenland. In plaats daarvan onderstreep ik het postkoloniale karakter van Nederland als voormalig koloniale macht. Zo is de instroom van grote groepen migranten, zoals in 1975 na de onafhankelijkheid van Suriname, een onderdeel van de nationale geschiedenis van Nederland en niet een gebeurtenis die daarbuiten staat. Deze postkoloniale blik maakt het daarom ook mogelijk om het strikte onderscheid tussen migrantenchristenen en de vaak zonder verder onderscheiding aangeduide 'christenen' in vraag te stellen.

Mijn overzicht van het huidige discourse over missie zoals dat in de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland gebezigd wordt evalueerde als eerste het hernieuwde missionaire elan positief. Juist vanwege de grote missionaire bevlogenheid, die bijvoorbeeld blijkt uit het voornemen om 100 pioniersplekken te starten, heb ik ervoor gepleit om deze praxis te doordenken vanuit het postkoloniale perspectief dat met een omarming van het wereldchristendom gegeven is. Uit mijn onderzoek bleek echter dat de scheidingslijnen tussen binnenland en buitenland vrij strikt getrokken worden, en dat christenen met een migratiegeschiedenis vaak niet actief bij missionaire activiteiten betrokken worden. Verder kan de oecumenische inbedding vaak actiever gezocht worden. Ook een woord als pionieren, dat een cruciale rol speelt in het huidige spraakgebruik, wordt niet kritisch onderzocht op de koloniale bagage die dit woord met zich mee brengt.

In mijn tweede hoofdstuk heb ik daarom een diepteanalyse gegeven van een aantal termen die een belangrijke rol spelen in het missiologische discours. Ik heb

vooral gekeken naar de geografische impact die deze begrippen kunnen hebben. De geografische dimensie van missie houdt in dat missiepraktijken vaak specifieke relaties aangaan met de ruimtelijke omgeving waartoe zij zich verhouden. Zo kan een bepaald gebied bijvoorbeeld aangewezen worden als zendingsveld of als pioniersplek. Ik heb in dit hoofdstuk de hulp ingeroepen van postkoloniale geografie als mijn gesprekspartner, omdat deze discipline ook actief bezig is om haar koloniale erfenis in vraag te stellen en daarom een belangrijke bijdrage kan leveren aan het bestuderen van de wisselwerking tussen geografie en missiologie. Het begrip planetariteit, dat ook breder in postkoloniale theorie een rol speelt, voornamelijk in het werk van Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, is daarbij een kernbegrip. Planetariteit stelt het woord *global* in vraag als een begrip dat is gekenmerkt door een primair economische opvatting van de wereld en uitgaat van verdeelbaarheid en beheersbaarheid. Daartegenover staat planetariteit als de onvervreemdbare alteriteit van de aarde en de daarbij dus ook de mogelijkheid om de aarde als één ondeelbaar geheel in te denken.

Dit tweede hoofdstuk heeft de begrippen *frontier*, zendingsveld [*mission field*], thuisland [*homeland*] en grens [*border*] onderzocht op hun mogelijkheid om deze te gebruiken in een postkoloniaal discours. Ik concludeerde daarbij dat de frontier zeer problematisch is omdat de frontier altijd op expansie gericht is: de frontier moet steeds verder opgeschoven worden. Juist deze geografische expansie kan niet verengd worden met een postkoloniaal perspectief omdat de frontier altijd een harde grens veronderstelt tussen geloof en ongeloof, christendom en heidendom, beschaving en wildernis. Ik stel ook voor om het begrip zendingsveld niet meer te gebruiken omdat het zendingsveld het koloniale beeld oproept van een leeg veld dat gereed is om gecultiveerd te worden door zending en evangelisatie. De tegenhanger van het zendingsveld, het thuisland, kan in de context van het wereldchristendom nooit het primaire vertrekpunt van missie zijn. Het thuisland biedt een geromantiseerd beeld van eenheid en homogeniteit die het in werkelijkheid niet bezit. Het beeld van de grens daarentegen is complexer: aan de ene kant is Jezus-Christus de grensganger bij uitstek, die gedurende zijn leven de beperkende grenzen tussen rein en onrein, Jood en niet-Jood, Galilea en Judea in vraag stelde. Aan de andere kant moeten hedendaagse grensgangers goed onderscheid maken tussen bevrijdende vormen van grensoverschrijding in het spoor van Jezus-Christus, en grensoverschrijdingen die ingegeven zijn door het gevoel recht te hebben om ongevraagd elke (geografische) grens over te steken.

Deze analyse leidt in het derde hoofdstuk tot een verdere verkenning van hoe het begrip marginaliteit kan dienen als een alternatief voor de besproken termen met een koloniale bagage omdat marginaliteit de mogelijkheid heeft om strikte binaire tegenstellingen te bezien vanuit het perspectief van de marge. De belangrijkste bron voor een theologie vanuit de marge zijn theologen die hun eigen levensverhalen verbinden met de marginaliteit van Jezus-Christus en vandaaruit op zoek gaan naar een nieuwe manier van nadenken over centrum en marge. Van

Orlando Costas neem ik het belang over van de dood van Jezus-Christus buiten de stadspoorten van Jeruzalem, buiten de centrale, heilige stad, en de daarmee verbonden oproep om ook Jezus-Christus daar na te volgen. Vergilio Elizondo en Roberto Goizueta leerden mij het belang van Galilea als de plek waar Jezus-Christus verschenen is na zijn opstanding. Galilea, het grensgebied, de periferie, op een ruime afstand van Jeruzalem, is de garantie voor Gods doorgaande werk, dat zal voortgaan op de manier zoals het ook begonnen is. Kosuke Koyama benadrukt de radicale omkering van de centrum en periferie in het leven van Jezus-Christus. Jung Young Lee bouwt hier impliciet op voort door te beargumenteren dat Jezus-Christus, als hybride persoon de grens tussen het goddelijke en het menselijke overbrugde. Als gevolg daarvan is Jezus-Christus, de marginale persoon bij uitstek, degene die het denken in elkaar uitsluitende begrippen kan doorbreken. Jezus-Christus is daarom de grensganger bij uitstek, volgens Peter Phan. Hoewel de Christologische insteek van deze auteurs een belangrijke rol speelt in de theologische verankering van marginaliteit, mist er in hun werk een meer genuanceerde visie op dit begrip, hoewel hun werk er alle aanleiding toe zou geven om deze lijn verder uit te werken. Ik sluit daarom aan bij intersectionaliteit als een dragend principe voor mijn ontwerp van marginaliteit omdat deze theorie laat zien dat marginaliteit plaatsvindt langs verschillende assen, zoals seksuele oriëntatie, nationaliteit, gezondheid, sociale klasse en gender. Deze dimensies staan niet los van elkaar, maar produceren juist elkaar versterkende kruispunten. Wanneer dit inzicht verdisconteerd wordt in de missiologie is de winst dat er op een minder massieve manier gesproken kan worden over centrum en marge. Als gevolg van een complexere visie op de marges wordt het mogelijk om theologie vanúit de diverse marges tot zijn recht te laten komen zonder vóór de marges te spreken.

Het thema van marginaliteit kan niet zonder een uitleg van de rol van kwetsbaarheid in het produceren van diverse marges. Kwetsbaarheid als onderdeel van een theologische antropologie is daarbij een essentieel onderdeel voor een dekoloniale missietheologie. Het woord kwetsbaarheid gaat daarmee veel dieper dan jezelf kwetsbaar openstellen: het duidt op het erkennen van je fundamentele eigenschappen als mens en deze niet proberen te verdoezelen of te bagatelliseren.

Hoewel dankzij het werk van David Bosch kwetsbare missie een belangrijk thema geworden is in de missiologie, is er weinig doordenking van de specifieke rol en inhoud van dit begrip. De Alliance for Vulnerable Mission biedt een sterk Christologisch ingekleurde blik op kwetsbare missie, met als sterke punt dat zij benadrukken hoe belangrijk het is in navolging van Jezus-Christus bepaalde vormen van wereldse macht niet te grijpen. Dit model blijft echter voornamelijk gefocust op de rol van zendingswerkers uit de Westerse wereld, zonder daarbij expliciet het perspectief in rekening te brengen van degenen die deze zendingswerkers ontvangen. Ik heb daarom bronnen ingebracht vanuit de feministische theologie en vanuit een theologische benadering van leven met een beperking of handicap. Het werk van Sarah Coakley bracht aan het licht dat een kwetsbaarheid

gebaseerd in de *kenosis* van Jezus-Christus een belangrijke bouwsteen is voor een dekoloniale missietheologie omdat de *kenosis* van de menselijke natuur van Jezus-Christus inhield dat hij geen gebruik maakte van de patriarchale overmacht die tot zijn beschikking stond. De navolging van Jezus-Christus opent daarom de mogelijkheid om op dezelfde manier hem na te volgen in kwetsbaarheid als een zich uitstrekken naar kracht-in-kwetsbaarheid waarbij de menselijke fragiele conditie verdisconteerd wordt. Om dieper in te gaan op die conditie heb ik gebruik gemaakt van inzichten vanuit de betekenis van leven met een handicap of beperking voor christelijke gemeenschapsvorming. Mensen met een handicap confronteren anderen met gezonde lichamen met het feit dat zij niet voldoen aan de maatschappelijke norm van absolute zelfstandigheid en niet vallen in de beperkte opvatting van wat 'normaal' is. Theologiseren van buiten deze norm stelt juist die onhaalbare en schadelijke norm onder kritiek, en stelt in plaats daarvan verbondenheid en kwetsbaarheid voor als maatgevende begrippen voor het goede leven. Als een gevolg kan een theologie van de kwetsbaarheid zoeken naar gezonde reacties op de schending van de menselijke kwetsbaarheid. Deze schendingen resulteren vaak in een verharde onkwetsbaarheid of juist een overdreven afhankelijkheid. Daarom is de juiste reactie op de menselijke conditie van het grootst mogelijk belang, om met mededogen en begrip te reageren op onze eigen mogelijkheid om geraakt en verwond te worden. Juist deze reactie biedt ruimte om het begrip planetariteit concreet gestalte te geven: vanuit onze intrinsieke verbondenheid met elkaar en met het leven op aarde.

Kwetsbaarheid en marginaliteit drukken tenslotte hun stempel op de roepingstheologie die ik ontwikkeld heb. Roeping is een complex begrip, dat de mogelijkheid heeft om ingekapseld te worden in verschillende missieparadigma's. Ik pleit daarom voor missionaire geletterdheid: het vermogen om jezelf te zien als onderdeel van het verhaal van de missie van God. Ook heeft missionaire geletterdheid een kritische dimensie: het duidt het vermogen aan om verschillende verhalen over missie van commentaar te voorzien en te kunnen beoordelen tot op welke hoogte deze (roepings)verhalen een dekoloniale potentie hebben. Ik het voorstel gedaan om deze theologie op vier pijlers te baseren. In de eerste plaats speelt roeping zich af op het krachtenveld van de narrativiteit, omdat roeping het vertellen is van een levensverhaal in het licht van de *missio Dei*. Ik pleit daarbij voor openheid: deze verhalen kunnen nooit dichtgetimmerd worden volgens een vast stramien zoals bijvoorbeeld het stramien van een onwillige geroepene en een vasthoudende God. Integendeel, de openheid zorgt ervoor dat roeping dynamisch blijft en de diversiteit van theologische stromingen in het wereldchristendom verdisconteerd kan worden. Daarom is het volgende begrip, gemeenschap [*community*] van fundamenteel belang, omdat juist een diverse, inclusieve gemeenschap verschillende subjectposities kent ten opzichte van de erfenis van het kolonialisme. In zo'n diverse gemeenschap kan de diversiteit aan roepingsverhalen op hun waarde beoordeeld worden. Het hart van zo'n gemeenschap wordt gevormd door spiritualiteit:

een gerichtheid op God als bron van verbondenheid. Deze spiritualiteit heeft geen wereldmijdend karakter, maar is juist profetisch van aard. Geroepen door de levengevende kracht van de Heilige Geest dienen mogelijkheden zich aan om zich uit te spreken tegen de status quo wanneer deze geen recht doet aan de kwetsbaarheid en waardigheid van unieke mensenlevens. Mijn roepingsopvatting zoekt daardoor naar een nieuwe weg om de subversieve en transformerende kracht van roeping uit te breiden. Een belangrijk element daarvan, dat aansluit bij de traditie van de bevrijdingstheologie, is om roeping te verbinden met degenen die arm zijn of gemarginaliseerd, omdat God zelf de God is van mensen die armoede en marginalisatie in hun leven ervaren. Deze stelling houdt geen romantisering of essentialisering in, maar is een poging om juist de epistemologische prioriteit van ervaringen van armoede te benadrukken, zonder daarbij armoede als een louter instrumentele categorie te benoemen. Deze vier bouwstenen samen vormen een dekoloniale roepingstheologie omdat ik roeping in de eerste plaats beschouw als een kwetsbare aanwezigheid: aanwezig zijn in de marges, in het grensgebied, uit identificatie met Jezus-Christus de grensganger.

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