

CHRISTIAN MISSION IN A FIVE HUNDRED YEAR CONTEXT

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The twentieth century was an extraordinary period in human history. As far as recorded history goes, it was extraordinary in its violence (though the record of the last few years suggests that in this respect it could be outstripped by its successor). In geopolitical terms, it was remarkable in that it marked the end of a vast movement of population that had shaped world history over several centuries. In the twentieth century this movement of population reached its peak, then came to a halt and went into reverse. We may call this movement the Great European Migration, and it had religious as well as economic and political effects..

It lasted from about the beginning of the sixteenth century until the middle of the twentieth. In the course of it first hundreds and then thousands and eventually millions of people left Europe for the lands beyond Europe. Some went under compulsion, as refugees, indentured labourers or convicts, some under their conditions of employment as soldiers or officials, some from lust of wealth or power. Most, however, were simply seeking a better life or a more just society than they found in Europe.

This movement of people brought whole new nations into being – all the nations of the Americas, for instance, Australia, New Zealand, and others. Russia, for so long bounded by the Urals, grew beyond them until it stretched from the Baltic to the Pacific, and for a time into America. It was the only participant in the Migration that expanded overland, rather than by sea. The new nations that arose as a result of the Migration adopted the languages and cultural traditions of Europe. Those of the original inhabitants (often a majority) unable or unwilling to adopt those traditions were effectively dispossessed and forced to the margins of a society that now lived by European cultural norms.

The Great European Migration enabled the powers of Europe to re-draw the patterns of world trade to their advantage. Sometimes the result was baleful, most notably in the case of the Atlantic slave trade, which (with the co-operation with some African states) generated immense wealth, and the China opium trade. A huge part of the population of Africa was moved to the Americas to meet the Migration/s labour needs. Smaller-scale operations

moved people from India and China to South Africa or the Caribbean; an Indian population was imposed on Fiji in the interests of economic development. Resistance to the desired trade patterns could be met with force; the Western powers blasted their way into China and Japan for the sake of the liberalization of trade.

Economic involvement led imperceptibly to the extension of political control. Some of the earliest and most complex examples of this took place in India and Indonesia; but by the end of the nineteenth century almost all Africa, much of Asia and all the Pacific had been divided between the European powers. In the early twentieth century the process was extended to the Middle East as the Ottoman Empire, once ruled by the caliph or deputy of the Prophet, gave place to territories ruled by Western powers, or to newly invented states such as Iraq with Western appointed rulers. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the great Muslim ruler was the Sultan by the Bosphorus; by its end it was Queen Victoria, with more Muslim subjects than the Sultan ever had. By the 1920s it was hard to find an independent Muslim ruler who was not the client of a Western power.

The later twentieth century, however, saw the beginnings of the break-up of the world order that had been established by the Great European Migration. In the first place, by the middle of the century the Migration had itself ceased or been reduced to a trickle, the state of Israel was its last great artefact. In the second, the European maritime empires were dismantled, and the Russian land-based empire substantially reduced. Patterns of trade became more complex, their relation to the power of nation states less evident. Asian powers, The rise of Asian powers, India and especially China, began to hint at new patterns of hegemony. To adopt the language of the Book of Daniel, the great beast who has occupied the centre of the stage for a long period, while still roaring and lashing its tail, seems to be in process of removal. It may be that beasts of another stripe are to occupy the stage and have their day before the books are opened and the Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven.

But the twentieth century was also notable for the beginning of another movement of population which may turn out to be as determinative of world history as the Great European Migration itself. In mid-century the Great European Migration not only came to an end; it went into reverse, Numbers of people from Africa, from Asia, from Latin America began to move to Europe and North America, and to set down roots there. Numbers have

steadily grown, and, as United Nations population studies indicate, the process looks set to continue. On the one hand the pressures for movement from the non-Western world are inexorable; on the other, though the nations of the West may not want more immigration, they can sustain their economies in no other way..

The Great Reverse Migration alters the dynamics of cultural and religious relations. Africa and Asia are now part of Europe, part of North America, where once they lay at the end of a long maritime journey. Latin America is part of North America too. Their religious traditions have also come; Islam and Hinduism have become religions of the West in a period when Christianity has become more a non-Western than a Western religion. And the Migration has brought substantial numbers of Christians from Africa and Asia and Latin America to the West, often bringing with them Christian forms and expressions new to the West. There are people in this Migration well placed to be cultural brokers and mediators; there are academics and theologians who could open new channels of understanding.

Christendom and the Great European Migration

When the Great European Migration began, Europeans described the territory in which they lived as Christendom, a word that simply means “Christianity.” The historical roots of the application of the name of Christianity to a geographical area lie in the period of Europe’s conversion to Christianity, the centuries (and the process took many centuries) in which the various people groups of Europe communally adopted the Christian faith. They did so, generally speaking, by accepting it as the basis of law and custom. It is of the nature of law and custom that no one may opt out; law and custom bind everyone in the community. Thus all were now regarded as Christians, and were baptized into the faith in infancy. In principle, each family lived within a geographical unit served by church and clergy committed to teaching the faith, and the laws governing society were to be conformable to the law of God. No idolatry, blasphemy or heresy should be found in Christian territory; it was the duty of the ruler, no less than of the Church to secure this, for Christian rulers were the servants, indeed the vassals of the King of kings.

The immediate neighbour of Christendom to the south and east was the Muslim territory of Dar al-Islam, in many ways the mirror image of Christendom and strengthening the identification of faith with territory.

From the larger world of peoples European Christendom, the western end of the great Eurasian landmass, was largely cut off until the trans-oceanic voyages of the late fifteenth century ended the long isolation and opened the possibility of the Great Migration.

By 1500, European Christendom had reached its broadest geographical extent; the last pagan peoples in Europe (other than those of the far north) had been brought into it, and Muslim rule in southern Spain, after six centuries of presence there, had been brought to an end. But Europe had also become more Christian in another sense. Over the centuries inter-action of the Christian message with the languages and cultures of Europe had produced a powerful symbiosis. European art, music, literature, philosophy were all dominated by Christian symbols and readily directed to Christian purposes, so penetrated by Christian themes that it was impossible to understand them without some knowledge of the faith. And not only was Europe Christian territory; it was, or so it seemed to people of the time, the *only* Christian territory. Many of the older Christian centres in Asia and Africa had now been eclipsed, or lay under Muslim rule; others, such as Ethiopia and South India, were outside the practical knowledge of Europeans. Europeans thus could readily think of themselves as the representative Christians, and their form of the faith, if not exactly the only, at least the only authentic form of it. When, therefore, their isolation ended and they met representatives of the old Christianity of Asia and Africa, they often decided that the latter were deviant.

In Africa and Asia and in that huge landmass in the Atlantic that they first identified as India but later named America, European Christians also met non-Christian peoples, and desired that they too should be part of Christendom. One or two African kingdoms responded, and became states of Christendom. But where there was no such response, European Christendom had an established institution intended to extend Christendom, or to reclaim territory lost by it. The idea of crusade, the use of force to extend the territory under Christian law, had been first developed with the idea of reclaiming formerly Christian territory lost to Islam, but subsequent crusades had been fought against northern pagans and Christian heretics. A particularly successful crusade had, as recently as 1492, culminated in the Muslim surrender in Spain. Columbus, setting out on his famous journey witnessed the surrender. In years to come the Spanish were to apply the principles of crusade, if not the name, in the lands which Columbus opened to them. Mexico became New Spain, with the laws and customs of Old

Spain, Whole populations were baptized, and were compelled to take Christian instruction. Thus Mexico and Peru entered Christendom, through the gate of crusade.

But in most of Africa, and especially in Asia, the scope for crusading was limited. Portugal, the representative power of Christendom was a small country, with no hope of successful warfare against the great Asian empires. It never abandoned the rhetoric of Christendom, but after the early years its attempts to extend Christendom across Asia were largely confined to the small enclaves that Portugal actually ruled. The extension of Christendom ranked well behind military survival and commercial success. The Dutch, who succeeded the Portuguese in the leadership of the Migration, maintained the rhetoric of Christendom (in Protestant instead of Catholic language), while the British, their successors, did not even trouble with the rhetoric. Under the British East India Company, it was clear policy that religion must never interfere with business. Colonialism forced the powers of Christendom to choose between their economic and political interests and their religious profession. It was perhaps the beginning of the secularization of Europe.

But there was always within Christendom a seminal minority seeking a truer Christian discipleship, and while the governments of Christendom might abdicate responsibility to spread the Christian faith, these radical Christians could not do so. They must find other ways of proclaiming Christ. It was among such Christian radicals that the missionary movement was born.

The crusading mode and the missionary mode are sharply differentiated means of extending the Christian faith. They grew up in the same area in the the same era, among people who shared the same basic theology; but in concept and in spirit they differ fundamentally. The crusader may first issue his invitation to the Gospel: but in the end, he is prepared to compel. The missionary, even if his natural instinct is to desire compulsion, cannot compel, but only demonstrate, invite, explain, entreat, and leave the result with God. But there is a further implication. If there is no power to compel, the business of demonstrating and explaining requires the missionary to win a hearing To do so usually involves learning a language and securing a place of acceptance, a niche within the society. None of these matters need trouble the crusader, who demands submission to his terms; the missionary has to live on terms set by other people.

The missionary movement from the West originated in the Reformation era. In Catholic southern Europe, among people who remained in allegiance to Rome but had been affected by the forces of renewal characteristic of the period. The renewed church had retained the religious orders which had in medieval times been the natural home of Christians seeking radical discipleship, and the forces of renewal had created new orders and societies as well as reforming old ones. These provided the infrastructure for the earliest missionary movement; it took Protestants almost two centuries to develop an alternative structure. It was therefore Catholic missions that first wrestled with the difficulties of translation, and who first worked out what it meant to live on others' terms. The latter could mean seeking to be a Christian exemplar of the Hindu ascetic or *sannyasi*, taking the diet and the dress, exploring a new language for deep Christian communication. To live on others' terms could lead to the recognition that to be a scholar in China must mean knowing the Chinese classics as a Chinese scholar knew them. Then would follow the labour of doing just that, while seeking to convey Christian teaching.

The missionary movement, first Catholic, then Protestant, then both at once, makes up a single story that arises out of the Great European Migration and covers the period of its existence. Yet it was always a semi-detached part of the Migration. It arose among the radicals of Christendom, and it remained the sphere of the radicals, the enthusiasts, people usually of minor significance in the Church, rarely the holders of ecclesiastical power or the leaders of ecclesiastical thought. It survived periods of immense frustration, periods not just of failure, but of utter disaster. It was semi-detached because ultimately its mainspring lay not in the Migration, or in the forces that produced the Migration, but in the Christian Gospel. Whatever else missionaries held they should be doing, the final reason for their existence was to point to Christ. With all the failures, contradictions and ambiguities that belong to the human condition, missionaries were migrants for Christ's sake.

Religion and the Great European Migration.

The religious effects of the Great European Migration were mixed. The spread of the Christian faith soon, as we have seen, ceased to be a priority for the powers of Europe. Migration often loosened the religious allegiance of the migrants themselves; Australia, New Zealand, even Canada, became more rapidly and determinedly secular than Britain from which most of their early migrants came. (The United States followed a different pattern; the

christianization that it underwent was perhaps the most notable success of the missionary movement during the nineteenth century). Other religions flourished as a result of the imperial aspects of the European expansion. Hinduism as we know it today, a coherent, confident formulation unafraid of modernity and the scientific world view, is a product of the British Raj in India. The Raj also produced the conditions for the emergence of Pakistan as the first modern Islamic state. Colonial rule, often deliberately, produced a vast increase in the number of Muslims, while at the same time policy in the Middle East ensured that Muslims felt aggrieved and offended. The strangest religious aspect of the Migration was in the position of Christianity. When the Great European Migration began in the sixteenth century, Christianity was the religion of Europe and a largely European religion. By the end of the twentieth a massive recession in the West, especially in Europe, and a massive accession in the rest of the world, and especially Africa, had transformed the cultural and demographic distribution of Christianity. Christianity had once more become, as in its beginnings, a non-Western religion. And – though it was by no means the only cause of the change – the missionary movement, the despised semi-detached appendix to the Great European Migration had played a significant role.

When the Great European Migration began, Europe was Christendom, Christian territory. Even in the nineteenth century, any informed person, if asked what defined Europe, what all Europeans had in common, would be likely to point to the experience of Christianity. And this answer would come from believers and unbelievers alike. The influence of Christianity in shaping European civilization, its impress on laws, social organization, public ritual, art, literature, music was beyond question. In the first decade of the twenty-first century the issue of a draft constitution for the European Union caused Europeans to revisit the question of what makes up “Europeanness”. On this occasion they decided, after due debate, to make no reference to Christianity at all, even as a historical influence in the making of Europe. Old Christendom is no longer an operating concept.

Even its landmarks are changing. A walk round the centre of my own city tells a story. The most striking older buildings reflect the traditional dominance in Scottish civic life of Christianity in its Reformed expression. At the corner where the principal street begins is the college where the ministry of the church was once trained. It still bears plaques on its walls commemorating some of the eminent theologians who once taught there; but it has now been converted into a smart restaurant, with a notice indicating

one of its special attractions: “Babylon – the ultimate night experience.” A little up the street is an imposing church building, once famous for the notable preachers who occupied its pulpit. It is now a casino, the signboard with its new name “Soul” giving a poignant hint of its original function. Nearby is another church converted into a nightclub under the name of “The Ministry.” To continue the walk would be to pass church building after church building with architecture and design that bespeak old Christendom, but now fulfilling a new function as a night spot, a drinking hall, a restaurant, a store, an apartment block. And the reason is that no one needs them as churches any longer.

The country that once sent missionaries across the world stands in desperate need of mission. It is too late for revival; the need is basic, primary evangelization, cross-cultural evangelization such as missionaries once sought to carry out in other continents. Old Christendom has been succeeded by an essentially non-Christian culture. Our god, if we have one, is Mammon, and Mammon’s altars are as gruesome as Moloch’s.

Here is the strangest development of the Great European Migration. The Christian faith declined sharply and so rapidly in what had long been its heartland, the apparent centre of its strength, in lands where it had permeated culture and moulded law and custom, while it spread into lands beyond. It was not the first time in Christian history that what seemed to be the heart of the Church wilted, and it may not be the last. Christian history is marked by such collapses in the locations of apparent Christian strength which have coincided with rapid growth at what seemed to be the margins. The majority of those who profess the Christian faith are now Africans, Asians, Latin Americans and Pacific Islanders; and they substantially outnumber the professed Christians of Europe, the old Christendom, and its North American outcrop. What is more, the trends that have produced this transformation appear to be continuing; in every recent year there have been fewer Christians in the West, and more in the rest of the world. Even in the United States the downward trend is clear, clearest, perhaps, in those areas from which the European decline accelerated, the cities, the universities, the intellectuals. That the American decline is not sharper seems due to the impact of the Great Reverse Migration: the arrival of Christians from Africa, from Asia, and especially from the Hispanic world.

How long these trends will continue is beyond our knowledge. Nor can we tell whether we are currently living in the last days, or in the era of the Early

Church. But if the trends were to continue much longer, it would not be unreasonable to expect that two thirds of the world's Christians will be from the non-Western world. What is already certain is that Christianity is now a predominantly non-Western religion, the profession principally of African and Asian and Latin American people; and that it is currently moving progressively in that direction.

The High Water Mark of the Missionary Movement

How has this come about? Certainly not according to the predictions of the best informed people. And here another visit to Scotland, this time to Edinburgh, may be instructive. What is now the Assembly Hall of the Church of Scotland was in 1910 the venue for the World Missionary Conference, perhaps the high water mark of the missionary movement. It was called to discuss "the missionary problem of the world," in other words how the work of Christian mission could be so organized that the Gospel would reach the whole world. This vision seemed attainable. We have spoken of the awesome violence of the twentieth century, but in the century's first decade this feature had not yet been revealed. Few in the Assembly Hall could have heard the beating wings of the Angel of Death. Despite Great Power rivalries and colonial flare-ups, the world appeared stable, and there were very few areas absolutely closed to the Gospel. Full mobilization of the resources of Christendom, organized international co-operation in the work of mission – these seemed in 1910 to be the instruments of world evangelization. And the resources to be mobilized were to be those of Europe and North America, with such marginal assistance as Australia, New Zealand and the White community of South Africa could afford. The benches of the Assembly Hall were packed with European and American missionaries and mission executives. A small number of Asian delegates, from China, Japan, India and Korea made up an important symbolic presence; but no African was present, and it had been agreed in advance that the Conference would not discuss Latin America.

The mode of procedure was to study and debate reports, the fruit of careful research prior to the Conference. The first report surveyed the existing state of evangelization. As regards Asia it was upbeat in tone, especially as regards Japan, China and India, the countries in which missions had invested most resources. Korea, where Protestant missions were still new, received only a short notice. On Africa, the report strikes a sober note. The gist of what it says is that, in general, the situation is not as discouraging as might have been expected. But it adds that the evangelization of the interior of the

continent had hardly begun. And another part of the report offers a “worst case” scenario of Africa as a Muslim continent. The Conference ground rules ensured that Latin America would feature only marginally in the report.

The Tide Moves Out

For those present the Conference was an inspiring, and for some a transforming experience. It ended on a note of high commitment. “The end of the Conference” announced John R Mott in his closing address, “is the beginning of the conquest.” And with this in view the delegates dispersed, pledged to full mobilization of Christian resources and to international co-operation.

Then came the First World War, sinking many of the immediate hopes of international co-operation. Before long, the government of one Christian nation was interning the missionaries of another. Then came the Angel of Death, and much of that young life that was to be mobilized for the evangelization of the world drained away in the trenches of France and Flanders. Then came the Depression, eroding the economic base on which missions had operated for a century. Then more war, more destruction, the appearance of weaponry of a power unimagined before, the dismantling of the European empires that in 1910 had seemed a pledge of political stability and missionary accessibility. Finally came the most shattering realization: that the lands once thought to be evangelized, the home base of missions, the treasure house that was to yield the dedicated resources of the Christian world, themselves needed to be evangelized afresh. One by one, all the props that upheld the world of 1910 were taken away; all the assumptions underlying their vision of the world and of world evangelization were undermined.

But the vision that was granted at Edinburgh, the vision of a worldwide Church and a worldwide spread of the Gospel – that was a true vision. And the event took place; but it took place in ways that no one at the Edinburgh conference could have predicted.

Among the surprises is the little Asian country that the survey of 1910 passed over so quickly. Korea had a very unusual Christian history in the twentieth century. It also developed a quite unusual sense of missionary vocation, so that hundreds of Korean missionaries operate in every

continent, even in places regarded as inaccessible to missions in 1910. Another surprise has been the emergence of a whole chain of churches stretching from the Himalayas deep into South East Asia. In 1910 – and indeed, long after – Nepal was regarded as a “closed land.” Now it has a thriving church. In the early twentieth century mission reports from North East India talked darkly of headhunters; now more than 90% of the population of Mizoram professes the Christian faith, and from thence and from other North East states comes a mission force whose presence is felt across the Indian sub-continent. Across the artificial frontier with Myanmar created by the British Raj, people of similar ethnic origin and culture have also turned to the faith; leading to a large increase in Christian numbers since the expulsion of Western missionaries in the 1960s. Across other national borders, with China in one direction and Thailand in another, the Christian churches among people of the same stock continue. Along this chain – shall we call it Himalayan-Arakan? – a Christian community has come into being that is very much a product of the twentieth century; before 1900 the signs of it were unimpressive. Its homelands lie in various nation states, and in each of those nations Christians are a minority, in some a small minority; taken together the Himalayan-Arakan Christian constituency is significant.

The story of Christianity in China did not follow the path to which the most favourable signs that were visible in 1910 were pointing. Estimates of the numbers of Christians in China today differ widely, not to say wildly; but most agree that the number now is many times what it was when Western missionary activity ceased in the middle of the twentieth century. It is impossible to predict what part Chinese Christianity will play in the new global configuration of Church and world, but it is unlikely to be peripheral. The twentieth century was more turbulent, perhaps, for China than for anywhere else in the world. And there can be few parallels in Christian history of churches that have undergone so much and emerged as the Chinese church has done. Nor should we forget that Chinese Christianity is not confined to China. The 1910 report had little of substance to say of the huge overseas Chinese population across Asia and beyond; the Christian portion of this is now substantial, another development of the twentieth century.

But the most astonishing difference in the Christian world between 1910 and the present lies in Africa. The report read at Edinburgh spoke of the evangelization of the interior of Africa as hardly begun; yet during the

twentieth century the expansion of the churches of sub-Saharan Africa was phenomenal. The century saw the emergence of sub-Saharan Africa as a Christian heartland, with Africa quietly slipping into the place in the Christian world once occupied by Europe. At the same time many of those churches have endured fiery trials, having to cope routinely with war, violent disruption, famine, disaster, displacement. Many have seen movements of renewal or developed new forms of church life. It is as though sub-Saharan Africa has crammed several centuries of Christian history and experience into the single century that separates us from the World Missionary Conference of 1910.

Latin America's Christian history has been different. Incorporated, as we have seen, into European Christendom at an early period of the Great European Migration, it effectively took on a Christianity made in Europe, effectively omitting the sixteenth century in the process. It adopted the provisions of the Council of Trent – a response to essentially European religious situations – without having had to work for them. Only in the twentieth century did the sixteenth century catch up with Latin America, bringing with it all the passion and ferment and upheaval that European Christianity experienced in that earlier era. . Movements of renewal, Catholic and Protestant, emerged; indeed, a specifically Latin American version of Protestantism was born. A powerful current of theology, engaging with issues of local society, broke new ground, threw off its Europe-derived character, and, paradoxically, began to influence the world beyond Latin America as it became distinctively Latin American. Another theological and pastoral current engaged with the social and religious realities of the original inhabitants, uncovering issues never faced in the imposed European model of Christianity that came with Christendom. Latin America has the capacity to release into the world church swirling cross-currents full of the Bible, full of social reality, that reflect the theological intensity and pastoral seriousness that Europe knew in the era of its great Reformations.

Early in the nineteenth century George Canning, British Foreign Secretary of the day, realizing that movements in the Americas would alter the traditional European politics of the balance of power, made a policy shift. "I called" he said, with rather too much grandeur, "the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old." In the twentieth century God called a New Church into existence to redress the balance of the Old.

Mission from Anywhere to Anywhere

For the balance of the Church has shifted; it has, as in other periods of Church history, been redressed. Lands that were once at its heart are now on the margins, others that were on the margins are now at its heart. It has no single centre; above all, the idea of a “home base” in Europe and North America such as the Edinburgh fathers took for granted in 1910 is long past.. The Church now has not one but many centres; new Christian impulses and initiatives may now be expected from any quarter of the globe. Christian mission may start from any point, and be directed to any point.

The global character of Christianity, now so obvious, is not a new feature. In principle the faith has always been global, and earlier centuries saw it spread across the whole Eurasian land mass and deep into East Africa. The exceptional period of Christian history, when Christianity seemed to belong essentially to the West, is the one from which we have just emerged; the period of the Great European Migration and that immediately preceding it. With its return to a non-Western religion, Christianity has reverted to type.

In the multi-centric Christian Church there can be no automatic assumption of Western leadership; indeed, if suffering and endurance are the badges of authenticity, we can expect the most powerful Christian leadership to come from elsewhere. The same may be true of intellectual and theological leadership; multi-centric Christian mission has the potential to revitalize theological activity and revolutionize theological education.. Theology springs out of mission; its true origins lie not in the study or the library, but from the need to make Christian decisions – decisions about what to do, and about what to think. Theology is the attempt to think in a Christian way, to make Christian intellectual choices. Its subject matter, therefore, its agenda, is culturally conditioned, arising out of the actual life situations of active Christians. This means that the normal run of Western theology is simply not big enough for Africa, or for much of the rest of the non-Western world. It offers no guidance for some of the most crucial situations, because it has no questions related to those situations. The reason is that Western theology – whether of more liberal or more conservative tendency is irrelevant – is heavily acculturated, It is substantially an Enlightenment product, designed for an Enlightenment view of the universe. The Enlightenment universe is a small scale one; witchcraft or sorcery, for instance, do not exist within it, its family structures have no place for the ancestors, the living dead of the family. The frontier between the empirical world and the realm of spirit, the natural and the supernatural, is closed. There is no place for those

“principalities and powers” that Paul sees as world rulers routed by the triumphal chariot of the cross of the Risen Christ. (The Bible is not an Enlightenment book) . Much of humanity lives in a larger, more populated universe, with constant activity across an open e frontier between the empirical and the spirit worlds, and faces issues for which Western theology has no resources. For assured Christian living, Christ must fill the world as people see that world; and this is the province of theodology. Christian mission in and from Africa is likely to widen the theological agenda; the consequent benefit could be of more than African significance. A wider theology of the principalities and powers might deepen our theology of evil, illuminating the nexus between personal sin and guilt on the one hand, and systemic, structural evil on the other, that has stalled much Western theological discussion. The engagement of Biblical thinking and the Christian tradition with the ancient cultures of Asia and Africa could open an era of theological creativity to parallel the encounter with Hellenistic culture in the second and third and fourth centuries. That early encounter, by following out issues raised for Christians within the culture, and using the intellectual materials to hand, gave us the great creeds and the beginnings of classical theology. Who can say that the encounter with Africa and Asia will not be equally enriching?

Church and mission are multi-centric; but the different centres belong to a single organism. Christian faith is embodied faith; Christ takes flesh again among those who respond to him in faith. But there is no generalized humanity; incarnation has always to be culture-specific. The approximations to incarnation among Christians are in specific bits of social reality converted to Christ, turned to face him and made open to him. All our representations of humanity are partial and incomplete; complete humanity is found only in Christ in his fulness.

The relation to each other of the different pieces of converted social reality was central to the life of the New Testament Church. Cultural diversity was built into the Church for ever when, so early in the Church's life, the decision was taken to abandon the Jewish proselyte model which in effect would have made every Gentile follower of Jesus into a Jew. From that time on there were two converted lifestyles in the Church. There was the converted Judaism of the Old Believers of Jerusalem of whom the old apostles themselves were representative; and there were the New Believers following the Hellenistic way of following Christ that we see under construction in Paul's letters. The Epistle to the Ephesians shows how the

two have been made one through Christ's cross. Here are not simply two races, but two lifestyles, two cultures; and, different as they are, they belong to each other. Each is a building block in a new temple that is in process of building; nay, each is an organ in a functioning body of which Christ is the brain. The Temple will not be completed, the Body will not function, unless both are present. More, Christ is full humanity, and it is only together that we reach his full stature.

There are now not two, but an infinite number of segments of partially converted social reality within the Church. They include representatives of some of the richest and some of the poorest peoples on earth. Their human relations are shaped by the events of the Great European Migration; the conditions of the Great Reverse Migration bring them as close together as the representatives of the two converted lifestyles in the New Testament Church. Like them, each is a building block belonging to a new temple still in process of construction. Like them, each is an organ necessary to the proper functioning of a body under Christ's direction. Only together will they reach the fulness of Christ which is the completion and perfection of humanity.