


# 'Black Pain is a White Commodity': Moving beyond postcolonial theory in practical theology: #CaesarMustFall!

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Postcolonialism and decolonising campaigns are expressions of human pain on the level of identity confusion (inferiority), ideological abuse (cultural discrimination) and structural oppression (imperialistic exploitation). The slogan 'Black Pain is a White Commodity' in the #MustFall campaigns is critically analysed within the framework of postcolonial theory and imperialistic power categories. The basic hypothesis of the article is that in early Christianity, pantokrator images of God were influenced by iconography stemming mostly from the Roman Emperor cult and Egyptian mythology. The power (omnipotence) and dominiumship of God directly and indirectly played a role in Christian imperialistic thinking regarding the expansion of the Kingdom of God and *missio Dei* strategies during times of European and colonial expansionism. In order to address the quest for 'moving beyond' in postcolonial theory, the impact of pantokrator-images of God on ecclesial thinking is researched. In order to contribute to sustainability and stability within the complexity of cultural diversity and current civil unrest on campuses in South Africa, the paracletic notion of compassionate being-with is developed within the framework of practical theological thinking. Instead of a Caesar-depiction, the theological notion of *passio Dei* is proposed: the decolonialising (post-imperialising) God.

## Introduction

It seems as if the #MustFall campaigns are heading for a total intercultural and political deadlock in South Africa. It is revealing deep-seated polarisation between whites and blacks; between activists and peacemakers (Du Preez 2016:11). It seems as if the dream of a Rainbow nation is becoming a nightmare and illusion. Are we heading for a bleak future without any option or alternative; unbearable pain without healing and hope? (See Figure 1)

The reference to *Black Pain* in decolonialisation campaigns in South Africa should be taken very seriously. Mamphalea Ramphela (2012) refers to the fact that failure in postcolonial Africa to raise above its painful past can be linked to the fact that the existential and ontological pain of humiliation has not been dealt with properly:

I would like to suggest that the failure to acknowledge and undertake the healing process to address social pain is at the heart of our failure to make the journey from subjects to citizens. (p. 174)

She, thus, asks the intriguing question:

How much pain are we inflicting as a society by the continuing inequalities of opportunity in our public and private lives despite the precepts of our human rights based constitution? (p. 173)

Before heading for options, and probing into healing and helping, it is necessary in a practical theological and pastoral approach to dwell longer on an understanding of the anti-sentiment in decolonising<sup>1</sup> activism (disorder) and its connection to *Black Pain*.

Research in postcolonial theory points out the importance of a *beyond-approach*. The colonised must rise above his and/or her colonised being (Memmi 1974:195–196). This challenge is captured by Mbaku (1999:6–7): 'Africans have still not yet provided themselves with the kinds of institutional arrangements that would minimize political opportunism, enhance wealth creation, and advance peaceful coexistence groups'.

1. According to Mahmood Mamdani (in Ramphela 2012:174), decolonising activism implies: deracialisation, detribalisation and democratisation.

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Source: Du Preez, M., 2016, 'Dis nou #WhitesMustFall', *Die Burger*, 11 Oktober, p. 11

**FIGURE 1:** Poster with slogan: 'Black Pain is a White Commodity' during the #MustFall Campaigns.

One should indeed acknowledge that a rational solution (positivistic approach) to the complexity of destructive forms of activism is not possible. Activism, and in the case of the #MustFall campaigns, is embedded in paradox and modes of disorder. According to the theory of *chaosmos in complexity thinking*, the bipolarity of an order – chaos complexity forms a paradoxical dynamic network within processes of creative thinking.<sup>2</sup>

In complexification (Morin 2008), the paradox of order-disorder becomes a point of departure in contemporary theory formation and attempts to move forward, beyond destructive, nihilistic thinking. In order to understand the 'chaos' (disorder and distress) in decolonising campaigns, it will be paramount to understand the paradigmatic framework of resistance movements on grassroots level against the background and theory of complexification (Morin 2008; Nilson 2007).

What are the paradigmatic issues behind the slogan: *Black Pain is a White Commodity*? How is this alarming credo connected to postcolonial thinking and other possible paradigmatic issues in our postmodern society, for example, the notion of dominium and threat power?

If it is indeed an imperative that the colonised must rise above his/her being, what about theologising and its connection to the imperialism of a powerful, colonised *Kingdom-of-God-Deity*?

This imperative is more or less the intention of Immanuel Lartey (2013), spelled out in his book on the *Postcolonializing God*. At stake in practical theological thinking is the transcending of colonial religion by means of practical

<sup>2</sup>Current thinking is described by philosophers as the hermeneutics of complexification within dynamic global networking (Morin 2008; Nilson 2007). The basic assumption in complexification is that the cosmos is not constructed by necessity and reductionist determinism, but rather it is partly a *chaosmos*, constructed by order as well as disorder. It is not prediction or control that determines knowledge. It is not merely the Newtonian notion that the whole universe is reversible and thus not irreversible that dominates. Together with the notion of entropy in thermodynamics, it emphasises the fact of disorder and randomness in a system (Montuori 2008:xxxii).

theological activities and strategies of imitation, improvisation and creativity: African practical theology must pursue and engage in the activities of the postcolonialising God (Lartey 2013:129). What are the theological implications of postcolonialising thinking on theory formation in practical theology, very specifically on God-images? In order to take #MustFall campaigns seriously, my emphasis in a pastoral hermeneutics will be to reflect on the decolonialising God of post-imperialistic thinking. Thus, the focus on the decolonialisation of God's kingdom: #CaesarMustFall!

## Basic assumptions and theoretical points of departure

In theory formation, postcolonialism is an endeavour to deconstruct skewed paradigms regarding inhumane forms of power abuse and its destructive impact on the value of people's lives and their wellbeing in civil societal contexts. Because of critical realism, it deals with ideology that contributed to the shaping and structuring of the people's lives in a negative way. It is critical, revolutionary, reactionary and in essence an anti-directed activism.

Postcolonial theory is, therefore, an attempt to bring about a comprehensive understanding of all the different perspectives and issues that shaped the mindset of colonial thinkers, its impact on human beings and native cultures and attempts to develop a critique on colonial thinking in order to probe into more transformative, and creative paradigms for anti-activism.

The following issues frame the postcolonial debate:

- Postcolonial theory is, in essence, an endeavour to conceptualise the impact of *imperialistic exploitation and structural social violence* (resistance) caused by oppressive expansionism on local community's cultural identities within daily experiences. It is an immanent critique on threat power exercised by authorities that seek national self-maintenance and political manipulation to the expense of native inhabitants.
- Postcolonial theory is not in the first instance geared to come up with instant solutions and opportunistic alternatives. It is about a *critical stance*, an engagement with and inflection of the everyday. One aspect of postcolonial studies is to critically analyse paradigmatic issues that undergird everyday activism.
- Postcolonial theories are furthermore attempts to *deconstruct oppressive paradigms*, thus, the endeavour to analyse discrepancies contributing to the many layered levels of meaning.
- Postcolonial theories are not merely about secular, neutral networking thinking. They are also 'spiritual' in the sense that they are vehicles for philosophies of life and belief systems. Within Christendom, one can suspect that there exists a close *link between imperialistic thinking and power categories stemming from Christian religious thinking in Kingdom of God expansionism and missional conversion campaigns*, thus, the endeavour to research crucially the role of religious thinking in the establishment of colonial

thinking and practices. One should even pose the question: What about the option of a 'Postcolonialising God'? (Lartey 2013). Lartey argues that Western Christianity applied a selective reading to the biblical text, ignoring grassroots spirituality in Africa. Much of the practice of African Christians imitates that of a European Christianity fuelled by *deistic imperialism*. The notion of a 'Postcolonializing God' is an attempt to address indignities in practical theological thinking and to shift the discourse in the direction of theory formation within an understanding of African spiritualities (Lartey 2013:xvi–xviii). African-indigenised pastoral care charts a different course uplifting these ignored readings of scripture and identifying how they are expressed again by Africans who courageously seek, through the practices of mysticism and African culture, to portray a God whose actions liberate and diversify human experience (Lartey 2013:xvii–xviii).

A 'postcolonialising God' puts on the table of practical theological thinking the following theological questions: Does the transformation of colonial thinking include the transformation of conceptualisations of God as well? What about a 'postcolonial, post-imperialistic God'?

Besides a liberating God, what other theological options should be explored in order to move into the *What-Beyond*-question in practical theology?

With reference to practical theological thinking, my basic approach and assumption is that a pastoral hermeneutics should probe critically into the realm of God-images; specifically, God-images and their connectedness to power categories like the notion of God almighty. Imperialistic theology thinks in terms of *omni*-categories. In order to contribute to a meaningful exploration of *beyond-alternatives* in Christian spirituality, *omni*-categories should be exchanged for *passio*-categories. Practical theological reflection should thus focus on a pastoral hermeneutics on theopaschitic categories rather than *pantokrator* categories. A praxis approach in pastoral caregiving should explore the option of compassionate being-with, as determined by the *passio Dei*. In this regard, the praxis principle should be the establishment of a compassionate ministry of hospitable presence wherein accusers and accused can meet in mutual trust. Hospitable presence could contribute to fostering a space of mutual trust and constructive dialogue<sup>3</sup> in the attempt to explore options for a beyond-approach in postcolonial discourses. In this regard, the notion of peaceful and compassionate co-existence is proposed.

## The assault against colonialism: The complexity of merely looking back into the past of imperialism

The assault against colonialism relies on three premises (D'Souza in Higgs & Smith 2015:57–58): (1) colonialism and its

link to imperialism are distinctively Western evils that were inflicted on the non-Western world, (2) the West exploited the colonies and became rich while the colonies were impoverished, and (3) the descendants of colonialism were worse off than they would be had colonialism never occurred.

In a critical approach to postcolonial studies, another dimension is at stake, namely (d): the interplay between postcolonialism and globalisation. Krishnaswamy (2008:2) refers to the fact that most studies focus largely on a Eurocentric colonial past and examine how subaltern practices and productions in the non-Western peripheries responded to Western domination. Besides the factor of Western imperialism, one must reckon with a very close connection between postcolonial thinking and processes of globalisation. The terms of globalisation theory – universal and particular, global and local, homogeneity and heterogeneity – are closely linked to postcolonial grammar:

Postcolonial conceptions of difference, migrancy, hybridity, and cosmopolitanism serve to harmonize the universal and particular in ways that appear to open up the global to a multiplicity of cultural relationships unheard of in the age of imperialism. (Krishnaswamy 2008:3)

Simon During (in Krishnaswamy 2008:3) even believes that the category of globalisation has superseded that of postcolonialism. He posits a dialectical relationship between the two and argues that postcolonialism should be seen not simply as the enemy, but as the effect of globalisation.

Krishnaswamy (2008:5) is convinced that it will be more fruitful and useful to cluster the decolonisation discourse around four issues that seem central to both postcolonialism and globalisation, namely: modernity, mobility, imperialism and resistance.

Imperialistic exploitation and plundering are without any doubt some of the paradigmatic issues at stake in the postcolonial discourse. But colonialism and imperialistic ideology are not exclusively Western. With reference to history, one needs to take cognisance of aggressive and violent exploitations by the Egyptian empire, the Persian empire, the Macedonian empire, the Islamic empire, the Mongol empire, the Chinese empire and the Aztec and Inca empires in the Americas (Higgs & Smith 2015:58). The perception is that the Europeans stole the raw material to build their civilisation. They took rubber from Malaya, cocoa from West Africa, and tea from India. But, before British rule, 'there were no rubber trees in Maya, no cocoa trees in West Africa, no tea in India' (Higgs & Smith 2015:59).

The problem with a critical analysis of colonial and postcolonial theories is that life and historical contexts are embedded in *discrepant experiences* (Said 2001:27). It is therefore an inadmissible contradiction to build analyses of historical experiences around exclusions that stipulate, for instance, that only women can understand feminine experience, or only formerly colonial subjects can understand colonial experience (Said 2001:27). Because of discrepancy,

3. Dialogue implies that before you walk together as a people you need to sit down and talk. 'The African traditional dialogue platform is the circle. It constitutes a level playing field that includes everybody and places everyone on the same plane making eye contact possible' (Ramphela 2012:182).



imperial interventions could have been fortunate to local and native communities.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the abuse of power cannot be overlooked.

Postcolonial studies should reckon with ambivalence. For example, imperialism is a many layered concept. Harari (2011) points out that:

all cultures are at least in part the legacy of empires and imperial civilisations, and no academic or political surgery can put out the imperial legacies without killing the patient. (p. 228)

'A significant proportion of humanity's cultural achievements owe their existence to the exploitation of conquered populations' (Harari 2011:216). That is the irony even in the history of South Africa. Blacks were not exposed merely to white imperialism but also to black imperialism:

About 10 million Zulus in South Africa hark back to the Zulu age of glory in the nineteenth century, even though most of them descend from tribes who against the Zulu Empire, and were incorporated into it only through bloody military campaigns. (p. 217)

Higgs and Smith (2015:57) refer to the writer Dinesh D'Souza (an Asian American) who poses the brave question: Was colonialism merely a bad thing? They (Higgs & Smith 2015:61) assert that the academy needs to shift its irrational prejudice against colonialism. It is argued that scholars should provide a more balanced perspective. Scholars should thus help to show the foolishness of policies like reparations as well as justification of terrorism that are based on anticolonial myths. The argument is not that colonialism by itself was a good thing, only that bad institutions sometimes produce good results.

The benefits were sometimes salient – law enforcement, urban planning, standardisation of weights and measures – and sometimes questionable – taxes, conscription, emperor worship. But most imperial elites earnestly believed that they are working for the general welfare of the empire's inhabitants. (Harari 2011:221)

According to D'Souza (in Higgs & Smith 2015):

My grandfather would have a hard time giving even one cheer for colonialism. As for me I cannot manage three, but I am quite willing to grant two. So here they are: two cheers for colonialism! (p. 61)

Postcolonial, thus, does not refer to a specific stage in historical events, but rather to a hermeneutical critique and paradigmatic stance in order to address the destructive impacts of postcolonial ideology on local contexts, processes of democratisation, the human quest for dignity and religious thinking.

I now turn to the paradigmatic issues and the fundamental hermeneutical question: What is meant by 'postcolonial' in decolonising activism?

4. 'Discrepant experiences open up potential for dialogue and interaction between East and West beyond the limits of a binary or "Manichean" opposition in which the West maintains a near-total discursive hegemony over colonial and postcolonial territories in the east' (Said 2001:26).

## Postcolonial theory and fundamental issues: A paradigmatic controversy

San Juan very aptly points out that the core problem in postcolonial theories is on a paradigmatic level. His criticism of postcolonial theory is that it is still driven by global market driven capitalism. He argues that much of the celebration of postcolonial versatility and freedom is, on closer analysis, part of 'cultural imperialism' or the 'Americanization of Third World cultures' (San Juan 1999:11). He is of the opinion that, mediated through racial/ethnic and class antagonisms, the sharpening of class and racial conflicts in the United States today has revived a hegemonic project of reconstituting a pluralist multiracial nation that recuperates traditional ideas of individualism and 'American exceptionalism' (San Juan 1999:11).

The slogan 'Black Pain' captures the essence of people's suffering; people deprived from self-worth, rights and dignity; and it exposes the pain of existential inferiority. 'Black pain' captures the impact of imperialistic supremacy and discriminatory oppression, on human identity; it cuts into the heart of our very being: The suffering of racism. The slogan also makes researchers aware of the fact that the postcolonial discourse should deal with the dimension of local culture. Postcolonial studies are deeply absorbed with the local circumstances within which colonial institutions and ideas are being moulded into the disparate, cultural and socioeconomic practices which define our contemporary 'globality' (Loomba in Krishnaswamy 2008:2).

The term 'postcolonial' refers to a former period of colonialism with its roots in the paradigm of a colony. In Roman usage, it refers to a settlement of Roman citizens in hostile or newly conquered country (Oxford English Dictionary) (In Gordimer 1974, note 6, 44).

The epitome of a colonial mentality is captured by the following remark of Olaudah Equiano (1789):

When you make men slaves you deprive them of half their virtue, you set them, in your conduct, an example of fraud, rapine and cruelty, and compel them to live with you in a state of war. (Equiano in Gordimer 1974:29)

For the coloniser, the other becomes nobody, a hopeless weakling. Jean-Paul Sartre (1974:24) captures the inhumane reality of colonisation as follows: '... the natives are atomized – and colonist society cannot integrate them without destroying itself'. The bleak and desperate situation of the colonised leads to hopelessness: 'And when a people has received from its oppressors only the gift of despair, what does it have to lose?' (Sartre 1974:25). Colonisation is thus built on an ontological predicament, namely oppression, and oppression means then, first of all, the *oppressor's hatred for the oppressed* (Sartre 1974:23). And this hatred leads to the fact that the coloniser starts to deny human rights to human beings whom it has subdued by violence, and keeps them by force in a

state of misery and ignorance – a subhuman condition (Sartre 1974:20).

Nadine (1974:41) refers to one of the most painful outcomes of colonialism: *racism*. Racism not an accidental detail, but a consubstantial part of colonialism, the highest expression of colonialism:

In fact, racism is built into the system: the colony sells produce and raw material cheaply, and purchases manufactured goods at very high prices from the mother country. This singular trade is profitable to both parties only if the natives work for little or nothing. (Sartre 1974:19)

Memmi (1974) points out that the liquidation of colonisation is nothing but a prelude to complete liberation, to self-recovery:

In order to free himself from colonisation, the colonised must start with oppression, the deficiencies of his group. In order that his liberation may be complete, he must free himself from those inevitable conditions of his struggle. (p. 195)

The ultimate challenge in decolonising activism is captured by Memmi (1974): The victim must cease defining him and/or herself through the categories of colonisers. The fundamental question:

What will the colonized become after the post of postcolonialism, because our being human should not be defined by means of the antithesis between West and East. Human identity should entail more than categories provided by Western reductionism or Eastern reductionism, by bourgeois ideology of proletarian ideology. (p. 196)

To live life meaningfully, the colonised need to do away with colonisation, but this endeavour breeds another challenge: The colonised must rise above his and/or her colonised being and transcend the anti-categories of decolonisation categories.

The core problem and danger then with postcolonial theory formation is that it is not necessarily embedded in historical and existential contextual realities, but theorised merely as verbal dexterity and ludic rhetorical games (San Juan 1999:8). But when postcolonial theories are being tested in terms of their contextual appropriateness, it is necessary to understand the core issues at stake in postcolonial activism.

## #MustFall campaigns in postcolonial activism: The reason behind (the conative dimension)

Postcolonial activism is accompanied by decolonising campaigns. In the #FeesMustFall campaign, it has even been said that Western knowledge and science must be removed in Africa. Science is a product of Western modernism and predominantly determined by Isaac Newton's theories regarding gravity, thus the notion of #ScienceMustFall

Postcolonial activism also wants to unmask destructive power systems that control the lives of people on grass roots

level. It is therefore anti-imperialistic and anti-hierarchical in its endeavour to attack institutions that maintain oppressive modes of external control.

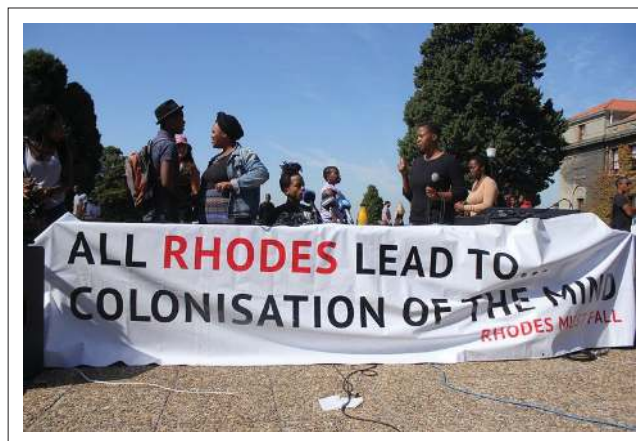
San Juan's (1999) critical hermeneutics of the paradigmatic background of postcolonial theories and decolonising activism is actually revealing the core and fundamental issues at stake in #MustFall campaigns:

Hybridity, heterogeneous and discrepant lifestyles, local knowledges, cyborgs, borderland scripts – such slogans tend to obfuscate the power of the transnational ideology and practice of consumerism and its dehumanizing effects. (p. 8)

One should interpret both postcolonialism and decolonisation in post-apartheid South Africa against campaigns like #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, #PatriarchyMustFall, and even #BalletMustFall. These campaigns reveal what is going on in the mind, emotion and being of humans in the post-apartheid South Africa (see Figure 2).

In an interview with Tankiso Mamabolo, a drama student and activist at the University of Cape Town, she explained the rationale behind the play *The Fall* as follows: 'it is about a social and civil consciousness that expresses institutional racism. The Fall does not merely address direct, blunt racism; it exposes existential inferiority' (Janse Van Rensburg 2016:3). This inferiority has to do with space and place, namely what it means to exist as a black human being in spaces occupied by whites – smugness, indifference and cultural superiority. Fall-campaigns are therefore educational forums to 'learn' elder people in power positions, academics and personnel the organic and ontological disposition of the youth in a postmodern society wherein position is determined not by power, but by modes of being and attitudes; they are systemic alarms, summing people to social sensitivity and civil awareness.

*The Fall* play is a sign of activism and captures the existential pain of anger and resistance (see Figure 3).



Source: Rhodes Must Fall, n.d, Decolonising the university, viewed 10 October 2010, from [https://www.google.co.za/search?q=The+Fall+play+UCT&rlz=1C2CHBD\\_enZA689ZA689&biw=1280&bih=662&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewi7956CyMrPAhVewxQKH9dAnAQ\\_AUIBygC#tbn=isch&q=RhodesMustFall&imgcr=QF20iJPds-zv5M%3A](https://www.google.co.za/search?q=The+Fall+play+UCT&rlz=1C2CHBD_enZA689ZA689&biw=1280&bih=662&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewi7956CyMrPAhVewxQKH9dAnAQ_AUIBygC#tbn=isch&q=RhodesMustFall&imgcr=QF20iJPds-zv5M%3A)

FIGURE 2: Decolonising the university.



Source: The Fall, n.d., *The Fall*, a brand new production at the Baxter this October, shares the experiences of seven recent UCT graduates during the #RhodesMustFall and subsequent student movements, viewed 08 Oct. 2010, from [https://www.google.co.za/search?q=The+Fall+Baxter+theatre+centre&rlz=1C2CHBD\\_enZA689ZA689&biw=1280&bih=662&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewiPpfOysrPAhWlzxQKHd4AAAt0Q\\_AUICGd#imgsrc=wLlWYYJujy8IM%3A](https://www.google.co.za/search?q=The+Fall+Baxter+theatre+centre&rlz=1C2CHBD_enZA689ZA689&biw=1280&bih=662&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewiPpfOysrPAhWlzxQKHd4AAAt0Q_AUICGd#imgsrc=wLlWYYJujy8IM%3A)

**FIGURE 3:** The actors in *The Fall* play demonstrate the sign of resistance.

To my mind, one should take the remark in *The Fall* seriously. If the source for racial tension and black anger is the existential experience of inferiority, a pastoral hermeneutics should start there. One should start with the crisis of identity and habitus. In order to move to the option for healing, helping and comfort, all the contributing factors should be analysed within a systems approach. Postcolonialism and decolonialisation are in essence exponents of sick, damaged and pathological political systems and social structures that caused *the pain of the heart*.

In general, one can say that postcolonial critique and the process of decolonialisation within the South African context refer to inter alia the following systemic factors that infiltrate the realm of the affective (feeling functions), the realm of the human mind (thinking functions) and the realm of the conative (motivational functions); the #MustFall campaigns are inter alia about the following activities of protest:

- addressing the impact of the after 1990-period (constitutional freedom) on social and political issues in South Africa, especially the ideology and heresy of apartheid
- introducing critical realism to the scars of apartheid and its impact on human dignity and human rights
- political transformation as a bottom-up approach; moving from power politics to *vox populi* [the voice of the people]
- promoting justice as a social asset and forum for unmasking discriminatory practices and oppressing judicial legislation of the past
- empowerment of people, very specifically disadvantaged communities (voicing the voiceless)
- dealing with social-economic disparities such as poverty: the predicament of the poorest of the poor and their suffering because of economic exploitation (preferential option for the poor).
- Attempts of social restructuring/civil engineering, for example, to tackle basic issues such as land distribution and education for all

- enhancing a politics of democratisation: Promoting human rights and human dignity
- transforming the society on the basis of an ethics of equality (addressing inequalities)
- changing education and theories for epistemology: Grassroots and community approach rather than abstract reflection
- the Africanisation of higher education and the turn to local cultural sources of wisdom (from Eurocentric to Afrocentric hermeneutics)
- expressing a deep-seated frustration and anger over against the arrogance of Western superiority. 'African philosophy challenges the arrogance of the West and asks the West to rethink its claim of cultural superiority' (Higgs & Smith 2015:57)
- represents an anticolonial stance as hostile reaction to affluent capitalism and an attempt to claim back authenticity by means of various forms of socialism based on traditional African social and political communalism.<sup>5</sup> The attempt is then to disprove the Western belief that Africans are unable to develop a scientific and rational culture
- applying the liberation paradigm to all spheres of life, as well as to all academic disciplines.
- to move from the theatre of exclusive thinking to the market place of inclusive thinking (engagement polity)
- to shift paradigms from academic excellence to public relevancy (outcome based education; public theology)
- deconstruction of harmful ideological and religious discourses and promoting the healing of society (reconciling broken human relationships)
- re-theologising: From hierarchical (denominational) ecclesiology to prophetic, social engagement; from orthodoxy to orthopraxy (Kairos-approach; public theology); from 'sacred texts' to 'life contexts' (contextualisation).

On the agenda of a beyond-approach in practical theological thinking, one needs first of all to probe into the meta-categories that informed theological thinking regarding the expansion of the King-of-God incentives in very specifically missional activities in the so-called 'heathen countries'.

## The hell of colonialism and divine imperialism: God save the king and kill the savages

The development and spreading of Christianity should be read in close conjunction with influences of Roman imperial thinking:

Around AD 500, one of the world's largest empires – the Roman Empire – was a Christian polity, and missionaries were busy spreading Christianity to other parts of Europe, Asia and Africa. (Harari 2011:243)

<sup>5</sup>Examples are Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, with his idea of *ujamaa*; Kenneth Kaunda's of Zambian humanism. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Sékou Touré of Guinea, who put forward the idea of scientific socialism; Leopold Senghor Senegal with his reference to Negritude; and Steve Biko with his ideas on Black consciousness' (Higgs & Smith 2015:51).



According to Harari (2011:243), the fact that the Christian faith is monotheistic makes it more aggressive, fanatical and missionary than polytheists.

The period of Western colonisation was closely connected to a process of cultural civilisation and Christian missionary campaigns. Because of the link between imperialism and Christian expansionism, the Christian faith was part of a *corpus christianum* wherein Christian values were rendered as superior to indigenous culture. In the light of a conversion obsession<sup>6</sup> in the *missio Dei* (Bosch 2001), local cultures were subjected to violent, cultural exploitation and most of the time treated as being inferior to European civilisation.

Two case studies will be used to trace down the impact of the colonial paradigm on local cultures. The link with missional expansionism does not mean that missiological interventions were all driven by imperialistic thinking. However, the case studies are included in order to illustrate the undergirding paradigms that accompanied many of the European interventions whether in a direct or indirect way.

### The case of Cuzco (Peru): Execution of Túpac Amaru (1998) in the name of God

Cusco was the capital of the Inca Empire, the most extensive and powerful state ever to exist on the continent of South America. The original name of the city was '*Qosqo*' which means 'navel of the world'.

The Incas had a complex system or spiritual life. Everyday living was directed by rituals which connected agriculture and politics to divine intervention. References pointed to a supreme being which meant more or less: The absolute – the creator of everything (*pachakamaq*). (Cuba Gutiérrez 2007:108). Worship was performed through veneration in a hierarchical order of all the elements: sun, moon, stars, earth, mountains, rocks, seas, lakes, trees, animals and natural phenomena. Elements had been considered as physical manifestations of divinity (*wakas*) (Cuba Gutiérrez 2007:108).

When Spain invaded the Southern America in their search for gold and silver, the first step was to conquer the native tribes and convert the Incas into Christianity. For example, on 15th of November 1532, Francisco Pizarro led the army to conquer the city of Cajamarca and met with the army of the Inca Atawallpa. During the meeting, Pizarro was accompanied by Father Valverde who offered the Inca greetings of the King of Spain. Valverde explained their mission, namely to teach the Christian doctrine. He gave Atawallpa a crucifix, saying that he presented Christ. He forced Atawallpa to be baptised into the Christian faith. He then handed Atawallpa a Bible, explaining that it expressed 'God's message':

He put the Bible close to his ear, but not hearing anything and therefore feeling duped, he threw it on the ground. Valverde, incensed, reacted by shouting to his army, 'Christians, what are

you waiting for? The gospel is on the ground! Come out and attack them. I absolve you!' (Cuba Gutiérrez 2007:161).

Pizarro ordered the assault and started to kill the people of Cajamarca.

Túpac Amaru or Thupa Amaro (Quechua: *Thupaq Amaru*) (1545–1572) was the last indigenous monarch (Sapa Inca) of the Neo-Inca State, remnants of the Inca Empire in Vilcabamba, Peru. He was captured and arrested in September and marched into Cuzco. He and other Inca generals were sentenced to death by hanging. While he was in prison, a priest came and visited him and fellow captives, indoctrinating them to be converted before their execution. They were to be baptised and Túpac Amaru received a 'Christian name', that is a Spanish name: Felipe Túpac Amaru (Cuba Gutiérrez 2007:188–189).

According to an eyewitness, Túpac Amaru was led through the streets of Cuzco between Father Alonso de Baranza and Father Molina, who instructed him for the benefit of his soul. Vega Laoiza has him riding a mule with hands tied behind his back and a rope around his neck (Jacobs 1998). A lot of Incas came into Cuzco to support Túpac Amaru and to lament the loss of their leader. A scaffold had been erected on the central plain of Cuzco before the cathedral. Despite the mourning of the crowd, Túpac Amaru calmly raised his hand and summoned them not to grief about his coming death. He referred to an event in his youth where he disobeyed and annoyed his mother. She then cursed him and forecasted a cruel and unnatural death. He was convinced that he should accept his coming death with courage and dignity. However, a priest stepped in and proclaimed that he is dying not according to the curse but in the name of the King of Spain, Philip II, and God.

According to a report, Túpac Amaru renounced Incan religion and admitted to the crowd that he had become a Christian stating that everything the Incas had said about their relationship to the Sun was false (Cuba Gutiérrez 2007:188–189). His last words were: *Collanan Pachacamac ricuy auccacunac yahuariniy hichascancuta* [Mother Earth, witness how my enemies shed my blood].<sup>7</sup>

### The case of the Mau-Mau (Kenya; Agĩkũyũ-culture): Brutal exploitation and the disruption of local cultural traditions

According to Josiah Murage (2011), in his research on *The Concept of Ūtugi within the HIV & AIDS Pandemic*, the concept of *ūtigi* can be translated as hospitality and refer to what one can call the freedom of the guest (Murage 2011:82). 'It means the creation of a free space where the vulnerable people in the society are welcomed, not only as guests, but also as part of that community' (Murage 2011:82). *Ūtugi* is an exposition of the cultural custom in African spirituality, namely to share love and affection to others and to put the idea of sharing

<sup>6</sup>The Spanish and Portuguese empires proclaimed that it was not the riches they sought in the Indies and America, but converts to the true faith. The sun never set on the British mission to spread the twin gospels of liberalism and free trade' (Harari 2011:221).

<sup>7</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C3%BApac\\_Amaru](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%C3%BApac_Amaru)

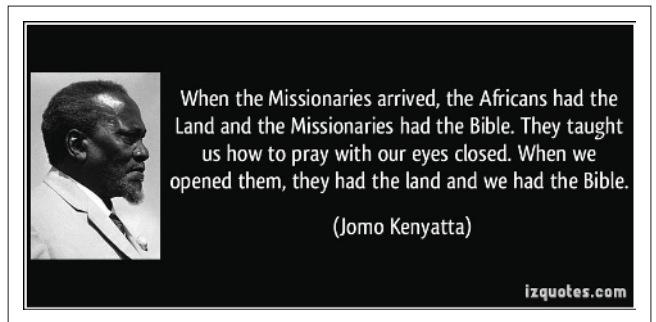
into practice. The saying in Kenya-culture and *Agikũyũ*-tradition is that to live with others is to share and to have mercy on one another since only witchdoctors are allowed to live and eat alone (Murage 2011:82). According to Mutugi (2005):

African hospitality is expressed in a loving way ... when a visitor comes, you welcome him or her by ushering him or her to a seat, and then you give him or her something to eat or drink. Then you share or socialize, seek to know, politely the problems or issues or news that brought him or her. (p. 4)

*Ūtugi* operates as a religious principle. 'Among the ancient *Agikũyũ* the people perceived *Ngai* [God] as unique and *Ūtugi* was extended to this *Ngai* and *Ngoma*, that is spirits (cf. *theoxenic* hospitality)' (Kenyatta 1938:259; Murage 2011:93). This perception is confirmed by Mbiti (1969:45) as he notes that God is also described as 'gracious' among Africans. To be a *Mūtugi* [a hospitable person] is, therefore, to participate in *Ngai's* [God's] acts of *Ūtugi* [generosity, accommodativeness, appreciative love]. It has an element of liberating humanity and nature; hence, it includes the process of improving the socio-economic and political well-being of those in need and those who are vulnerable within the society (Murage 2011:85). Issues like land, place, space and human identity were all interrelated in *Ūtugi* thinking. This anthropological understanding is what the British colonialists could not understand, and the issue of land became one of the major factors that drove the Mau Mau (*Agikũyũ* freedom fighters) to the forest to reclaim their inheritance. Many factors prompted the Mau Mau rebellion, which was a guerrilla war of emancipation that was fought from the 1940s to 1963 by the *Agikũyũ* against the British colonial authorities to protest the disruption of *Ūtugi*. The colonial government forced the *Agikũyũ* into colonial camps and seized their land, thus making the practice of *Ūtugi* impracticable.

The *Agikũyũ* found themselves in overcrowded areas which were not fertile for farming and had little grazing land for their cattle. The *Agikũyũ* regard the land as the mother of the community, because 'it is the soil that feeds the people and at death the people are buried in the soil which nurses the spirit' (Kenyatta 1938:21). Therefore, the Mau-Mau people found life unbearable and they opted to fight back as a way of regaining their humanness (Murage 2011:112–113).

Out of the two case studies, it becomes clear that postcolonial activities and decolonising campaigns are exponents of dehumanising structures that robbed people of their dignity and degrade them to the status of inferiority. Anti-activism is thus an expression of existential anger and inhumane helplessness, hopelessness and neglect. On a subconscious level, postcolonialism can be linked to a dream for change, transformation, freedom and a different dispensation – The painful yearning for a situation 'beyond' the present social, economic, discriminatory and political discrepancies in civil society (see Figure 4).



Source: Kenyatta, J., 1938, Facing Mount Kenya, Heinemann, London, viewed 26 June 2016, from [https://www.google.co.za/search?q=mau+mau+uprising&rlz=1C2CHBD\\_enZA689ZA689&biw=1280&bih=667&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&sqi=2&ved=0ahUKewiClYzqm8bNAhVklcAKHR-VDikQ\\_AUIBigB#tbn=isch&q=jomo+kenyatta+quotes&imgsrc=GC\\_kTdNgBA2EM%3A](https://www.google.co.za/search?q=mau+mau+uprising&rlz=1C2CHBD_enZA689ZA689&biw=1280&bih=667&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&sqi=2&ved=0ahUKewiClYzqm8bNAhVklcAKHR-VDikQ_AUIBigB#tbn=isch&q=jomo+kenyatta+quotes&imgsrc=GC_kTdNgBA2EM%3A)

**FIGURE 4:** The Mau Mau Uprising, also known as the Mau Mau Rebellion, Mau Mau Revolt, or Kenya Emergency, was a military conflict that took place in British Kenya between 1952 and 1960. It involved Gikũyũ-dominated groups summarily called *Mau Mau*, the white settlers, and elements of the British Army, including local Kenya Regiment, mostly consisting of the British, auxiliaries and anti-Mau Mau Gikũyũ (Kenyatta 1938).

## Postcolonial critique and the question: Moving beyond towards what?

Postcolonial critique suggests a period after and beyond. Loomba et al. (2005:1) pose the intriguing question: 'What, then, do we propose to move "beyond"?'

The challenging question 'Beyond – towards what?' is indeed complex.

The danger is that one easily falls prey to offering alternatives that miscalculate the complexities on grassroots level. However, posing the beyond-question can become in fact an alley of decolonisation:

Postcolonial critique therefore continues and seeks to complete the work of decolonization. It develops an oppositional analytical standpoint that targets the conditions, the narratives, the relations of power that, in their combined effects, support the iniquitous forms of sociality and the varieties of pauperizations that characterize the current world order. These forms include traditional and customary socialities that inscribe gender and communalist ethnic oppressions. (Venn 2006:3)

The intriguing question 'Beyond what?' should therefore reckon with forces that established the Western form of colonialism and imperialism and continue to operate, often in altered forms, through cultural mutations in local circumstances and through apparatuses that continue to exploit in a very subtle way.

In his book on postcolonial theory, San Juan (1999) poses the question whether it is possible to move beyond the postcolonial theory in order to unlock infertile deadlocks of destructive social and psychological polarisation. His problem with many postcolonial theories is that they feed on the euphoria of freedom from, but is not addressing the problem of freedom for. For whom and for what purpose and in which local, historical and cultural setting? They feed on global multi-categories that do not take cognisance of local



economic, social and cultural inequalities. 'Postcolonial discourse generated in "First World" academies turn out to be one more product of flexible, post-Fordist capitalism, not its antithesis' (San Juan 1999:8).

The notion 'Beyond Postcolonial Theory' within the current framework of a globalisation is indeed problematic. Globalisation in itself tends to become the imperialism of market driven economy controlled by the empires of Big Companies and economic directors. The US invasion of Iraq (2003) casts a shadow on twenty-first-century democracies. It becomes virtually absurd to speak of ours as a postcolonial world (Loomba et al. 2005:1). The signs of a galloping US imperialism make the agenda of postcolonial studies complex but therefore more necessary than ever.

The debate regarding the 'post' in postcolonial studies in academic circles is not new (Loomba et al. 2005:2). However, the #MustFall campaigns in South Africa should take the demand of decolonisation by means of postcolonial theory seriously. At Anglo-US universities, the discourse in most cases is an ideological offspring of Western capitalism. In South Africa, the situation is more complex. The paradigmatic debate is embedded in global market driven expansionism, developmental capitalism, the digital dominance of the World Wide Web and the upcoming notion of 'apartheid after apartheid'. Rather than to focus on macro-issues, what is needed in beyond-approaches is to start to focus on the everyday as a category that questions. The focus should be aspects of the ordinary, everyday culture and experience. Kelwyn Sole (2005:182, 197) calls this focus an attempt to address structural underdevelopment and the everyday.

The point is, postcolonial studies have become a complex endeavour. There is a growing awareness that *beyonds* that try to simplify the issue of postcolonialism can in fact contribute to new anti-campaigns. Oversimplification leads to facile hope about easy transformations. Beyond is rather about an attempt to chart a path between utopianism and 'hip-defeatism' in order '... to posit new forms of critique that will address the ideological and material dimensions of contemporary neo-imperialism' (Loomba et al. 2005:4).

According to Eloff (2016:14), black youth are talking about 'post-apartheid-apartheid'; politics of apartheid – anti-apartheid (Kelwyn Sole in Loomba et al. 2005:19). Rising expectations among middle class blacks bump against the ceiling of 'white control freaks'. According to their experience, the new South Africa is still dominated by white supremacy. Whiteness and white privilege leads to anti-white sentiment. This anti-expression against white dominance is not seen by students as racism, but as justified prejudice (Eloff 2016:14). Therefore, the slogan: 'remove whites'. The basic need is to create spaces without white presence so that black students can talk about their disadvantaged predicament. Black people should also occupy white spaces of control and administration at campuses.

The same demand is surfacing in postcolonial criticism regarding the role of many mainline churches and traditional communities of faith in the time of colonial suppression. Thus, the demand of Lartey (2013:129) that practical theology within an African context should pursue and engage in postcolonialising theologising.

How can theology be transformed to get rid of zombie categories that served more the interests of ecclesial imperialism than the sacrificial categories of cruciform love?

## #CaesarMustFall: The emperor mystique in the corpus christianum

Fundamental to imperialistic paradigms is the notion of control and power. European empires used force to gain control over the resources of 'native countries'. European nationalism was in most of cases accompanied by the so-called *corpus christianum* [Christianism] and its missionary endeavours to conquer heathens for God's kingdom. During the times of colonial annexation, European expansionism was a close ally of denominationalism in its vigorous attempt to establish churches (church planting schemas). One should acknowledge the fact that many missional interventions linked secular power categories to the theological paradigm of the *missio Dei* (Bosch 2001).

One can say that postcolonialism and decolonising campaigns cannot be separated from theological schemata of interpretation that portrayed God in images that represented Western and even Hellenistic and Roman imperialistic thinking, and thus the attempt to apply a pastoral hermeneutics to paradigmatic issues in postcolonial theory.

More and more it is accepted that the Roman and Hellenistic paradigm of imperialistic thinking, had a huge impact on conceptualisation in Christian reflection. Michael Schaper (2014:1), in the edition of Geo Epoche: *Die Kunst der Antike*, points out that Christian art, especially in the middle ages, was dominated by static Hellenistic paradigms that tried to glorify God in terms of an aesthetics of faith.

One theory in the interpretation of early Christian iconography is called the theory of the *Emperor Mystique* (Mathews 1993:12).

The *Emperor Mystique* approach refers to the theory in iconography accepted by art historians, namely that the images of Christ in Early Christian imagery were derived from images of the Roman emperor (Louw 2014:129–133):

Both the shape and the power of the images, according to this theory, come from reliance on imagery formerly used to present the emperor. I call this approach the 'Emperor Mystique.' It is a "mystique" in so far as it involves a reverence bordering on cult for everything belonging to the emperor. To such historians dropping the word 'imperial' into a discussion represents an appeal to a kind of ultimate value beyond which one never looks. (Mathews 1993:12)



Source: Louw, D.J., 2014, *Icons. Imaging the unseen. On beauty and healing of life, body and soul*, Sun Press, Stellenbosch

**FIGURE 5:** (a) Mosaic with image of Apollo, from Greek mythology. The depiction of Christ *pantokrator* with halo (Hagia Sophia) in Byzantium iconography shows a remarkable resemblance (b). See also Louw (2014:127).

The Hellenistic and Roman background of icons (Louw 2014:125–134, 2015) should be acknowledged (Nyssen 1982:413). It is quite understandable that in their search for identity, the followers of Christ during the early times of Christianity expressed their identities in terms and images that draw on widely shared cultural categories. The similarities are evident. However, Christians indeed reinterpreted such categories in a different and unique way. According to Harland (2009:47), the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, which reflect group life in two central hubs of early Christianity – Western Asia Minor and Syrian Antioch –, provide a case in point. In these writings Ignatius drew heavily on categories from the culture of Greco-Roman cities in order to build up the identity of the Christian communities. The same process is evident in imaging (see Figure 5).

It should be mentioned here that Byzantium art cannot be separated from the historical background when *basileia ton Rhomaion* was transformed to Byzantium and its Greek roots (Evans 2004:15). In 1557, the name of the empire was replaced with the term Byzantium. Constantinople was seen as the place for the restoration of political and religious power (Evans 2004:5).

The attempt to guard against pagan influences was predominant in the history of Christianity. It even led to theories that there is a close connection between the Isis cult and the development of private home altars (Weitzman 1998:5). It was believed that Serapis, with his shrine situated in Alexandria, united in himself the underworld powers of Osiris with the healing powers of Asclepius. His head was given the broad brow and copious hair of Jupiter. He wore a wreath of laurel and balanced a grain measure on his head.

In 400 AD, an association between Serapis and Zeus developed (Mathews 1993:184–185).

What should be reckoned with in iconography is that Byzantium icons represent a wedding of the pagan icon genre<sup>8</sup> to Roman secular portraiture.<sup>9</sup> Mathews (1998:51) refers to the case of Bishop Gennadios of Constantinople (458–457 AD) and a painter, who dared to paint the saviour in the likeness of Zeus. The story goes that he found his hand withered. The bishop healed him and instructed that Christ must have more short frizzy hair. However, in the later development of icons, the Zeus type won, because within the framework of the power issues<sup>10</sup> in Byzantium culture, the Zeus-depiction was more forceful (Mathews 1998:51).<sup>11</sup> The great male gods of antiquity – Asklepios, Serapis and even Suchos – ‘all assumed the broad forehead, long hair, and full beard that characterized Zeus, the father of the gods. Christ should hardly be seen as less powerful than they’ (Mathews 1998:51).<sup>12</sup> In this regard, the blessing Christ from

8.Velmans points out the influence of Greek thinking on the idealism of the early church fathers (Velmans 2007:20); very specifically the impact of Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita.

9.Many of the pagan images were Christianised in order to serve a different purpose. See for example: On a statue of Dionysus, Psalm 28: 3 was written just above the genitals (8–9 AD) (Zakssaya 2006:50).

10.For the further impact of power images in Byzantium icons, see the research of Helen Evans (2004:5–16).

11.Early Christian art is permeated with symbolism. See in this regard the very early testimony of Eusebius concerning Orpheus as symbol of Christ, even Heracles. All act as bearers of the idea of salvation, of the victory of good over evil, of prosperity and well-being (Zakssaya 2006:49).

12.Christians’ claims of historical authenticity for the icons are founded on faith more than fact. Icons in Christian traditions should therefore not be interpreted from the viewpoint of historical fact but from the viewpoint of spiritual experiences and faithful imaging. Byzantium art was indeed an attempt to portray Christ as superhuman, thus the reason for depictions larger than life scale (Mathews 1998:51–52).

the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, should be rendered as a perfect example: 'All the verist tricks of Roman portraiture are added to convey the powerful presence of Christ' (Mathews 1998:51).

The point is that icons and their impact on establishing God-images in the Christian tradition cannot be understood without the background of classical mythology. They played an important role in the worship of the godhead in the temple cult. In this regard, it is hypothesised that in terms of possible origin there is a close connection between Christian icons and the Isis cult in ancient Egypt (Weitzman 1998:7).<sup>13</sup>

Gabriele Kopp-Schmidt (2004:68–69) points out in her book, *Ikonomie und Iconologie*, that it was during the fourth century AD that the Christianisation of Roman culture occurred. The Romans made use of examples from ancient Rome in their depiction of Christ and in their church architecture. Constantine and his family supported the 'new movement'. When Christianity became a state religion at the end of the fourth century AD, elements of the Caesar-cult were accommodated in the liturgy and priesthood. In order to gain power, it was important for the clergy to portray Christ in all images as a heavenly ruler and monarch.

According to the so-called emperor cult and Constantine paradigm, God's kingdom should be understood in terms of militant power. God reigns as a 'Caesar' and determines every sphere of life. Ever since, it has been a real danger to fashion God in the image of the 'cultural gods' – the imperial rulers of the Egyptian, Persian and Roman empires. The church gave unto God the attributes which belonged to Caesar (see also Inbody 1997:139). The church becomes a cultural institution with God as the official Head of a powerful establishment: God's omnipotence – God as Pantokrator (Louw 2000:1–60).

In theology, God's omnipotence has often been interpreted, not in soteriological and sacrificial terms but in Hellenistic terms: *pantokrator*. The latter is the Greek version of the Hebrew phrase '*el Saddaj*' (Hieronymus used the Latin version *deus omnipotens*). It is a fact that God revealed himself several times as the Almighty. Genesis 17:1: 'the Lord appeared to him [Abraham] and said "I am God Almighty"'. (See Gn. 28:3, 35:11, 43:14, 49:25; Ex. 6:3.) However, the etymology of '*el Saddaj*' is very complex and uncertain. (Louw 2000:67–68):

The phrase *el Saddaj* should be traced within the context of the various texts. In essence, it represents the uniqueness (grace) and greatness (majesty) of Yahweh who reveals himself, in terms of the tribal and familial metaphor, as a Father and God of the covenant. Within this Hebrew context, Hieronymus's translation (*omnipotens*) and the *pantokrator*

conception are misleading and deeply influenced by Hellenistic and Roman thinking.

Gradually in the history of the church, the connotation between God as *pantokrator* and the church as a political and imperialistic entity overshadowed the *missio Dei*. Instead being merely a witnessing and incarnational presence, the *missio Dei* had been shaped as an ecclesiocentric enterprise; sending became expanding and territorial authority.

With reference to David Bosch (2001:1), a theological synopsis of 'mission' as concept, has traditionally been used as (1) propagation of faith, (2) expansion of the reign of God, (3) conversion of the heathen, and (4) the founding of new churches. Behind the notion of being sent into the world, was the paradigmatic notion of power and authority. This notion of being sent, was always closely connected to the theological paradigm of the authority of God as illustrated by the theological, overarching concept of the *missio Dei*; 'The *missio Dei* institutes the *missiones ecclesiae*' (Bosch 2001:370, 519).

In the ecclesiocentric approach of Christendom, 'mission', became a program of the church and were associated with 'church planting':

Mission boards emerged in Western churches and understood themselves as sending churches, and they assumed their destination of their sending to be the pagan reaches of the world that needed both the gospel and 'the benefits of Western civilizations'. (Guder 1998:6)

Already in his book *Transforming Missions*, David Bosch (2001:367) emphatically stated that we need a fundamentally new and different model than the expansion paradigm: '... mission must be understood and undertaken in an imaginatively new manner today' (Bosch 2001:367). In this regard, the paradigm shift should be in the direction of a calling into society within the parameters of the human quest for meaning and dignity and not anymore been supported by the *omni*-categories of Christian imperialism. Thus, the argument of Bosch (2001:373) that the missionary dimension of a local church's life manifests itself *inter alia* when 'it is able to welcome outsiders and make them feel at home'.

Ecclesial thinking is closely linked to existing God-images and how the church exercises authority in its denominational structures and local organisation. The church should acknowledge its role in colonial activities and imperial thinking and should thus embark on a theological mission to address the impact of *omni*-categories in praxis thinking and transform paradigms stemming from *pantokrator* images.

## 'God' in a beyond-postcolonial theology: From *omni*-categories to *passion*-categories

The debate on postcolonialism and the challenge to deal with the destructive legacy of colonialism identifies two issues

13. One should bear in mind that iconography in the Christian tradition was very specifically influenced by the complex world of Roman culture of the period 200–400 AD: The Romans were a matter-of-fact people, and cared less for fancy goods. Yet their pictorial methods of telling the deeds of the hero proved of great value to the religious which came into contact with their far-flung empire (Gombrich 2006:96).



that framed paradigms regarding the promotion and understanding of the Kingdom of God expansionism, namely (1) hegemonic and subversive thinking (thus the need for a postcolonialising God and the emphasis on diversity) and (2) the link between threat power and imperialistic thinking (thus the need for a decolonialising God and the emphasis on compassion).

### The postcolonising God of colonialism

For Immanuel Lartey (2013:xvi–xviii), a paradigmatic transformation means to introduce the notion of a postcolonialising God. It implies a deconstruction of hegemonic thinking and a subversive top down approach to a grassroots approach in order to embrace plurality, human creativity and polyvocality as means for God's expressive activities in cultural diversity. 'At Pentecost God postcolonializes subverting dominant hegemonic discourses and affirms the diversity and plurality of creation. The new creation is to be a postcolonial reality' (Lartey 2013:14).

### The decolonising God of post-imperialism

In decolonising the God of post-imperialism, practical theology should go further than merely acknowledging diversity and deconstruct hegemonic oppressive thinking. It should deconstruct oppressive power categories projected onto God in order to maintain imperialistic ecclesiologies and Hellenistic God-images designed for immutable deities. In this regard, theopaschitic thinking could be applied in order to move from *missio Dei* expansionism to *passio Dei* expressionism.

To my mind, deistic categories of sovereign imperialism should be replaced by theopaschitic categories of co-suffering and cruciform passion (Louw 2016; Moltmann 1972). Compassion transcends the scepticism of prejudice by the intimacy of unconditional love (the sacrificial ethos of *agapē* and the embracing outreach of hospitality).

*Paschō* demarcates the identity of Christ's mediatorial work and the connection with death: *pathēma tou thanatou* (Heb 2: 9). *Paschō* is closely connected to soteriology. It is substitutionary in character because Christ is the atoning sacrifice for our sins (Heb 13:12). The suffering of Christ as displayed in a theology of the cross describes the all-sufficiency and completeness of his atoning sacrifice. His vicarious suffering took place *ephapax*, once for all (Heb 7:27; 9:12; Rom 6:10). Christ's vicarious suffering means for believers not deliverance *from* earthly suffering, but deliverance *for* earthly suffering and the creation of modes of courageous resilience.

The hope emanating from a theology of the cross (the divine paradox of the forsakeness of the dying Son of God) resides in the fact that because of his vicarious suffering, Christ is able to comfort through his compassion; suffering defines Christ as a high priest who sympathises (*sympathēsai*) with our weakness (Heb 4:15). Suffering, furthermore, constitutes

the church as a *koinōnia*, a fellowship partaking in the sufferings of Christ (*sympaschomen*). Believers are summoned to show not merely sympathy with one another but active and practical compassion (*sympaschō*). In the Old Testament, compassion implies more than merely empathy. It is deeply related to the Torah and the notion of *dikaioσynē* (righteousness). Righteousness is therefore not a matter of actions conforming to a given set of absolute standards, but of behaviour which is about enfleshment of love and compassion (Seebass 1978:355).

Despite paradoxes, suffering becomes a kind of ministry (*diakoneō*) (2 Cor 11:23ff.) and serves to identify the true servants of the church. *Paschō* then is intrinsically an eschatological category and is a means to *doxa* and glorification. Repeatedly in the New Testament suffering and glory (Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet 5:1, 10), as well as suffering and patience (2 Thess 1:4; Heb 10:32), demarcate the journey of hope throughout the trajectories of life (Louw 2016).

In general, the word *splanchnizomai* is reserved for the care and pity of Christ as a display of the compassion of God the Father. Furthermore, pastoral care derives its unique theory and identity from *ta splanchna*, the compassion of God. Because of *ta splanchna*, God should be introduced to suffering human beings as a *Compassionate Companion*. The implication is that we ourselves, within the unique meaning of the human soul (*nēfesh*), should be compassionate:

and it is to understand that undergoing the dispossession of self, entailed by compassion, is to align our own 'being' with God's 'being', and thus, performatively, to participate in the ecstatic ground of the Holy Trinity itself. (Davies 2001:252)

Instead of the impassibility of God and our human tendency of *apatheia*, compassion summons us to a lifestyle of compassionate and hospitable being-with and suffering-with.

In a theopaschitic approach, co-suffering should lead to the spiritual praxis of coexistence. With spiritual is then meant an integrative approach that keeps in mind that intersubjectivity, in all forms of existential encounters, is framed and determined by the bipolar directives in human attitude and social-cultural orientation: *differentiation* (the dividing factor of dissimilarity, unique identity, particularity and a sense of otherness) and *integration* (the coherence factor of intimacy, togetherness and a sense of belonging).

## Conclusion

'Beyond postcolonialism' is not a utopia for the complexity of creating a fair and just society on the basis of democracy – a society without class, race and discrimination. The beyond is to move from the paradigm of imperialism and oppression to a paradigm of peaceful coexistence within the discrepancies and schismatic divisions in society. The beyond approach is not a solution to be performed by achievement ethics. Beyond is about cultivating an ethos and habitus of compassionate being-with and a mindset and paradigmatic

thinking of accommodative wellbeing of the other<sup>14</sup> (stranger, intruder, outcast, co-inhabitant, opponent, antagonist and opposition).

The concept of co-being within cultural diversity should be accepted as an existential reality. It implies a dynamic bipolarity of distance (differentiation/separation) and nearness (sense of belongingness, intimacy). Coexistence is a networking category within a systemic approach of life. Life is inevitably a complex system of bipolar and even polar forces. There could be centrifugal forces, but also repulsive forces. Anti-tensions are part and parcel of lifestyles (*vivendi*). However, in a pastoral hermeneutics the focus should be on positive and constructive forces that foster social and cultural resilience, meaningful hope and compassionate being-with. In this regard, the notion of peaceful coexistence comes into play. In this regard, the notion of compassionate being-with as an explication and enfleshment of the *passio Dei* could be applied in a practical theological approach that contributes to a 'moving beyond' impetus within the discrepancies of social and violent conflicts.

In a praxis approach with the emphasis on both social wellbeing and peaceful coexistence, one is in need for categories that can contribute to spiritual sustainability – factors that transcend normal, daily differences and existential friction. In this regard, power issues are at stake. It is argued that, in practical theology, power categories that contribute to oppressive and imperialistic theological thinking should be deconstructed.

#CaesarMustFall! refers to a practical theological deconstruction of categories stemming from ideological conceptual frameworks and patterns of thinking. The latter refers to conceptualisation in ecclesial thinking that conveys and transfers a metaphysics of immutability and a *pantokrator*-image of imperial dominionship, contributing to ecclesial expansionism in the missional outreach of the church to people exposed to, and suffering from, hierarchical exploitation and threat power (Black Pain and the suffering of ontological inferiority). Thus, the practical theological campaign of decolonising the God of the 'Emperor Mystique'. Static ontological categories are to the author's mind inappropriate (zombie categories)<sup>15</sup> for theory formation in practical theological thinking that needs a paradigm switch from a positivistic interpretation of *fides quaerens intellectum* to a heuristic hermeneutics of *fides quaerens vivendi*: Faith seeking meaningful modes of living (appropriate lifestyles for promoting a humane space of significant existential orientation within the dynamics of market place realities and civil societal dynamics). For practical theological thinking that wants to shift from imperialistic categories in Kingdom of God paradigms, to theopaschitic categories, I therefore

propose the bowel categories of *ta splanchna* thinking in a pastoral hermeneutics. A 'beyond approach' in practical theology should apply the notion of compassionate being-with in a praxis approach to #MustFall campaigns, namely to understand the other from the position of compassionate solidarity and viewpoint of sympathetic dialogue. Thus, the proposal to switch from dominium God-images (threat power) to co-suffering, passion categories: *passio Dei*. Translated into a pastoral hermeneutics for peaceful coexistence, theopaschitic thinking is proposed in order to establish trust and hope. In this regard, the spiritual and pastoral category of compassionate being-with can play a decisive role in the establishment of an ethos of sacrificial outreach to the suffering of fellow human beings, very specifically the other as stranger and intruder.

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14.Bosch (2001:373) argues that the missionary dimension of a local church's life manifests itself inter alia when 'it is able to welcome outsiders and make them feel at home'.

15.Reader (2008:6) advocates for a revolution of categories in the field of theory formation in practical theology. He warns against the danger of 'zombie categories' (Ulrich Beck), that is, the continued employment of concepts that no longer do justice to the world we experience, and yet, which are difficult to abandon because of tradition and because they are not yet totally redundant.

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