

MISSIOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGY: LAND, IDENTITY, AND COLONIALISM
FINAL INTEGRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW
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Existentially, one's being is inextricably linked to sociopolitical realities – particularly, geographic location and intrapersonal dynamics. Further, one's subjectivity depends upon perichoretic harmony and reciprocity between God, humanity, and non-human creation. When such relationships are disrupted, both human and non-human creation suffer ecological imbalance and degradation. Though prevalent throughout history, the last five hundred years reveal the dehumanizing and commodifying implications of Western colonialism where divine, human, and non-human relationships have been syncretically manipulated to elevate certain demographics while relegating others – particularly: the divinization of “Whiteness” and demonization of Black and Brown bodies.¹ Hope for missiological reconciliation necessitates recasting theological anthropology from the “bottom up,” effectively challenging and de-centralizing Western colonial ideologies with a renewed emphasis upon Majority world experience.

This integrative literature review aims to synthesize multiple sources – namely: Ada María Isasi-Díaz's lecture *The People of God's Church in the Twenty-First Century* at Boston College, Green, Pardue, and Yeo's *So Great a Salvation: Soteriology in the Majority World*, Pinn and Valentin's *The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theology in Dialogue*, and Green & Yeo's *Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Justice, and Identity* – in considering the colonial distortion and subsequent missiological reconciliation of land and humanity. The review consists of three sections that outline the colonization of land, colonization of identity, and the missiological reconciliation of land and identity. The review will end with a concluding summary of its contents.

Colonization of Land

Colonialism relegates land to exploitable resources, effectively promoting geopolitics where “everything has a price.”² Such commodification stems from the “discovery of the new world,” where the Church justified colonial expansion on soteriological grounds – namely, the “Christianization of savages and Westernization of land.”³ Such ideologies contrast with indigenous theologies of land, where “Mother Earth” and interdependent, interconnected relationships with God, fellow humans, and non-human creation inform one's identity and subsequent responsibility.⁴ Wrestling with colonial distortion and Indigenous theology, the following section considers spatial injustice via indigenous expulsion, ecologically destructive ideologies of ownership, and the centrality of perichoretic divine, human, non-human relationships.

¹ Johnson, “Chapter Two: Faith Seeking for Land: A Theology of the landless,” in “*Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Justice, and Identity*” (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021) Green, et al., 39

² Brueggemann, “Introduction: Theologies of Land,” in “*Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Justice, and Identity*,” Green, et al., 2

³ González, “Chapter Three: Scripture, Tradition, Experience, and Imagination: A Redefinition,” in “*The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theology in Dialogue*” (New York, NY: Continuum, 2001), Pinn, et al., 70

⁴ Zacharias, “Chapter Three: The Land Takes Care of Us: Recovering Creator's Relational Design,” in “*Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Justice, and Identity*,” Green, et al., 89

Spatial Injustice

According to Johnson (Honduras) and Raheb (Palestine), colonial theologies disrupt the existential relationship between Indigenous people and the land via Biblical argumentation⁵ and “epistemic othering.”⁶ Concerning the former, Raheb expands upon Israeli and Western use of the Bible – particularly texts like Joshua and the Old Testament’s “promised land motif” – to “invent” a sacralized nation-state whereby military conquest is justified to “restore Israel’s glory” while ignoring Palestinian suffering.⁷ Likewise, Treier (Western) notes that European colonization of America was predicated upon Biblical Israel’s conquest of Canaan.⁸ Concerning the latter, Johnson identifies the epistemic invention of “new lands and people” under the guise of Christian missions as effectively promoting geographic commodification and sociopolitical subjugation – in his own words, establishing a dichotomy of global “landlords and the landless.”⁹ In conjunction with Biblical argumentation, Raheb points out that colonialists employ such “epistemic othering” to rename and, thus, “re-tradition” land in exterminating cultural ties to the land.¹⁰ Reflecting on the relocation of Indigenous children to Canadian residential schools, Aldred (First Nations - Cree) highlights diaspora as another means by which colonial powers epistemically dehumanize and overtake Indigenous populations.¹¹

Considering Indigenous experiences with colonization, Raheb, Ramantswana (South Africa), and Yeo (China) emphasize the existential crisis prompted by Biblical argumentation for conquest – namely, the contrast between colonially oppressive and Indigenous land-affirming interpretations of the Bible.¹² While reflecting on Hispanic American and Latino/a experience, González (Cuba) points out that expulsion from the land equates to paradigmatic political, economic, and historical “exile” alongside a relegated epistemological status as societal “aliens.”¹³ Pedraja (Hispanic) steps further in defining such exilic alienation as ontological “non-being” whereby Hispanics, unwelcome in both the U.S. and their native land, are effectively “landless” (to use Johnson’s term).¹⁴ In resisting spatial injustice, Raheb emphasizes that historically oppressed populations like Palestine have proven theologically resilient in outlasting

⁵ Raheb, “Chapter Two: The Bible and Land Colonization,” in “Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Justice, and Identity,” Green, et al., 11

⁶ Johnson, “Faith Seeking for Land,” 47

⁷ Raheb, “The Bible and Land Colonization,” 13-14, 20-22

⁸ Treier, “Chapter One: The New Covenant and New Creation: Western Soteriologies and the Fullness of the Gospel,” in “So Great a Salvation: Soteriology in the Majority World” (Saint Louis, MO: Langham Global Library, 2017), Green, et al., 31

⁹ Johnson, “Faith Seeking for Land,” 45-46, 49

¹⁰ Raheb, “The Bible and Land Colonization,” 23

¹¹ Aldred, “Chapter Six: An Indigenous Reinterpretation of Repentance: A Step on the Journey to Reconciliation,” in “So Great a Salvation: Soteriology in the Majority World,” Green, et al., 120, 122

¹² “Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Justice, and Identity,” Green, et al., 11, 99, 102

¹³ González, “Scripture, Tradition, Experience, and Imagination,” 64

¹⁴ Pedraja, “Chapter Eleven: Building Bridges between Communities of Struggle: Similarities, Differences, Objectives, and Goals,” in “The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theology in Dialogue,” Pinn, et al., 217

empiric domination (i.e. lament, protest, etc.).¹⁵ Said another way, while empires come and go, “the people of the land remain.”¹⁶

Ecological Destruction

Reflecting on patriarchal authority in African and Pentecostal contexts, Gabaitse (Botswana) notes that theological dualisms between the “spiritual” and “material” are used to legitimize gender inequality.¹⁷ While worth revisiting later in considering the colonization of identity, other authors seem to agree that such dualisms likewise justify the commodification and exploitation of natural resources. For instance, Aldred emphasizes that Canadian colonization was propelled by a European settlement ideology of “taming” and ultimately “owning the land.”¹⁸ Further, Johnson describes the stark contrast between European “titles of the land,” whereby land is a commodity bought and sold by the powerful, and Indigenous theologies of “Mother Earth” whereby people *belong to*, rather than *control*, the land.¹⁹ Referencing the epistemological implications of geography, Yeo notes that landscape and sacred space are “intertwined.” Thus, specific locations - like Jerusalem, Palestine, South America, Botswana (etc.) - take on contextual theological significance.²⁰

As covered in the following section, Majority World theologies emphasize the fundamental relationship between God, humanity, and non-human creation, thus promoting hamartiological disorientation²¹ and soteriological reconciliation²² in re-defining human responsibility. Concerning hamartiology, Yeo emphasizes the connection between colonial materialism, “sinning against creation,” and “environmental degradation,” natural disasters, and even the transmission of viruses.²³ Similarly, Raheb declares that “geopolitics determine the land’s fate,” thus highlighting the historical continuity and present implications of empiric exploitation.²⁴ Zacharias (Cree -Anishinaabe/Austrian) even goes so far as to critique seemingly positive theologies of “creation care” for overt anthropocentrism, effectively “de-sacralizing” the land in asserting human autonomy and control over creation.²⁵

Perichoretic Divine, Human, and Non-Human Relationships

Particularly noteworthy are Aldred and Zacharias’s discourses on Indigenous theological anthropology that expand on the relational essence of the Imago Dei in light of God’s life-giving, response empowering Grace. Zacharias outlines the “theocentric” realities of God’s “creation, filling, and blessing” throughout Genesis one, thereby emphasizing the “relational web” inherent

¹⁵ Raheb, “*The Bible and Land Colonization*,” 25-27

¹⁶ Raheb, “*The Bible and Land Colonization*,” 29-32

¹⁷ Gabaitse, “*Chapter Three: Luke 4:18-19 and Salvation: Marginalization of Women in the Pentecostal Church in Botswana*,” in “*So Great a Salvation: Soteriology in the Majority World*,” Green, et al., 71-72

¹⁸ Aldred, “*An Indigenous Reinterpretation of Repentance*,” 118

¹⁹ Johnson, “*Faith Seeking for Land*,” 42

²⁰ Yeo, “*Conclusion: Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Justice, and Covenantal Identity*,” in “*Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Justice, and Identity*,” Green, et al., 139

²¹ Zacharias, “*The Land Takes Care of Us*,” 83, 85, 89, 91

²² Aldred, “*An Indigenous Reinterpretation of Repentance*,” 127

²³ Yeo, “*Theologies of Land*,” 135

²⁴ Raheb, “*The Bible and Land Colonization*,” 25-26

²⁵ Zacharias, “*The Land Takes Care of Us*,” 72-74

to human and non-human life and, particularly, their co-creative responsibility.²⁶ Brueggemann adds that God’s connection with creation is both *corporeal* and *dialogical*, thus declaring God’s care for material creation and, like Zacharias, relational connection with humans and non-human creation.²⁷ Such interdependent and responsive relationships ultimately reflect perichoretic love – a reflection of Trinitarian communion in which divine, human, and non-human differences are embraced in unifying love. Similarly, Isasi-Díaz (Cuba) argues that differences serve as necessary “boundaries” at which relationships become possible.²⁸

As highlighted in the preceding subheading, Majority World theologies stress relational hamartiology and soteriology in contrast to traditionally individualistic Western theologies.²⁹ Said further, the implications of sin include both sinners and other persons – the “sinned against.” Likewise, authentic salvation necessitates reconciliatory healing.³⁰ Thus understood, Johnson interprets colonial sin as the disruption and subsequent exploitation of divine, human, and non-human relationships via colonial supplantation of God in self-divinization.³¹ In this regard, Aldred describes the cascading effects of colonial sin upon Indigenous Canadians and the land, severing “primary relationships” that informed the flourishing of Indigenous people and the ecosystem.³² In unison with other Majority World theologies, Ramantswana proclaims that an authentic liberation of the colonially oppressed isn’t possible unless the land is likewise liberated – in other words, holistic salvation in which both human and non-human creation are reconciled to one another and, ultimately, to God.³³

Colonization of Identity

As expressed thus far, land and identity are inseparable; to exploit one directly impacts the other.³⁴ However, colonialism reaches beyond “the surface” - seemingly material dimensions like diaspora - to intentionally distort Indigenous identity by imputing culturally self-deprecating epistemologies that idolize colonialists while justifying racially exploitative hierarchies, like slavery and land rights. In this regard, focusing on identity, the following section will consider the expulsion of Indigenous identity via Western relegation, the self-image projected onto the colonially oppressed, and the Majority World equivocation of salvation as “re-humanization.”

Indigenous Identity and Western Relegation

The authors generally agree that “epistemic othering” undergirds colonial infrastructure. Building on Johnson’s work concerning the “discovery of the new world” and subsequent

²⁶ Zacharias, “*The Land Takes Care of Us*,” 72-81, 85, 90-91

²⁷ Brueggemann, “*Theologies of Land*,” 4

²⁸ Isasi-Díaz, “*The People of God’s Church in the Twenty-First Century*” (Lecture, Boston College, 2004, Chestnut Hill, MA, Video, 00:53:20) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umRplau9Y4Q&t=3s>

²⁹ Kerema, “*Chapter Two: Telling our Stories: Salvation in the African Context*,” in “*So Great a Salvation: Soteriology in the Majority World*,” Green, et al., 49

³⁰ Aldred, “*An Indigenous Reinterpretation of Repentance*,” 127

³¹ Johnson, “*Faith Seeking for Land*,” 48

³² Aldred, “*An Indigenous Reinterpretation of Repentance*,” 122

³³ Ramantswana, “*Chapter Four: Negotiation and/or Conquest of the Land: Reading the Land of Promise Motif in the Hexateuch through Decolonial Lenses*,” in “*Theologies of Land: Contested Land, Spatial Justice, and Identity*,” Green, et al., 106

³⁴ Yeo, “*Theologies of Land*,” 135

colonial “re-imagination,”³⁵ Ramantswana argues that the sixteenth-century Church inaugurated a “doctrine of discovery” that legitimized “the racialization of human society,” thereby promoting European superiority and indigenous inferiority.³⁶ In a similar vein, reflecting on Canadian colonization, Aldred notes that accusations of heresy were used to justify violence against Indigenous peoples, viewed by colonists as “problems to be solved.”³⁷ Johnson explains that European colonists rhetorically questioned “Indigenous humanity,”³⁸ a point whereby Hopkins (African American) and Gabaitse challenge colonial definitions of “Blackness as synonymous with evil”³⁹ and spiritualized soteriologies that dismiss embodied experiences like slavery and patriarchy.⁴⁰ Stewart (African American) goes further in examining the dualistic implications of Augustinian theological anthropology used by colonists to dehumanize Africans as “soulless bodies.”⁴¹ Effectively summarizing these comments, Isasi-Díaz poignantly proclaims that such sociocultural categorization assigns consequences to dissimilarities and, ultimately, positions humans hierarchically according to their differences.⁴² She goes on to describe colonial awareness as a “boomerang perception” in which colonizers project their experience, traditions, and biases *onto* Indigenous cultures, thereby assuming Indigenous autonomy or subservience based on the “mirroring” of Western civilization.⁴³

Colonization and Indigenous Self-Image

Yeo considers land to possess existential dimensions that inform human communication and communion.⁴⁴ In this regard, Aldred and Johnson have already highlighted sin as a “falling out of balance” with God, creation, and self,⁴⁵ and that loss of land is ultimately a loss of identity.⁴⁶ However, Aldred also emphasizes that colonists employ racism to cultivate cultural and self-deprecating shame that, in turn, idolizes oppressors.⁴⁷ Regarding the African American experience, Pinn (African American) describes such racial methodology as promoting “ontological Blackness” - a narrow and relegated identity crafted by White oppressors.⁴⁸ Pineda-Madrid stresses that such racialization and colonial suffering are passed on generationally,⁴⁹

³⁵ Johnson, “*Faith Seeking for Land*,” 39

³⁶ Ramantswana, “*Negotiation and/or Conquest of the Land*,” 100-101

³⁷ Aldred, “*An Indigenous Reinterpretation of Repentance*,” 117-118, 121

³⁸ Johnson, “*Faith Seeking for Land*,” 42

³⁹ Hopkins, “*Chapter Five: Black Theology on God: The Divine in Black Popular Religion*,” in “*The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theology in Dialogue*,” Pinn, et al., 101

⁴⁰ Gabaitse, “*Luke 4:18-19 and Salvation*,” we will have 60, 66-72

⁴¹ Stewart, “*Chapter Nine: Christian Doctrines of Humanity and the African Experience of Evil and Suffering: Toward a Black Theological Anthropology*,” in “*The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theology in Dialogue*,” Pinn, et al., 171-174

⁴² Isasi-Díaz, “*The People of God’s Church in the Twenty-First Century*”

⁴³ Isasi-Díaz, “*The People of God’s Church in the Twenty-First Century*”

⁴⁴ Yeo, “*Theologies of Land*,” 134

⁴⁵ Aldred, “*An Indigenous Reinterpretation of Repentance*,” 125

⁴⁶ Johnson, “*Faith Seeking for Land*,” 50

⁴⁷ Aldred, “*An Indigenous Reinterpretation of Repentance*,” 122-124

⁴⁸ Pinn, “*Chapter One: Black Theology in Historical Perspective: Articulating the Quest for Subjectivity*,” in “*The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theology in Dialogue*,” Pinn, et al., 33

⁴⁹ Pineda-Madrid, “*Chapter Ten: In Search of a Theology of Suffering, Latinamente*,” in “*The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theology in Dialogue*,” Pinn, et al., 192

which, in Johnson's view, reveals the historical perpetuation of colonizing ideologies via diaspora and socioeconomic injustice.⁵⁰ He later considers Latin America as a historic example of geopolitical colonization and “self-deceptive liberation” given the consistent grip of Western nations (particularly, the U.S.) and the seemingly self-autonomous, though unknowingly subversive, adoption of capitalistic politics and Western culture by Latin Americans.⁵¹ In a similar vein, Stewart highlights the covert perpetuation of colonial racial hierarchies within anti-slavery movements, denouncing human bondage while simultaneously divinizing White culture.⁵² Essentially summarizing what these authors have shared, Isasi-Díaz laments that longstanding economic exploitation has “corroded the souls” of Latinas families and, likewise, perpetuated negative self-worth in light of their powerlessness.⁵³ If crushing self-deprecation leading to disharmony with God, neighbors, non-human creation, and oneself is colonial sin, then what hope does the gospel offer for the Majority World?

Majority World Soteriology: Re-Humanization

In considerable irony, most authors argue that Majority World theologies discover soteriological healing within the same methodologies used by their oppressors – namely, epistemic reconciliation in light of God’s identification with the oppressed.⁵⁴ Reminiscent of Rahab’s “colonial renaming,”⁵⁵ Valentin (Hispanic) proclaims that Indigenous people harness such power in “self-naming” and, thus, self-determination apart from colonial oppression.⁵⁶ However, Hopkins carefully emphasizes that such self-determination stems from divine/human encounters that constitute a “new humanity” for the marginalized - said further, that “knowledge of God” leads to an epistemic liberation from colonial oppression and reinforces cultural identity.⁵⁷ Alongside other authors, Hopkins explains that such encounters with God promote “popular theologies” whereby culture and experience serve as a primary hermeneutical lens.⁵⁸ In this regard, Anderson (African American) considers the popular religion of slaves to be an essential catalyst in cultivating subjectivity (i.e. one’s personhood) and a “culture of survival” amidst White oppression.⁵⁹ Further, reflecting on Salvadorean responses to oppression, Recinos (Hispanic) argues that active resistance to political injustice is itself a process of re-

⁵⁰ Johnson, “*Faith Seeking for Land*,” 39

⁵¹ Johnson, “*Faith Seeking for Land*,” 51-54

⁵² Stewart, “*Christian Doctrines of Humanity and the African Experience of Evil and Suffering*,” 176-179

⁵³ Isasi-Díaz, “*Chapter Seven: Preoccupations, Themes, and Proposals of Mujerista Theology*,” in *The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theology in Dialogue*,” Pinn, et al., 136

⁵⁴ Hopkins, “*Black Theology on God*,” 100, 102, 106

⁵⁵ Raheb, “*The Bible and Land Colonization*,” 23

⁵⁶ Valentin, “*Chapter Two: Strangers No More: An Introduction to, and an Interpretation of, U.S. Hispanic/Latino/a Theology*,” in “*The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theology in Dialogue*,” Pinn, et al., 45

⁵⁷ Hopkins, “*Black Theology on God*,” 105, 107-112

⁵⁸ Hopkins, “*Black Theology on God*,” 99

⁵⁹ Anderson, “*Chapter Four: ‘We See Through a Glass Darkly’: Black Narrative Theology and the Opacity of African American Religious Thought*,” in “*The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theology in Dialogue*,” Pinn, et al., 86

humanization.⁶⁰ Elaborating on Mujerista theology, Isasi-Díaz proclaims that Latinas have begun cultivating new, culturally and contextually authentic identities in response to their oppression.⁶¹ Likewise, González emphasizes that Hispanic theology and tradition, while rejected by colonizers, have been passed down “on the laps of abuelitas,”⁶² thereby challenging generational shame and fostering a theologically robust cultural identity.

Missio Dei – Reconciliation of Land and Identity

Having wrestled with the ecological and epistemic implications of colonialism, the following section will consider the gospel as an embodied proclamation throughout the Majority World – particularly, regarding God’s new covenant and in-breaking kingdom, hermeneutical and ecclesial plurality, and the global Church’s missiological responsibility to participate in ecological and sociopolitical reconciliation. In passing, it’s worth emphasizing the stark disparity between Western and Majority World theologies: the former driven by individualism and soteriological dualisms (i.e. corporeal deprecation in favor of disembodied, “spiritual salvation”), and the latter oriented around communal identity and ecological flourishing. However, as Aldred proposes, there remains an opportunity for the West and Majority world – namely, for historic oppressors and the oppressed - to enter repentant dialogue in “writing a new story”⁶³ - one defined by God’s missional reconciliation.

The New Covenant and In-Breaking Kingdom

As covered earlier (*Spatial Injustice*), colonial hermeneutics rationalize national conquest while crushing Indigenous subjectivity. Challenging such interpretive authoritarianism, Brueggemann argues that the Bible includes both a narrative of *predation* (i.e. conquest) and a counternarrative of *emancipation* whereby God acts on behalf of the oppressed.⁶⁴ Likewise, Ramantswana highlights the dichotomy between Biblical Israel’s patriarchal hospitality (Gen.) and later colonial ideology (Exod. - Kings).⁶⁵ In contrast to colonial hermeneutics, Majority World theologies stress the soteriological implications of Christ’s incarnation *and* atonement – described by Treier as the new covenant whereby God embraces both spiritual and material dimensions.⁶⁶ Said further, salvation is both *present* and *future*. God transcends colonial injustice to “identify with” the poor and powerless; representative of the “Mestizo Jesus” in which González proclaims Hispanic popular religions discover liberating hope.⁶⁷ Yet such hope is likewise grounded in the eschatological reality of God’s *in-breaking* kingdom - brought about by God’s missiological activity and, emphasized by Acosta (Columbia), the Church’s empowered response.⁶⁸ Similarly, Isasi-Díaz’s Mujerista theology intentionally uses “kin-dom” to denote the

⁶⁰ Recinos, “Chapter Six: Popular Religion, Political Identity, and Life-Story Testimony in an Hispanic Community,” in “*The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theology in Dialogue*,” Pinn, et al., 122-123

⁶¹ Isasi-Díaz, “Preoccupations, Themes, and Proposals of Mujerista Theology,” 137-142

⁶² González, “Scripture, Tradition, Experience, and Imagination,” 64-65

⁶³ Aldred, “An Indigenous Reinterpretation of Repentance,” 136

⁶⁴ Brueggemann, “Theologies of Land,” 1

⁶⁵ Ramantswana, “Negotiation and/or Conquest of the Land,” 114-119

⁶⁶ Treier, “The New Covenant and New Creation,” 29, 32-36

⁶⁷ González, “Scripture, Tradition, Experience, and Imagination,” 62

⁶⁸ Acosta, “Chapter Five: From What Do We Need to Be Saved? Reflections on God’s Justice and Material Salvation,” in “*So Great a Salvation: Soteriology in the Majority World*,” Green, et al., 105-107

anticipatory reality and present ecclesial work toward relational reconciliation.⁶⁹ Reminiscent of Brueggemann while likewise considering Yeo’s emphasis on soteriological re-humanization⁷⁰ and the present/eschatological dimensions of missiological reconciliation, Martínez-Olivieri proclaims that the gospel has inaugurated an alternative “human praxis” of actively confronting structural injustice.⁷¹ Further, as will be addressed in the following sub-section, Martínez-Olivieri argues that salvation is “not fully lived until it reaches the temporalities of human existence,”⁷² thus requiring sociopolitical self-examination in cultivating a renewed, missiologically authentic ecclesiology.

Hermeneutical and Ecclesial Plurality

Reflecting on the inspiration behind *Theologies of Land*, Yeo explains that Majority World theologies and Biblical interpretations must be re-prioritized given their historic exclusion from Western-centric and, thus, Scripturally and theologically inauthentic ecclesial dialogue.⁷³ In this regard, Isasi-Díaz declares that all theologies are contextual and must be “demystified” to expose interpretive limitations and biases.⁷⁴ As a crucial example, she argues that the “epistemic privilege of the poor and oppressed” - the unique ability of the poor and powerless to “dream” God’s activity within the world – is an essential missiological dimension that counters Western theologies of individualism and consumerism.⁷⁵ In this way, all authors agree that the Church must embrace Majority World experience and Scriptural interpretation to cultivate hermeneutical and ecclesial plurality – namely, unity amidst diversity that reflects Trinitarian perichoresis.⁷⁶

Regarding hermeneutics, Pedraja explains that liberation theologies read Scripture “from the ground up” and against oppression.⁷⁷ Likewise, challenging colonial interpretation, Raheb stresses that authentic understandings of the Bible must “listen to” Indigenous voices given the relevance of their suffering, struggle, and hope to exegesis, and, further, the fundamental theme of liberation throughout Scripture.⁷⁸ Regarding ecclesiology, the introduction to *The Ties that Bind* argues that theology must become intercultural discourse promoting overarching systems of meaning, holistic imagination, communal integrity, activism, and solidarity.⁷⁹ Effectively countering Western apprehension and “scarcity” informed resistance to ecclesial plurality, Yeo

⁶⁹ Isasi-Díaz, “*The People of God’s Church in the Twenty-First Century*”

⁷⁰ Yeo, “Introduction: *So Great a Salvation: Soteriology in the Majority World*,” in “*So Great a Salvation: Soteriology in the Majority World*,” Green, et al., 7

⁷¹ Martínez-Olivieri “*Chapter Four: Con Las Venas Abiertas: The Hope of Life and Salvation in Latin American Theologies*,” in “*So Great a Salvation: Soteriology in the Majority World*,” Green, et al., 79

⁷² Martínez-Olivieri “*Con Las Venas Abiertas*,” 83

⁷³ Yeo, “*Theologies of Land*,” 136

⁷⁴ Isasi-Díaz, “*Preoccupations, Themes, and Proposals of Mujerista Theology*,” 137

⁷⁵ Isasi-Díaz, “*The People of God’s Church in the Twenty-First Century*”

⁷⁶ Chung, “*Chapter Seven: Salvation as Reconciliation: Toward a Theology of Reconciliation in the Division of the Korean Peninsula*,” in “*So Great a Salvation: Soteriology in the Majority World*,” Green, et al., 147-148

⁷⁷ Pedraja, “*Building Bridges between Communities of Struggle*,” 209

⁷⁸ Raheb, “*The Bible and Land Colonization*,” 28, 32

⁷⁹ “*Introduction*,” in “*The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theology in Dialogue*,” Pinn, et al., 18-20

proclaims that authentic theological discourse is grounded in “empowerment, creative transformation, and meaningful Biblical translation” that unite the Church amidst its diversity.⁸⁰

The Church’s Participation in Missiological Reconciliation

Regarding common Western apprehension surrounding “liberation” theologies, Martínez-Olivieri argues that such an adjective points toward a qualitative dimension of the gospel necessary for all theology to embrace *rather than* a sub-branch of hierarchical systematics.⁸¹ Said further, she proclaims that the “Church is Christ’s broker of embodied salvation and has a decided preference for theologizing in light of those who suffer.”⁸² Characteristic of an Old Testament scholar, Brueggemann argues that the contemporary Western Church requires a prophetic “epistemic crisis,” like Psalm 73, where the allure of materialism and normalizations of predatory power are exposed through divine encounter⁸³ - ultimately, a “means of grace” in which Western Christians rediscover the inadequacy of self-sufficiency and, subsequently, God’s provisional leading. As was the case with Israel’s prophets, such epistemic crises facilitate opportunities for ecclesial reorientation to the *Missio Dei* whereby Western Christians can partner with Majority World theologies in discerning and enhancing sociopolitical realities.⁸⁴ However, Pinn emphasizes that authentic sociopolitical liberation and reconciliation are reciprocally mutual and dialogical,⁸⁵ thus highlighting the necessity of ecclesial plurality and intercultural relationships. Like the “epistemic privilege of the poor and oppressed,”⁸⁶ Pedraja argues that intercultural dialogue is necessary if the Church is to challenge geopolitical injustice faithfully.⁸⁷ Likewise, as argued by Aldred, such dialogue includes ecological restoration and reconciliation whereby divine, human, and non-human relationships are restored;⁸⁸ a soteriological facet too often overlooked by Western commodification. Beyond a reformed awareness of sustainable living and environmentally hospitable practices, Ramantswana proclaims that the Western Church must also wrestle with “incomplete liberation” where historic colonialism is perpetuated by the failure to return indigenous land.⁸⁹ Effectively summarizing these points, Johnson advocates for “decolonial theologies” in which Western-centric epistemologies and theologies are “myth-busted,” thus challenging colonial “monstrafications” of Indigenous peoples while likewise promoting the “re-traditioning” of land predicated upon Indigenous voices, culture, and experience.⁹⁰ Altogether, Aldred’s emphasis on repentant reconciliation and a “renewed story” between oppressors and the oppressed proves a hopeful paradigm for cultivating eschatological ecclesial plurality in the here and now.⁹¹

⁸⁰ Yeo, “*Theologies of Land*,” 152

⁸¹ Martínez-Olivieri “*Con Las Venas Abiertas*,” 80

⁸² Martínez-Olivieri “*Con Las Venas Abiertas*,” 80

⁸³ Brueggemann, “*Theologies of Land*,” 6-7

⁸⁴ “*Introduction*,” in “*The Ties that Bind: African American and Hispanic American/Latino/a Theology in Dialogue*,” Pinn, et al., 13

⁸⁵ Pinn, “*Black Theology in Historical Perspective*,” 26

⁸⁶ Isasi-Díaz, “*The People of God’s Church in the Twenty-First Century*”

⁸⁷ Pedraja, “*Building Bridges between Communities of Struggle*,” 209

⁸⁸ Aldred, “*An Indigenous Reinterpretation of Repentance*,” 136

⁸⁹ Ramantswana, “*Negotiation and/or Conquest of the Land*,” 114

⁹⁰ Johnson, “*Faith Seeking for Land*,” 57-65

⁹¹ Aldred, “*An Indigenous Reinterpretation of Repentance*,” 136

Conclusion

Though historically relegated, the ecclesial re-prioritization of the Majority World has challenged Western colonial theologies of geographic commodification and ethnic oppression. The land isn't a series of resources to be exploited for gain but an intricate member within the perichoretic unity of God, humans, and non-human creation. Likewise, ethnic diversity isn't an epistemic hierarchy necessitating authoritarianism, but a necessary plurality whereby all experiences, interpretations, and eschatological hopes are embraced for the flourishing of the Church and creation. To sin by manipulating land or relegating Indigenous peoples is to distort the intrinsic interdependence between God and all members of creation. Though bearing a dark history of colonial syncretization, there is still hope for prophetic reform and reconciliation between the West and the Majority World. However, Western Christians must be willing to undergo the challenging work of corporate reflection and fostering intercultural dialogue if such missiological reconciliation – namely, the in-breaking of God's kingdom – is to be cultivated within creation.

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