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## **Missiology in the Grey Zone: Discussing ‘mission’ at U3A-ACT**

**Kevin Walcot**

### **Introduction**

To understand the problem of discussing Christian mission publicly today one need only read the introductory apologia on the AAMS website. A defensive approach is understandable in an age when most people, even many Christians, tend to equate mission with proselytism. What follows is a description of how an interest in, and a greater understanding of, Christian mission, Christian history and theology developed over a period of years among a group of people in a particular corner of the public square. The University of the Third Age, (U3A), is a voluntary organization. Originating in France after World War II, and now worldwide, it provides a structure and ethos (i.e. a university) requiring no campus, staff qualifications, exams, or diplomas to people who want to learn with, and from, one another.

The specific corner of the public square discussed here is U3A-ACT, the largest U3A group in Australia, with 3,600 members. It has a mature, well-read, educated, widely-travelled, membership, of varied backgrounds and rich experience, mostly Christian in upbringing. What follows is a historical account of my 13 years involvement, modified, in part, by what I would tend to do now, in the light of experience.

I came to U3A in 1997 primarily to learn and drifted into course leadership. I started out to educate myself by offering courses based on accessible books that I had found interesting. And I have learned that searching long and hard for the right book, chart, map etc. is time well spent. Two of Karen Armstrong books: *A History of God* (a history of the understanding of God in Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and *The Battle for God* (fundamentalism in the same three traditions), were followed by my self-researched *History of the Devil*, and *Faith and Fear at the Millennium*. (It was 2000 when computers would crash and sects were making scary plans). Karen Armstrong, Norman Cohn and Elaine Pagels were reliable and readable guides in those early days. There was also a sudden demand after 9/11 for courses on Islam and I offered three - making a big mistake with one opaque, indigestible book. For variety there were some courses on literary topics: Chekhov Conrad, Joyce and on general culture, the arts, history and philosophy. Thus Daniel Boorstin’s *The Creators*, and Richard Tarnas’ *The Passion of the Western Mind* were conflated into a less Eurocentric course entitled: *The Creative Passion of the Human Mind*. The groups had abundant talent: volunteer guides at the NGA, musicians and scientists. U3A groups are an embarrassment of riches ! The class of 70 (in two groups of 35 on Thursday and Friday) changed over time, of course, but an amazing number wished to stay together over several years. Living in the shadow of the ANU proved a plus when Professor Muhammad Torabi offered to talk on ancient Persian culture and literature and Professor John Mulvaney likewise on aboriginal archaeological sites, particularly Lake Mungo. There was a marked interest in listening to good readers, reading unabridged texts: Joyce’s *The Dead*, Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (which could later relate to the Portuguese invasion

of Kongo in a course on Global Christianity), Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (providing a backcloth to similar later discussion of the Spanish conquest of Peru). For insight into India there were: (a) Kipling's *Kim* (topical for today's Afghanistan conflict and offering some insight into Buddhism), and (b) E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. Both are read by the brilliant Indian actor, Sam Dastor. While listening to, and discussing Forster's novel I sensed that our classes were becoming, inter alia, a course in Christian mission theology and mission history.

### 1: A Passage to India as Missiology

The novel was inspired by Forster's two visits to India, and based on his diary and letters, which he had asked recipients to keep. On completion he had no title but soon discovered and borrowed Walt Whitman's poem of the same name, celebrating the great 19<sup>th</sup>-c. technological achievements: trans-continental railways, the trans-Atlantic cable, the joining of the Mediterranean world to the Arabian Sea and India via Suez: the passage to India. Could this technology lead (Whitman mused) to improved human contact and understanding? Forster explored the same question: 'Only connect' had been the epigraph of an earlier novel. Forster's homosexuality made of him a shy but courageous outsider, longing for inclusion and acceptance which probably sharpened his understanding of exclusion's multiple forms: social: the whites only, apartheid clubs; the verandah as the closest an Indian might come to meeting a sahib; racial and cultural: white Western claims to cultural, intellectual and racial superiority and rejection of Indian claims of cultural value, as in Macaulay's infamous minute: 'A shelf of English books is worth a whole Indian library...'; political, military, economic and legal: the everyday power of the Raj over Indian lives, and, not least, theological: Christian exclusivist claims to religious superiority.

Early reviewers had seen it as a political novel; later it was seen as far more complex. But few have fully examined its theological dimensions. Forster's maternal grand-father had been a member of the Evangelical Clapham Sect, as had Virginia Woolf's paternal grandfather, James Stephen. Alongside Wilberforce they had lobbied and plotted to end slavery and revoke the E. I. C.'s ban on missionary work to India (succeeding in 1813). Carey had famously evaded the ban by settling in Danish Serampore where the EIC's writ did not run. Forster himself was agnostic but had inherited a strong social conscience, a knowledge of the bible and a distaste for bullying and snobbery.

Forster's mission theology becomes apparent in the novel's tripartite structure:  
**Mosque, Caves, Temple:**

**Part I: Mosque: Islam:** focus: The Festival of Muhurrum - the cool dry season;  
**Part II: Caves:** no immediately obvious religious significance; focus: a 'festive' picnic at the caves and its tragic aftermath - the hot dry (worst) season of the Indian year;  
**Part III: Temple: Hinduism:** focus: a description of darshan - 'seeing' the god at the Festival: Gokul Ashtami, honouring Krishna's birth - the cleansing monsoon season.

So Caves is left for us to work out for ourselves. Traditionally caves symbolize darkness, ignorance, delusion etc. Here I believe it symbolizes the heart of Christian darkness - the picnic, at the caves is a meal intended to bring people together (a radically egalitarian 'eucharistic' image?) but it goes badly wrong: black and white, Indian and Westerner, ruler and ruled, Christian, Hindu and Muslim are set at odds with one another. Just as the Caves section is located in the 'dead' centre of the novel, symbolically separating Mosque from Temple, so, has Western imperialism, combined

with Christian missionary activity, set Hindu against Muslim? Forster suggests in various ways that Christianity (specifically Anglicanism, the official religion of the Raj), is fatally compromised by being so closely linked to political, economic and military state power. Thus, e.g. the church bells ring out from the cantonment and Civil Lines -- a clear missionary proclamation - but they are ineffectual, having no impact on either Hindu or Muslim. Forster invariably refers to the Christian God as *Jehovah*. Was Forster aware that this was an incorrect vocalization of *YHWH*? It is very possible. The deliberately incorrect Hebrew name would be a striking literary device to indicate that this 'God' is in fact a false, a compromised, God in thrall to the Raj. Thus when Adela Quested prays for guidance on the night before Aziz's trial, Forster suggests she prays to Jehovah, who returns 'a con-soling reply', but later she asks for a brandy, 'deserting Jehovah'. Forster comments that Jehovah 'the God who saves the king, will surely support the police!' (against Aziz). In his portrait of the two missionaries, old Mr Graysford and young Mr Sorley (who was advanced) he suggests that they were well aware of the danger and lived apart from the other Europeans in the Civil or Military Lines. They 'lived out beyond the slaughterhouses, always travelled third on the railway and never came up to the club.' Anyone who has ever worked in a mission situation will recall how toxic 'the club' can be.

As we would discover later when studying the story of Matteo Ricci's mission to China, determining the correct name for God is no small missiological issue.

Forster counters this caricature of an impotent, compromised Christianity with a gentler, non-aggressive, more sympathetic and inclusive form as portrayed in the person of Mrs Moore, a prophetic figure who removes her shoes in the mosque, saying: 'God is here,' and quotes (I Jn 4:8): 'God is love' as a mantra to her insensitive magistrate son, Ronny. He, in turn, is thus described by Forster: 'Ronny approved of religion as long as it endorsed the National Anthem, but he objected when it attempted to influence his life' and 'he knew this religious strain in her (his mother) and that it was a symptom of bad health.' Of Ronny, Forster would later comment in a foretaste of our own, belated, Sorry Day: 'One touch of regret – not the canny substitute but the true regret from the heart – would have made him a different man, and the British Empire a different institution.'

Finally there is an ever-present theme of invitation. The word recurs constantly in the novel: as a tiresome social burden for the Collector, whose invitation to the Indian community to attend his 'Bridge Party' is ineffectual; as an incessant, social convention the invitations within the Anglo-Indian community bore Adela and Mrs Moore; even as a cry from the heart of Dr Godbole to the god, who 'neglects to come.' But Christianity as a sincere and humble invitation had not, Forster hints, really been tried in British India. Mrs Moore gets nowhere with her Johnanine alternative to the mindless, megaphone model of Christian mission. She might also have turned to I Peter:15: *always have your answer ready for people who ask the reason for the hope that you have.* (Jerusalem Bible translation).

Interestingly, in the final section of the novel, Temple, the action is set in the rain-refreshing monsoon season, suggesting the new life, which might have been an appropriate season for baptismal renewal had Mrs. Moore's version of Christi-anity been the norm in India, instead of her son's. In the novel it represents rather the birth of Krishna, whose infancy story closely resembles that of Jesus in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Matthew. Some scholars have seen here the early influence of the Thomas Christians on Hindu mythology, a powerful reminder that Christi-anity flourished in India long

before Islam's arrival and that it is a distinctive Christian community with strong apostolic credentials.

In a Tablet review (Oct. 2, 2008) of Robert Eric Frykenberg's *Christianity in India: from beginnings to the present* (O.U.P. 2008), Frykenberg observes that Christianity has flourished most vigorously in India where it has had least connection with British rule (hence the relative success of Catholicism) and in areas remote from a central administration, whether British or Indian; and he argues convincingly that Christianity in India, so far from being a colonial import, is 'profoundly indigenous.' Forster's 1924 intuition about Raj and Church in India seems to have been prophetic.

In the interests of fairness it must be added that at least three Anglican missionary 'rebels' in India made notable contributions to the country and to mission theology: C.F. Andrews (1871-1940) was an early supporter, friend, and trusted confidant of Gandhi. He has been honoured on an Indian postage stamp. Verrier Elwin (1902-64) resigned from ministry and became an anthropologist and vocal spokesman for India's adivasis (indigenous tribals) and Roland Allen (1868 –1947) became a critic of power and control mechanisms at work in mission organizations and promoted a rethink of missionary theology in the Indian context.

Among other missionary-anthropologists, Roman Catholic, Fr. Stephen Fuchs SVD (1908 – 2000), Austrian founder of the Institute of Indian Culture at Andheri, Mumbai deserves special mention. His work among the Bhils of Madhya Pradesh was 'next door' to Dewas where Forster had been secretary to the Maharajah.

## 2: Literature and Theology

Are there other possibilities in fiction, film, historical or biographical narrative? The subtitle above is the title of an Oxford journal, one of several dedicated to this relatively new area of study and would suggest the answer is 'Yes.' Worthy of study are such novels as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, and Tsitsi Dangarembiga's *Nervous Conditions* and *The Book of No* to mention just two African authors. Even more specifically mission-oriented and also very moving are: Rose Macaulay's *The Towers of Trebizond* (also a comedy!) and Margaret Craven's *I Heard the Owl Call my Name*. Among the non-fiction titles: two fascinating, very readable mission histories stand out: Tom Hiney's *On the Mission Trail: A Journey through Polynesia, Asia, and Africa with the London Missionary Society* describing an eight-year long trek around the world (including New South Wales) assessing the L.M.S. project. It provides a model of a visitation in length and depth. And Fergus Fleming's *The Sword and the Cross* which describes the friendship between two unusual men: Charles de Foucauld, hermit, missionary, imperialist and Laperrine, a French military officer in N. Africa. These are great history and 'ripping yarns'!

Films: (1) *The Mission*: Robert Bolt's script based on the producer, Fernando Ghia's idea for a story about the Jesuit Reductions of Paraguay, possibly inspired by Ralph Hochwaelder's play: *The Strong are Lonely*;

(2) *The Valladolid Controversy*: A brilliant French Film (with English sub-titles by SBS) based on the debate between Bartolome de Las Casas and philosopher, Juan Gines de Sepulveda about the morality of the colonization of the Indians in C. and S. America. The latter arguing that indigenous people were less than human.

### 3. Christianity: A Global History:

Study of Forster's novel and Indian history, geography and religions (the course had in fact been entitled: A Passage to more than India!), unintentionally paved the way for a more ambitious, systematic, chronological, theological series of courses on the history of Christianity. Earlier I had co-led a course based on Hans Kung's Christianity, which relies on Thomas Kuhn's paradigm theory. It was an illuminating, but very Eurocentric, approach. Now we wanted to attempt a truly global history allied with some basic understanding of missiology. By chance I came across a then new Penguin book: Christianity: A Global History by an American scholar (now a professor in Cape Town) David Chidester. It was pitched at the right level, well organized, up to date and above all, truly global. It served well in getting us airborne and with some additional material took us up to 1453. Thereafter, as it became less chronological and more topical it served rather more as a supplement. I had wanted a chronological approach to mission history that was as far as possible integrated into world history – in both senses: the world beyond the church and the wider world beyond western history, abandoning once and for all the old History of Christendom and its colonial offshoots approach. The timing (2005) was propitious: new winds were blowing in these quarters and I took as my first guide Diarmaid MacCulloch's *Reformation: Europe's House Divided: 1490 – 1700*. Not only was its time-span longer, but its geographical reach broader than most Reformation histories. I noted that his title had no definite article: Was there then more than one Reformation? When I happened upon his shorter work: *Christian History: An Introduction to the Western Tradition*, the very acknowledgement: Western on the front cover indicated a break with the past: an admission, at last, of traditional Christian history's blatant incompleteness. The book is a revision of a standard text for U.K. theology students, (*Groundwork of Church History*). In it I also learned to see the Reformation as indeed a Second Reformation, the first being the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>-c. top-down monastic reforms of Hildebrand. This book (Epworth Press) is sadly, very hard to get, even second-hand.

I became aware that there was indeed a seismic shift going on in church history: the telling of the global story of Christianity. Volume II of Irwin and Sunquist's *History of the World Christian Movement* (Orbis) is not out yet and I worry that vol II: 1453 to modern times cannot be packed into one volume. The 9-volumes, 6,800 pages, of *The Cambridge History of Christianity* is now complete except for Vol IV, due out soon. Among resources that have stimulated me have been books by my own SVD and former-SVD colleagues: Bevens and Schroeder's *Constants in Context* and Monumenta Serica director, Roman Malek's *The Chinese Face of Jesus*. Bill Burrows of Orbis books has readily shared various short insight pieces with me. From the wider world: Adrian Hastings: *A World History of Christianity* is excellent – though not strictly chronological. A new volume by Lamin Sanneh: *Disciples of All Nations* (OUP, 2008) provides the final quotation of this paper.

Following MacCulloch, I decided on periodization based only on dates significant in wider world history, not e.g. 1797 for the new era of Protestant mission based on Carey's Serampore venture (pace Bevens & Schroeder), nor 1813 (tempting though it was: the year the EIC Clapham directors had allowed missionaries into India - with profound implications, as Dalrymple shows in *The Last Mughal*), but 1815, close enough to both dates to serve mission history, yet signifying a new world of French eclipse and British ascendancy (till 1914) that would profoundly affect world mission.

I also accepted (following Clive Ponting: *World History: A New Perspective*, 2001) the idea of the Gunpowder Empires. It was Chinese-invented gunpowder, borrowed by the Ottomans that had demolished the walls of Constantinople. Gunpowder had already numbered the days of every walled city in Italy (as Machiavelli realized). Mounting canon on ships meant that the native princes of the Indian sub-continent would be outgunned at sea by the Portuguese, as the cultures of the Americas would be on land by both Portugal and Spain. The former was then hemmed in and steadily dispossessed by Dutch cannons, until later British and French canon steadily eliminated the Dutch and, finally, France and Britain were left to meet in a series of encounters from N. America and the W. Indies to India, Egypt, Copenhagen and the Iberian peninsula to their final encounter at Waterloo: 'Hard pounding, this, gentlemen; let's see who will pound longest.' (Wellington).

Like all such periodizing schemes it oversimplifies but still provides one framework within which to view a complex global Christian history. It is based, it must be said on a Western chronology partly for pedagogical reasons - moving from the known to the unknown -- partly because an unbiased global chronology may not be possible.

### **Periodization: Where to draw the historical boundary lines ?**

**2006: Christianity: A Global History: Part I: From Yeshua, to 1453**, the year of:  
 - The Fall of Constantinople; triumph of an Islamic Ottoman Gunpowder Empire  
 - Growing Portuguese naval power in the Azores (1432) and Cape Verde (1445); Pope Nicholas V granting the Portuguese the right to enslave those living S. of Cape Bojador, the most westerly point of W. Africa (1450)  
 - Bordeaux being taken from the English by the French, marking the end of the Hundred Years War (1337 – 1453) between England and France: two powers who would continue to be globally at odds particularly in Part III: 1690 - to Waterloo.

Part I was originally called: Lost, Forgotten and Neglected Christianities and there had been no plan to take the story any further. 1453 was such a widely used boundary-marker (the beginning of the Modern Age etc.) that there was no reason to question it; but I found two other good reasons for it (above). This section was largely based on Chidester Parts I and II, the prescribed class text. Its first twenty chapters provided good coverage of the period and this was supplemented from other sources to cover: (1) Gnosticism, the Nag-Hamadi Library and the Gnostic Gospels (Pagels et al). It was propitious that at the time a legal battle was under way between Dan Brown (Da Vinci Code) and the authors of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. Brown's lawyer suggested the latter's two authors had themselves borrowed a great deal from the Gnostics! (2) the story of The Jesus Sutras as related by Martin Palmer. These texts were translated into Chinese by the Sogdians on behalf of the Church of the East in the time of Muhammad and taken by Alupen to the Tang Dynasty capital, Xian, where the stele describing the mission can still be seen, as it was seen in the 16<sup>th</sup>-c. by the Jesuits. An emphasis was placed on the East-ward flight of the 'losers' in the early christological Councils. Where else could they go? Some, disenchanted, persecuted, Christian monks on their way east assisted in Muhammad's religious education; he has kind words for them in the Qu'ran.

**2007: Christianity: A Global History: Part II: 1453 – 1690**: This was dominated by Portugal's (and later Spain's) Age of Reconnaissance: the Padroado and Alexander VI's line drawn to keep them from clashing. The main source was MacCulloch for the 'Second Reformation.' To this was added Davies section on the growth of Muscovy and

the birth of Moscow as the Third Rome. There followed the Gunpowder Empires, early Iberian history, the Portuguese exploration of the West coast of Africa and their incursions into Kongo (well described by Hochschild in *King Leopold's Ghost* and the section by Kevin Ward on Africa in *Hastings*), then the continuing Portuguese voyages round the Cape, up the E. coast and across to Goa, having learned the monsoon system from Muslim sailors, the brutal Portuguese conquests in India, then the Portuguese in the Americas alongside Spain, the Philippines, Brazil and then the Jesuits in Goa, Macau, Nagasaki and a fairly extended treatment of Ricci and his colleagues in China. The significant establishment in 1622 of the Roman Congregatio pro Propaganda Fidei, followed by some coverage of Catholic Mission in Europe (from Linda Woodhead – see below) and in Spanish America, slavery and taking the story to our own time, pope Benedict's 2007 visit to Brazil and his controversial speech concerning local cultures and the gospel. Finally, a note on Jamestown in N. America, the later Plymouth settlement and the founding of Protestantism's first missionary society: The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England in 1649. The initial cut off date for this period was 1670 but I changed it when I realized how significant 1690 was beyond the Atlantic (a.k.a. British) Isles. The Battle of the Boyne was the definitive end of any possibility England might revert to Catholicism. William of Orange's armada to cross the Channel set sail one hundred years to the day (ironically November 5<sup>th</sup>, Gut Fawkes' Day) after the Spanish Armada had sailed in the opposite direction. William's fleet was the largest fleet in the Channel until D-Day, June 1944 !

### **2008: Christianity: A Global History: Part III: 1690 – 1815:**

Reliance on MacCulloch for the second Reformation ( 'a little local difficulty'); also Tarnas for the ongoing fallout from the Second Reformation and Linda Woodhead's *An Introduction to Christianity* (C.U.P.,2004 ) for Catholic & Protestant Negotiations with Modernity; Norman Davies: *Europe: A History*, Barzun: *From Dawn to Decadence* and David Starkey's *Monarchy* for political and cultural European history; Tim Blanning: *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe: 1648 –1815* (Penguin/ Allen Lane, 2007) & Robert & Isabelle Tombs: *That Sweet Enemy* (Pimlico, 2007) for more detail.

1690 marked a turning point in the three-way series of wars and diplomacy between England, the Netherlands and France – all three were trade rivals, all three would be significant in the Christian mission story. England in fact finally saw France as the real danger and its army and navy as formidable forces. The Stuarts as pawns of the French king impressed no one, not even the pope. When Charles II, died a Catholic and his son, James II, became a Catholic, one might have expected the pope to be pleased. But Innocent XI was no fool, and had both a sense of justice and a grasp of Realpolitik. No wonder the historical appendix to a recent historical novel, *Imprimatur* by Monaldi and Sorti, claims that Pope Innocent XI, of the wealthy Como bank-ing family, the Odescalchis, secretly funded Protestant William of Orange (though not necessarily, specifically, his unopposed 'invasion' of England) to bring the Netherlands and England together against the power-mad, absolutist, Louis XIV, who was encouraging the Turks to attack Vienna, a move the pope was desperately trying to halt. Whether or not he actually lent William money, Innocent was appalled by Louis's Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and by the ham-fisted way that James II went about trying to restore Catholicism in England.

There is a further link between England/France and Constantinople in both 1453 and 1690. 1453 marked the end of the First Hundred (actually 115) Years War and 1690 the beginning of the Second Hundred (actually 127) Years War in 1815. By simplifying

history in describing two Reformations: 1000 – 1300 and 1453 – 1690 and two Hundred Years Wars (as above), I am following the usage of two reputable historians (\*MacCulloch in the first case; # Blanning in the second). Streamlining history (as in the chart below) helps us to see the big picture against which, and within which, Western Christian history and mission history has unfolded in the last millennium. It is not, of course, the only way – or the best - (whoever decides that !)

### Broad Outline of History of W. Christianity in the Second Millennium

1000 – 1300: The First Reformation\*

1338 - 1453: The First Hundred Years War#

1453 – 1690: Renaissance ,The Second Reformation and Age of Reconnaissance:\*  
Catholic Mission's heyday

1690 – 1815: The Second Hundred Years War#:  
Protestant mission gets underway

1815 – 1914: Britannia rules  
Protestant Mission's heyday/ Catholic mission revival

1914 - 1945 - 2000: World Wars, Cold War, Decolonization, USA rules:  
The Era of polycentric, more ecumenical Christian mission begins

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I began this article by referring to our understandable defensiveness about Christian mission, especially in Australia. But a balanced assessment requires that we see the broader picture. Here, to end, is the African theologian and missiologist Lamin Sanneh in the Introduction (pp xx – xxi) to his new book: *Disciples of All Nations* (OUP, 2008):

It is estimated that there are just over two billion Christians worldwide, making Christianity among the world's fastest growing religions. In terms of the languages and ethnic groups affected, as well as the variety of churches and movements involved, Christianity is also the most diverse and pluralist religion in the world. More people pray and worship in more languages and with more differences in styles of worship in Christianity than in any other religion. **Well over three thousand of the world's languages are embraced by Christianity through Bible translation, prayer, liturgy, hymns, and literature. More than 90% of these languages have a grammar and a dictionary at all only because the Western missionary movement provided them, thus pioneering arguably the largest, most diverse and most vigorous movement of cultural renewal in history.** At the same time, the post-Western Christian resurgence is occurring in societies already set in currents of indigenous religious pluralism. In addition to firsthand familiarity with at least one other religion, most new Christians speak a minimum of two languages. It is not the way a Christian in the West has been used to looking at the religion, but it is now the only way.

### Three Questions

#### A

Have we a moral-pedagogical imperative to introduce new terminologies ? I recall the shock horror in 1973 that greeted Geza Vermes's book entitled (at Lady Collins insistence !) *Jesus the Jew*. Should we not in our classroom discussion at least make a point, e.g. *Yeshua* as well as *Jesus*; *Messiah Yeshuah* – as well as *Jesus Christ* as Gary Wills and Donald Akenson have done ? An example of such pedagogical shock tactics is the title of Christopher Rowland's standard textbook: *Christian Origins: The Setting and Character of the most important Messianic Sect of Judaism* (SPCK, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 2002). Other terminologies are: Original Testament, Hebrew Bible or TENAK (Torah, Nebiim, Ketubim) (for O.T.); Renewed Testament (for the N.T.) ?

#### B

With the current seismic demographic N - S. and W - E. shift in Christianity's distribution pattern (e.g. India has 50 – 60 million Christians), will the power and authority of the existing centres of Christianity remain unaffected, retaining their authority and commanding the same loyalties in years to come ? Or will they come to be regarded as we now regard Antioch, Alexandria and Constantinople: venerable, reminders of our history, but no longer commanding universal respect and obedience ? With their own Christian populations so dramatically diminished, can allegiances to e.g. Canterbury (already crumbling) and Rome (queried) be counted on for another century ? For me this is the most intriguing question of our century.

#### C

Finally: To err is human to forgive divine. But can we forgive ourselves for the errors of our past – and present ?

Gerard Manley Hopkins ends his eco-sonnet, *God's Grandeur* with a startling but very biblical image. Ruach, the Spirit of God, is depicted as a she-dove hatching out a new world to renew / replace the one we have been so consistently, mindlessly and energetically destroying. Can we not broaden that image to include, beyond the eco-damage, the damage we have done to human individuals and cultures. Sanneh suggests that what is coming out of the destruction, blunders and disasters of the darker side of Christian mission may, surprisingly, be unexpected, unpredictable new life, from a new direction in the South and East, a re-birth that only Ruach, the renewer, can bring:

And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—  
For the Holy Ghost over the bent world broods  
With warm breast and with ah ! bright wings.

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Thank you.

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