

Christological Difficulties at IAMS 10 – Part II

Colleagues,

Exactly two years ago this very week (it was May 13) Thursday Theology #1 went out into cyberspace. So today's ThTh 100 is a bit special—if for no other reason than that we've been blessed to get this far—and also blessed with over 500 of you now on this listserve. ThTh 100 is special in another way, namely, it's the longest ThTh piece we've ever posted—46K characters (=12 hard copy pages). Today's text represents Part II of my comments on the Christology we encountered at the missiology conference Robin, Marie and I attended earlier this year. That was the Tenth Conference of the International Association for Mission Studies meeting at the Univ. of Pretoria (Hamanskraal campus) January 21-28, 2000. [Part I of this report was posted as ThTh #94.](#) If 12 pages are just too much, lay them aside, but don't run away. Next week's posting will be shorter.

Peace & Joy!

Ed

Part II. CHRISTOLOGY IN THE PLENARY PAPERS AT IAMS X

[Background: [Part I of this essay \(March 30, 2000\)](#) spoke of the "christological difficulties" we had at IAMS 10. The fundamental difficulty was that we hardly ever talked about Christology at all during our 8-days together. In Part One I concocted some abbreviations that I'll also use here in part Two. I abbreviated the conference theme's two parts as follows: JCCL was short-hand for "Jesus Christ Crucified and Living..." and TBW was "...Today's

Broken World.” Two more code symbols signalled the double meaning of the key term “reflecting.” “Reflect-T” was reflection as thinking. “Reflect-M” was reflecting as in a mirror.]

I. **A. J. V. CHANDRAKANTHAN “Proclaiming the Crucified Christ in a Broken World: An Asian Perspective”**The printed text of AJVC’s paper that I brought home from IAMS 10 does not fully match the notes I took while he was speaking—and that in two significant places.

1. My notes record considerable time devoted to six distinct images in St. Paul’s christology. In the printed text that’s all condensed to one single sentence.
2. Fully half of the printed text carries the title: “A Broken World: Glimpses of a War Experience.” It is the author’s jeremiad on the civil war in Sri Lanka, illustrated with his own first-hand experience of holocaust-like horrors inflicted on the Tamil community there. The data are dreadful. However I don’t remember hearing any of that in his plenary presentation. Did it happen or am I having a “senior moment?”

The six Pauline metaphors for Christology that AJVC gave us were powerful, and could have been foundational for plenary work on JCCL. This high Christology is the best resource Christians have for crossing over to the broken world so frightfully reported in the last half of the paper. But that did not happen in the paper, nor in the subsequent discussion we had. Yet these christology items are too good to go to waste. So I’ll try my own hand at making some linkages below.

In a private conversation afterwards, reported by Fritz Frei, Chandrakanthan offered this summary:

- A. Jesus Christ, crucified and living in our world via Word, sacrament and in reality, is for Paul the content of life and proclamation. Despite the scandalous humiliation associated with this mode of death Paul sees Jesus' crucifixion as the historical source of God's redemptive intervention. The apostle strives relentlessly to mediate this mystery by taking every facet of daily life he can imagine and using it for this purpose. From cultic life he presents the cross as expiation; from economics it is God's new covenant (new contract for exchange of goods and services); from political life it's ransom; from daily street life it's Shalom, God's new greeting of peace to people; from the courtroom it's righteousness and justification; from the realm of personal relations it's reconciliation. In this way Paul portrays this action of God as inexpressible, yet genuine rescue, linked then with the invitation to proclaim this "good news" to the ends of the earth.
- B. In the context of the socio-religious and political spectrum of Asia this crucified brokenness of God is evident among his people and in the current realities of every stratum of daily life. Frightful is the brokenness manifest in the never-ending conflict between Singhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka. Over 60,000 Tamilian civilians, mostly women and children, have died in the mayhem. And all the while the official church keeps its distance, observing this unending crucifixion in much the same way as the onlookers who stood back and watched the events of Mt. Calvary. Sri Lanka symbolizes Asia's brokenness in most brutal fashion. Only a genuine church of the poor and powerless, the weak and the

bleeding, will have the courage to take up this daily cross, to carry the sign of the cross and point prophetically to a hopeful future in the power of God and the Spirit of Christ. The church is called to identify the sins of the world, for which the poor carry the burden. The God of the Bible is on their side. The church is commissioned to discover her calling as community in Christ by constantly seeking reconciliation between the powers that divide. In taking her place at the side of the poor and helpless, the church makes God's constant and concrete presence visible and palpable in their midst. The mission of the Asiatic church is rooted here. Here is the place to be disciples of Christ.

Comment:

where and how does Chandrakanthan connect paragraphs A and B? Para A is solid JCCL. Para B is grim TBW. But do the twain meet other than in the fact of crucifixion in each one? Not really. There's not much good news in noting that Jesus was crucified and, sure enough, Tamilians are being crucified too. But Paul's high Christology of the crucified Lord and the myriad Tamil crosses could be crossed theologically with one another, couldn't they? So that the former would be a resource for coping with the latter. Perhaps something like this:

1. In all six of Paul's metaphors for portraying the cross of Christ, the agenda is humankind's "God-problem." Not our problem in believing in God, but our conflict with God. Every one of the metaphors conveys "good news" because it remedies a prior "bad news" situation. Christ's cross is (cultic) expiation because it removes barriers blocking access to God. It is new covenant, God's new

personal contract wherein God “remembers our sins no more.” It is political in liberating slaves from alien owners into God’s own realm of mercy-management. It is Shalom in restoring rectitude in personal relations between God and humans. It is forensic courtroom stuff in that “the accuser has been thrown out” of the divine court since the “blood of the Lamb” has been entered into the record on behalf of the (otherwise rightfully) accused.

2. It is reconciliation, as Paul calls it in II Cor 5, but not to be understood as two parties once at odds now becoming friends again. Instead Paul is using reconciliation as a commercial metaphor [like reconciling your checkbook with the bank’s statement], which Luther liked to call the “froehlicher Wechsel.” Joyful transfer, a fantastic exchange, a sweet swap. It’s all about exchanging assets and liabilities—Christ’s assets for our liabilities. In Christ’s crucifixion our liabilities move to his account with all the consequences which that entails, and Christ’s assets are transferred to us with all the benefits thereunto appertaining. In Paul’s own words: “In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses [i.e., the law’s kind of commerce] against them.” Instead “for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin [i.e., our liabilities transferred to one who had none such on his own] so that in him we might become the righteousness of God [i.e., Christ’s assets transferred to us (former) sinners].”
3. JCCL solves the God-problem of the human race. In I Cor 3 Paul speaks of it as freedom. “Where the Spirit of the Lord [Christ] is, there is freedom.” (v.17) Christ-trusters, Christ-connected sinners,

are free from any god-problem. They now “have confidence toward God through Christ.”[I Cor 3:4] Run this freedom through the metaphors AJVC offered us: Free from barricaded access to God (cultic); from God’s trespass-counting (commercial); from alien owners (political); from accusation before the divine bench (forensic); from other negatives now replaced by God’s mercy-management in relating to us. This God-freedom is new grounding, new rooting to nourish other freedoms. Initially my own internal freedom—in the heart. Call it faith, namely, the confidence that the God-freedom just described is indeed true about me. Consequently I don’t need to keep focusing on my God-connection, but can devote my energies elsewhere, for example, to TBW.

4. Which is what AJVC does. He agonizes that in a country so full of religion as Sri Lanka—Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian—people committed to these religions have no significant effect on the “apocalypse now” unfolding there. Paul would wonder whether any of the four groups mentioned, Christians included, are free enough to do what AJVC pleads for. Apart from what might be said for the other groups, Christians—if they indeed are the silent observers AJVC portrays—are the ones who have forgotten JCCL. They need to be diagnosed, not first of all for their defective ethics, but for their defective faith. If the fruits are bad, says Jesus, the tree is sick. You don’t tell the tree to bear good fruit. You first have to re-root it, re-root it into JCCL. Faith before ethics. Otherwise you get no Christian ethics at all.
5. In NT language the opposite of faith is fear. Who knows what all the things are that bystander

Christians in Sri Lanka fear? From my distance I can only guess: fear of ridicule, fear of criticism, fear of repercussions on family, fear of getting killed myself, fear of doing the wrong thing despite my best intentions, fear of getting in trouble with my own tribal associates, and more. When Christians are under diagnosis of such inaction, the root fear is that JCCL can't sustain me, won't sustain me, when I do indeed confront any or all of the above.

6. When fear spreads its tentacles around the heart, freedom dies. And for folks like that, as Paul tells the Galatians, slavery has returned to subvert the "freedom wherewith Christ has set us free." For such cases, it's back to square one. The putative Christians need to be evangelized again—at the base, at their own roots. The God-connection—both good and new—brought by JCCL must be re-established. If it is not, freedom for Christ's kind of courageous word and action in TBW will never happen. Fear will (continue to) carry the day, and mayhem multiply. When Jesus tells the panic-stricken father (Mark 5:36): "Fear not, only believe," he is articulating this very axiom. Fear is un-faith in JCCL. It barricades acts of freedom. Trusting JCCL is freedom. ["Jesus means Freedom," E. Kaesemann once titled one of his books.] Faith-grounded freedom mobilizes folks formerly fearful for acts of freedom, the acts that AJVC calls for in the face of the slaughter in Sri Lanka.
7. Here once more the sequence is important. To get Christians moved to the courageous (and dangerous!) ethics of discipleship, you first have to check the faith factor. AJVC emphasized Paul's fascination with the term "power" (dynamis) for Christ's

significance: the cross is the power of God for salvation. Faith in Christ makes that power my own and that generates the freedom for us to enter TBW as Christ's field representatives. "Lord, increase our faith," is step one for any act of Christian freedom. Though we are justified by this faith alone, says Paul, it never remains "alone," but moves directly into TBW as faith active in love.

8. I can't imagine that there aren't such free-by-faith Christ-followers working in TBW of Sri Lanka. But their number may be small, vastly smaller than the official Christian population of the land. But even if I lived there, I'd be ignorant of the actual situation, for faith's freedom is often hidden. That doesn't mean it's absent. It just can't be photographed. You can't tell by looking whose heart is free, whose is fear-full. It can be faked, although when one's own life is at stake, faked Christian freedom usually fades. Yet faith's kind of freedom pops up in surprising places. Sometimes (most times?) it shows up as "widow's mite" events, where the poor and oppressed themselves give away their lives in words and acts grounded in Christ's "Fear not, only believe."
9. But what is that, someone may say, among so many fear-driven folks, the ones who seem to run the show in Sri Lanka? Granted, fear is perhaps the most powerful force that drives human history in both its macro- and micro-formats. And faith's kind of freedom—also freedom from fear—cannot be legislated, any more than faith itself (trusting Christ) can be coerced. For those who do not, will not, live by such faith—and that includes putative Christians—Paul suggests here and there in his

epistles that God has another “system” in place. In that system God works to keep the old creation from totally blowing apart. God gets a modicum of equity and caring done in human society even when fear-filled humans are the only agents God has to implement the program. Paul talks about the law [n.b., not the Gospel] inscribed in human hearts, which he interprets as a plus for common life in our fallen world. He also speaks of the godly coercion exercised by Caesar’s “sword.” Paul does not think he’s thereby promoting violence. His logic is that a sinner’s self-interest will more often than not constrain him to do what’s right in civil society and get a reward, rather than to do what’s wrong and have to pay for it. How this might be linked to TBW in Sri Lanka is another essay for which I am patently incompetent. Besides, such considerations go beyond the assignment to link JCCL with TBW using the Christological models AJVC gave us. That is what I sought to do above.

- II. **PAULO SUESS “The Gratuitousness of the Presence of Christ in the Broken World of the Poor of Latin America”** Paulo’s title already signals the Christology he proposes. He wants to show us that Christ is present, present in his explicit gratuitousness [freely bestowed gift-giving], in the broken world of the poor in Latin America. [Hereafter L.A.] Though he offers no separate Christological section—as AJVC did with his survey of Paul’s christological images—this Christology permeates his paper. The 500-year long crucifixion of Latin America’s indigenous peoples is the same reality we have in the crucifixion of Jesus. Not just similar (as AJVC saw in the Tamilian crucifixions in Sri Lanka), but all of the same piece. That sameness is more than just the identical

suffering, injustice, agony in both parties. In both we have the same redemptive, revelatory, salvific resources, the same good news. At least for L.A. the gospel is an ellipse. Its two centers are JCCL and the corollary messianic power of Amerindian suffering peoples.

Put that way it does sound radical. Does the christology of 2 Corinthians 5 invite us to add Amerindians into the claim that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself"? Are the "poor and the Other" co-redeemers with Jesus for the life of the world? Statements from Paulo sound like that. E.g., "The poor and Others...give rise, not only to new inculturations of traditional christology, but to NEW CHRISTOLOGICAL THEOLOGIES." "The poor...the Others...ARE God with us, Emmanuel, Jesus Christ crucified and living amongst us." "The poor, those excluded, migrants and indigenous peoples [are] bearers of the good news of The Way." There is a "link between the PRESENCE of the Lord and the life of the poor." "Jesus Christ [is] present in the penury . . . of the poor and the Others." He can designate it the "latest linking of [God's] Third Covenant, a universal, historical and eschatological covenant of the poor and the Others."

That is forthright speech. In Pretoria we never got around to checking it, to raising the question: Paulo, is it true? What are your grounds, your foundations, for this "new christological theology?" How "new" is it when laid alongside "traditional christology?" The animating agony that moves Paulo in this paper is clear. It is today's "new" world, the market economy of global capitalism. Its consequences for the people he lives and works with is their never-ending crucifixion, a crucifixion that already has a 500-year history. The Pilates, Herods and centurions were the European conquistadors and all too often the

church's agents who accompanied them. So the polarities in his paper are the crucified and the crucifiers, the victims and the criminals.

When JCCL is brought into the discussion, it is no surprise that the crucified are close to JCCL, and the criminals nowhere near. Yet Paulo would like to bring them (us) nearer to the original JCCL. That entails bringing them nearer to the currently crucified. I sense that this is his strategy: To show us the full-Christic reality—messianic, salvific—in the currently crucified, so that we might thereby see aright what the original JCCL really was and still is.

Not surprisingly, Luke 4 is his grounding text. From the outset this has been the “canon within the canon” for Latin American liberation theology. Here Jesus appropriates for himself Israel's ancient Jubilee proclamation. Says Paulo: “Jesus takes this unrealized goal [i.e., scant evidence that it ever happened in Israel's history] and makes it the programmatic announcement of his life.” His argument to support this rests on three key terms: gratuitousness (sharing), closeness (incarnation, inculturation), and universality (non-exclusion, going beyond the boundaries of blood and race).

I'm not sure what gratuitousness all means in Portuguese. The signals I hear in Paulo's use of it as an English term are that creation is gift-laden and God is fundamentally a gift-giver. The resources for life on the planet are freebies. When they are commoditized, bought and sold, claimed by owners, have a market price placed upon them—that's already diabolic, in the literal meaning of the term: smashing them to smithereens. That brings chaos

into the divine plan. Creation in all its parts is freely given, freely received, and therefore freely to be given further. Call it sharing. So also God's last great act of gratuitousness, the cross, where God's own son is shared for the life of the world.

Closeness is the antithesis of separation, "us vs. them" indifference and exclusion. It signals "proximity of the poor/Others." Paulo is intent to "make a distinction between 'poor' and 'Others'." Though "poverty is very near to otherness," Otherness is a cultural term, not an economic one. In Latin America (or anywhere else for that matter) poverty does not energize for action or for survival. "Thanks to their cultures – and not their poverty – people live and survive, repel death, reproduce, and celebrate their life. It was not because of their poverty that the indigenous peoples of L.A. survived 500 years of colonization, but because of their otherness."

Although the culture of the colonizers was death for the indigenous peoples, they survive to this day. Why? There is power in their "otherness," power enough to hold back the juggernaut of the colonial culture that sought to kill it. This cultural otherness–alterity is Paulo's fancy term–has persisted throughout millennia–not just the past 500 years–in Latin American peoples. For Paulo this becomes an indigenous "gospel." He links it to God's own "otherness," the core of which, as we've seen above, is gratuitousness. From there is it but a small step to put it right alongside its mirror image in JCCL. Result: the elliptical christology of JCCL plus Amerindian suffering servants. These two centers together ground his hope that even in the face of the global market octopus, all is not lost. A transformed society of gratuitousness can yet come to pass.

What does this mean for missiologists? Paulo calls missiologists to reflective thinking (reflect-T) on these realities so that our craft can become (reflect-M) mirrors reflecting "the perspective of the Kingdom and the presence of the Lord in history . . . to TBW of the poor in L.A." "Missiology is involved in the struggle to save the memory of the poor/Others," not for reasons of nostalgia lest they be forgotten, but for the power they offer for the "transformation of our societies." The cultural alterity native to Latin America is "the gratuitousness of the presence of Christ in the broken world of the poor in L.A." We must not only cherish it, but appropriate it for our own discipleship. Not only do "we" not need to bring JCCL to "them;" we need to receive the JCCL they still have to supplant the erroneous conquest-christologies so common among us. This leads Paulo to call for "Indian Theologies in L.A. . . . with their own missiology." They are "protagonists" for the rest of us to learn about "missiological exogamy," the antithesis of missiology practiced as "ecclesiocentric incest." For the missiological establishment [IAMS?] "this exogamy—the seeking of a bride outside one's own tribe, not in the New York or Tokyo stock market, but in the midst of the poor and the Others—is not an optional attitude, but a command of the Lord." Paulo could hardly make that more explicit.

Universality signals what the word catholic meant in the ancient creeds, if I read this paper aright. God's gratuitous project for the world is one where everybody plays. Christ majored in making the outsiders insiders. So the poor/Others are not just add-ons, they are first-string players. Gratuitousness is God's alternative globalization venture to counter totalitarianisms of all times. In our day that means the "restrictive and

‘exclusive’ [economic] globalization” now encircling the planet. Paulo’s is not a call to “integrate” these outsiders into the ideology of market-globalism, but to replace it with the “missiology of the poor/Other.” “The mutilated life of the poor, the excluded and the Others provides a constant indicator that social relations as a whole must be changed.” “Jesus Christ [is] present in the penury . . . of the poor and the Others.” Because the poor and Others are planet-wide already, and in Paulo’s perspective intrinsically Christic by definition he designates this universality as God’s “Third Covenant, a universal, historical and eschatological covenant of the poor and the Others.”

Comment:

Paulo proposes his Christic ellipse as a sample of the “new christological theologies” arising from the poor and the Other. He deems it new in contrast to “traditional christologies.” That invites us to take the “old” ones and compare and contrast. The old ones in my seminary days 50 years ago were said to be three-fold:

- A. Christ as victor over the principalities and powers (Irenaeus)
- B. Christ as substitutionary satisfaction (Anselm)
- C. Christ as moral example (Abelard).

Anselm: Christ’s Substitutionary Satisfaction

Paulo by-passes Anselm entirely. For Anselm the playing field for the work of Christ is the fractured relationship between God and humankind, all humans. Paulo doesn’t show JCCL to be the power that restores sinners to fellowship with God. In what he has given us here there is no “God-problem” bedeviling humanity. Concerning the poor/Others of L.A. he speaks not a word of their need to be reconciled to God. The folks who are in trouble with God

and do need reconciling are those crucifying them. Yet they too do not need JCCL to alter their lethal relationship with God. Rather JCCL is primarily pedagogical—to show them, teach them, reveal to them, that God is not an oppressor, and neither should they be. And if they/we cannot see this in the N.T. or in the praxis of the church, he will help us see JCCL in the crucified poor/Others of L.A.

There are elements of Irenaeus' Christus Victor and of Abelard's moral example, I think, in Paulo's proposal, but they are distinctively nuanced.

Irenaeus: Christus Victor

Christ and his cross are paradigmatic for Paulo as God's victory over all the oppressions that humans inflict on fellow-humans. Jesus' resurrection is the ultimate ground for that confidence. Just how is not clearly spelled out other than that Easter is the last word in the story and Good Friday is not. But Irenaeus' Christus Victor had a different agenda. It was not human oppressors with whom he contended. For Irenaeus Christ was victorious over trans-human oppressors, big ones. Before these oppressors the whole human race is powerless. They are the unholy trinity of sin, death and the devil.

Paulo doesn't discuss them either in his occasional references to traditional Christology, nor in the one he proposes, the two-centered ellipse. Now it may be that he works with a "realized soteriology," the notion that since Christ's Good Friday and Easter is now past history, those mega-oppressors are indeed defeated, and thus of little consequence any more, "no big deal." The oppressors still vexing humanity, possibly the fallout of these ancient tyrants, are fellow-humans and the structures of

crucifixion they devise. Paulo might be saying that these present and active oppressors haven't yet heard, or don't believe, that the unholy trinity has been undone. So they continue in service (and servitude) to these primal oppressors—even though they are effectively passe'—and thus human oppression continues.

Not so Irenaeus. He read the NT to be saying that though JCCL has tossed them out of the heavenly courtroom, these mega-oppressors were still at work on earth. All people die, Hitlers happen. What is already true in heaven needs yet to be made true on earth. Here on earth, yes in Latin America, the unholy trinity (not just its human devotees) still rages. Until Christ conquers these mega-oppressors in the hearts of those tyrannized by them, or in the hearts of their willing followers, people-to-people oppression won't go away. Coping with earthly oppressors and ignoring the mega-ones is symptom-therapy, a band-aid on the boil, a plaster over the cancer.

Anselm: Christ as Moral Exemplar

Much of Paulo's proposal has links to Abelard's Christology. But again "with a twist." For the most part Abelard's agenda was ethics, to get Christians to live and act like Christ's disciples. For that, of course, the Master himself is the prime exemplar. So "model your life according to his" is Abelard's proposal. He was a human and he could do it, so can you. God's goal for fallen humanity is restoring them to righteousness. That is the fundamental reason why God sent Jesus. As moral example he goes all the way to the cross, suffering for others, trusting God all the way. Human lives modelled after his will conclude as his did. Easter victory will be ours as well. That's Abelard simplified, I grant, but not distorted.

Paulo too does parallel modelling, but his universe is not at all calm as Abelard thought his was. Paulo's world is in turmoil, terrible turmoil. The "bad guys" are not just doing bad things and needing a moral exemplar. It's a lot worse than that. Nowadays they've got the whole world in their hands. Not only are they crucifying the poor and the Others in that world, they are crucifying the planet itself. Paulo's paralleling focuses on the cross, Christ's and that of the poor/Others. They mirror-image each other. Yet the latter do not need the former as source or power to do what they are already doing. Already as they confront their crucifiers they are living life gratuitously—even before the gospel of JCCL ever gets to them. If/when JCCL does get reflected to them it is confirmation of the universality of what they are doing. Both are allied to God by the fact of their suffering, since God ["by definition" in liberation theology] makes a preferential option for the poor. Because both have God on their side their ultimate victory is assured. But is Jesus really necessary in Paulo's christology for bringing Good News (something good, and something new) that is not already there in the L.A. culture of the poor/Others? That is the question.

[The six Christology metaphors AJVC showed us above do not all easily fit into the three models just discussed. E.g., Paul's picture from the marketplace of the "sweet swap"—ownership exchange of our sins for Christ's righteousness—correlates to none of the above.]

Summary.

Since Paulo is our new IAMS president, there's a possibility that we can recoup the conversation we missed at Hammanskraal. If so, I'd suggest pursuing two questions—one on TBW in L.A., the other on God's

gratuitousness in JCCL in the N.T.

1. Put bluntly, Paulo, are L.A. poor/Others sinners? That may sound crass, but it's a fundamental Christian issue. Do they on their own have a God-problem diagnostically distinct from the oppression-problem that undeniably tortures them? In the Reformation rhetoric of the Augsburg Confession (1530) sin is described as the malady of the human race "since the time of Adam." Its specs are that humans are "without fear of God, without trust in God," and—in place of these two real absences—that sinners live their lives "incurved into themselves." If L.A. poor/Others ipso facto already replicate what JCCL represents, how did they get rid of that primal malady?
2. In discussing Paulo's christology—elliptical, as I read it—we need to hear more about the reality of those two centers. My question: Is God's gratuitousness at one center the same thing as God's gratuitousness at the other? I hear the N.T. witness saying no, i.e., that there is something new, brand new, in the gratuitousness coming our way in the Christ-center of the ellipse. Whereas the gift-giving coming from the other center is a grace that obligates the receivers, God's gift-giving in Christ runs on a new formula—"scandalously" new—a gift-giving that liberates but does not obligate at all. It even liberates us from failed obligations that pile up from our gift-receiving at that other center day in and day out throughout our lives.

So we need to ask:

what changed, what was different in our world after Good Friday/Easter happened? The changes signalled by Paul's 6

soteriological metaphors, the ones AJVC showed us above, are cosmic. They are all changes for the good. They all signal changes in a sinner's God-problem. In Christ God deals with sinners differently, precisely at the point of what they've been doing on the receiving end of all that primordial gratuitousness. I didn't find Paulo following his apostolic namesake in attending to the God-problem we humans have. Maybe he's done it elsewhere—after all you can't say everything in 9 pages—but then we need to have it connected here. And that second center, the poor/Other. What gives them parallel status to God's gratuitousness in JCCL? What gives their crucifixions power—both for themselves, and for others?

I'm writing this on Good Friday. Three crucifixions are in the Gospel text for the day. Only one is intrinsically salvific. Of the two men to the right and left of the center figure one does come into the orbit of that salvation. But he wasn't there at the outset just by being on a cross. His dying takes on saving value by virtue of his eleventh-hour appeal to the central figure and the response he receives. In this transaction the salvific power flows in only one direction. The man on the other cross dies disconnected to Christ. His crucifixion does have meaning, but it is not salvific. Rather it is "the just sentence of condemnation" for one who "does not fear God." He receives "due reward for his deeds." One dies with his God-problem healed, the other not.

"Bringing humanity into the presence of the Lord," a definition Paulo offers for mission, is not automatically good news. The result could be "just reward for one's deeds." Even entering the presence of Christ crucified is not ipso facto good news apart from the transaction reported in the first case. Can we extrapolate from this

crucifixion paradigm that until the God-problem gets “fixed” in both oppressors and oppressed, God’s just sentence and due reward for deeds is what all participants can expect? With no faith-connection to the One in the center on Good Friday, how can anyone’s crucifixion replace fear with freedom, greed with gratuitousness, estrangement with closeness, self-incurvature with universality, anywhere in human society?

- III. **TINYIKO SAM MALULEKE “Christ Crucified Among African Cross Bearers”** Tinyiko’s presentation was one of two shorter papers presented as last-minute fill-ins for the plenary lecture spot left vacant when Isabel Phiri was unable to come to the conference. In the copy I brought home (“unedited draft”) he devotes most of the text to surveying the scene of African Christianity today and only launches into Christology. But that christological excursus strikes a note not heard in the first two papers. It might even contradict them on the subject of the linkage between the crucifixion of Jesus and the crucifixion of peoples in Sri Lanka and L.A. Although African Christians draw strength in corollating their suffering with Christ crucified, Tinyiko says, they are quick to note the difference between the two. There is identification, but that is “only one half of the story. The other half is an emphasis on his ‘otherness’ and his ‘difference’ from us.” So it is yes, and then yes but. He cites Setiloane’s poem to show the identification, the Yes:

*“Yet for us it is when he is on the cross,
This Jesus of Nazareth, with holed hands
and open side, like a beast of sacrifice:
when he is stripped, naked like us,
Browed and sweating water and blood*

*in the heat of the sun,
Yet silent,
That we cannot resist him."*

The "but no" Tinyiko finds documented in "many sermons and songs." Even "when he is stripped, naked like us," the same Christian confessors say "There is 'no one like him.'" Tinyiko continues: "Africans affirm that human beings fail much too often, especially in the face of temptations and calamities, but [as the popular hymn says] Jesus never fails. African Christians realize "that human beings do not and cannot adequately match Jesus in the glory of his brokenness." Citing Miroslav Volf he goes on to say: "The suffering of Christ cannot be totally and exclusively taken over by the poor Such a total take-over would be contrary to the self-giving grace of the Crucified God, which is at the very heart of the Christian faith."

Is this not a clear "contra" to the first two plenary presentations, especially to Paulo's? So the stage was set for substantive debate on fundamental Christology, but we never got around to it.

Much of the rest of Tinyiko's paper chronicles the "brokenness of Africa," the scarcity of hope, and the contradictions present in the "massive Christian presence on the continent." Yet he does not conclude in hopelessness. Only after confessing our brokenness, he says, "can we come to appreciate the reality and worth of Jesus' brokenness for ourselves." That double action, penitential confession and Gospel-grounded faith, leads him to his final sentence. "In this way we may be able to reflect something of both the death and the resurrection

of Christ.”

There’s a solid assertion for further discussion: the practice of confession and absolution as one way to reflect JCCL in TBW. Isn’t that what Tinyiko is actually proposing? I think so.

PHILOMENA N. MWAURA

presented the companion paper to Tinyiko’s. I never got a printed copy of it and my notes are insufficient. To compensate I offer the paragraph from the “Listening Committee’s Report” presented in our closing session. Philomena’s “presentation related to the meaning of brokenness for women in Africa. We were introduced to the amazing contradiction that although women are marginalized in society and suffer injustice, sometimes through dehumanizing laws of traditional culture, these are the persons who respond with joy and enthusiasm to the message of the crucified Christ in whose brokenness peoples’ hurts, desperations, fears, anxieties and struggles have found meaning. Healing has spurred hope and a yearning for the joys to be experienced in the resurrection. It remains a paradox that the church has been an instrument of liberation and entrapment of women at the same time as it has ignored certain sectors of the very group it claims to speak for. It is not surprising then that women are drawn to African Independent Churches where the value of life is emphasized and the gifts of women are received.”

These were the major plenary papers. We did have one more plenary presentation, the presidential address from CHUN CHAE OK, “Mission in a New Millennium.” She too spoke to christological matters and I’ll review her words here in my closing paragraphs.

CHUN CHAE OK

Chun Chae's call for new missiology in the new millennium gave gentle critique of missiologies past. Granting that "full consensus on the definition of missions" among our IAMS membership "is difficult," she nevertheless offered her proposal, "start[ing] where my context challenges me." Two patent pieces of her own context are that she is an Asian and a woman. She did not pointedly chastise missiologies past—and missions too—for being so Eurocentric and a mostly male club. Yet what she offered for the future made it perfectly clear.

1. Mission in the new millennium must move to full and equal presence of the womanly half of the human race, even if it were not true that women comprise more than half of the worldwide church.
2. The same holds true for Asian inclusion, the continent where half of all the world's billions live. The numbers present at IAMS 10 did not reflect either of these two facts of life.

Most pointed, though gentle, oh so gentle, was Chun Chae's critique of us missiologists. Though committed to reflecting JCCL in and into TBW, the first candidate for working on the reflection-M agenda is in the person and life of the missiologist. That, she reminded us, was Paul's own paradigm. In his own biographical crucifixions and resurrections on the mission ramparts he mirrored the very message he was promoting. Citing Asian missiologists she spoke of "misrepresentations of the gospel in different aspects of mission work." Her focus was not on policy or strategy issues, but "misrepresentations of the gospel . . . deeply rooted in the very lives of mission-promoting people." The brokenness of TBW is not just "over there," but in us too. Mirroring JCCL into that brokenness

in us amounts to repentance and absolution. Tinyiko above concluded on the same theme.

The “new” items for missiology in the new millennium are:

1. “The missionary movement is in the South.”
2. It’s not mission TO today’s broken world, but the people from TBW, “the very poor people are [the] missionary people.”
3. “It is new that transforming mission is to be begun within mission leadership.” She calls us to “a shift of missionary reflection from intellectual discipline to inner transformation of the reflectors.” To play on Pogo’s famous line, she’s telling us: “We have met the problem and it is us.”

That could be a wide, very wide, critique. To move away from the Western ethos of the Enlightenment [reflecting-T] to “a longing to be changed within ourselves with newness of life and with honest evaluation of our prejudice on different situations and persons, greediness for comfortable living, popularity, and recognition.” That’s repentance again. Her call entails “reflecting-T” on defects both in ourselves and in our own linkage to JCCL, so that we ourselves be rightly re-rooted. From which could indeed come the “reflecting-M” that is at the center of Christ’s mission to the world.

In earlier days of my seminary teaching in the USA, we debated the wisdom (even the ethics) of inflicting the Enlightenment on our grad students coming from Asia and Africa. The exegetes carried the day, so we continued to do it. The reasons were: you can’t just pretend it never happened; the western world is shaped by it, so “they” have got to know it. Many of those students “knew their Bible” better than some of us profs did, but we thought we

were doing the right thing. Nowadays there is even more reason to question such a policy, especially in the West, where post-modernism pooh-poohs the Enlightenment. So Chun Chae may not be calling for the impossible. Granted she mentions neither the Enlightenment nor Post-modernism, but her words in the paragraphs above are not just an aside, a minor point, in her presidential address. She concludes the paragraph: "I understand that this kind of newness is the core of mission in the new millennium."

Her address concludes with her list of the component parts for Mission in a New Millennium. Mission is cooperation, is women and youth involvement, is restoration, is celebrating and sharing life, is living the gospel, is evangelism and local church, is unity and unification, is reconciliation. Two of these bear on the project I'm engaged in here. One relates to the subject just discussed above. In "Mission as living the gospel" she speaks to "the real problem . . . the gap between words and acts in mission leadership." That's the problem of missionaries themselves being reflectors-M of JCCL in whatever world, broken or otherwise, that they serve.

From Mission as living the gospel she segues to her most explicit christological statements. Actually they are more Christ-confessional statements. Alongside a citation from John Stott critiquing modernity [sc. the Enlightenment] and postmodernity, she says: "Whether in east or west, south or north, there must be a simple statement of who Christ is in His unique role in salvation history – crucified and resurrected for the salvation of human beings as revealed in the scriptures." Both missionaries and missiologists "are challenged to go back afresh to the Scriptures . . . to grasp the core of the gospel in the heap of cultural and religious data."

Mission is evangelism, “sharing the spirituality of the cross and resurrection.” In the context of Asia’s ancient and new religions, she “call[s] to return to biblical pattern of mission. In the East there is no greater attraction and meaning for people of other values and faiths than the person of Jesus Christ and His redemptive work. In old religions, treasures of teaching are found for moral and ethical living. The need is to behold the glory of the Lord.”

Chun Chae gives her understanding of that Lord and Christ in her final paragraph, “Mission as reconciliation.” She reviews the reconciliation theology (the “sweet swap”) of 2 Cor. 5, the text we’ve examined before way back at the beginning with Klaus Schaefer’s pre-conference essay. “God was in Christ reconciling the world” means that “The cross of Christ is unique. He died for our sins. He died in our place. God in his amazing love substituted himself for us, being our sin and dying our death.”

Mindful of humanity’s “God-problem” she counsels us “not to minimize sin and true guilt. Sin is a rebellion against God.” Its remedy? “In the cross God made reconciliation.” How does that reconciliation become ours? “By his grace alone, on the ground of Christ crucified alone, through faith alone.” What does the life of those reconciled look like? “A change so radical that no imagery can do it justice except death and resurrection with Christ, dying the old life of self-centeredness, and rising to a new life of burning love for others.” That’s Chun Chae’s proposal for a new millennium of reflecting-T on JCCL and her encouragement for our reflecting-M in TBW.

Conclusion.

Some IAMS colleagues, responding to Part I of my IAMS

review, suggest that our conferences are not the venue for the Christological conversations—and likely conflicts—I said I'd hoped for. So I should be grateful for the small blessings. I am grateful—and a number of the blessings were not small at all! Nevertheless I recommend to the planners for IAMS XI that they brainstorm possibilities for a program architecture that would open doors for such things. Vis-a-vis the past conference, one mechanical modification might be to have papers from plenary presenters in our hands before the assembly gathers. Then we could use plenary program time for face-to-face conversations between the authors of those papers. Grant, for the moment, that my lengthy review above is partially on target. Then a plenum discussion between the principals would concretely ask Paulo to argue his "new christology" vis-a-vis Klaus holding forth his reading of Paul's christology, with AJVC's and Philomena and Tinyiko making the case for their Asian and African christologies—and Chun Chae asking them all to consider the value of her Asian and womanly christology with its patently evangelical contours.

The way I've just proposed it is clumsy, but the project is worth trying, isn't it? Where else in the Christian world do such foundational debates take place? If mission-minded folks can't do it, who can? Besides, we're all friends, not just IAMS members. Better yet, we're sisters and brothers members of an even Larger Network, committed to a Planetary Project.

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