Ethnicity, Missiology and Indigenous Theology

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The State is the political paragon of the so-called Enlightenment. It is the invention of cerebral planners, of a rational ordering of society *in spite of* the messiness of cultural realities 'on the ground'. Ethnicity, why not say it, has paradoxically become the political epitome of post-modernity. Empires and states break up or weaken on account of it; fabricated colonial states face disintegration under its pressures. And ethnicity is not essentially rational; it is fundamentally a collective emotional urge of belongingness to planetary space in the face of an over-*organized*, or more correctly *appallingly managed* world. Ethnicity burgeons from the raw earth, not from cerebral artifice. And it boldly affirms, in a Nietzschean vein now rehabilitated for post-modernity, that the *Geist* of a modern sense of humanity is not enough to make us noble: 'there must be something to ennoble the spirit ... Blood'.[1] Or, to defuse this of racist connotations (at least before due analytical time!), ethnicity is the call of an organic rootedness, or for the exiled and the expatriate an underlying pathos of basic irridentism, that casts modern politics under the suspicion of artificiality and super-*structural*-ism. Ethnicity entails the claim that a long enough attributed and defended territory, its inhabitants sharing a common culturo-religious and for the most part linguistic inheritance, is the only authentic base for polity.[2] (Not that the

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A different version of this paper has been submitted to *Missiology*.

1 From *The Will to Power*, trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, New York, 1968, *sect.* 942.

2 Start with R. Wright and D. McManus, *Flashpoints: promise and peril in a new world*, New York, 1992; Trompf, 'Introduction' to *idem* (ed.), *Islands and Enclaves: nationalisms and separatist pressures in island and littoral contexts*, New Delhi, 1993, pp. xix-xxxi; and for more historical perspective on Two-Thirds World nationhood, see the useful surveys by L. Mair, *New Nations*, London, 1967 edn. and M. Janowitz, *The Military in the Political Development of Small States*, Chicago, 1964. I do not have space to explain that I include in this organicism the 'nation' in its earlier, pre-statist sense, cf. esp. the great work by the Jenö Szücs, *Nemzet és történelem: tanulmanyök*, Budapest, 1974, pp. 254-79, cf. also A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford, 1986. On futurology, W. W. Rostow, 'The Coming Age of Regionalism', *Encounter*, June 1990, pp. 3-7.

engines of State have made no use of such *Grundlagen* to fuel the fires of their patrotisms - for German Nazism, or Russia's Communist destiny, to take two glaring cases.[1] Yet it is Germany above all as an imaged culturo-ethnic unity that has outlasted arrant Nazi and Communist statism and brought down the Berlin wall, and it is massive culturo-regional reaction against the former Communist bloc - from the Czech Republic, to Chechnya, and down to Macedonia - that forms the very hallmark of current 'ethnic politics', or of the newest reclaimed nationhoods).[2]

What we call 'the indigenous' (or indigeneity) encapsulates ethnicity into a sharpened sense of the pristine, of the *ethnê* or 'first peoples' occupying a land before other peoples came. As ideational constructs, admittedly, the ethnic and the indigenous remain products of the modern achievement to render the world intelligible, yes, in the current jargon, to invent it for analytical (and then 'political') purposes, yet ethnicity and indigenousness 'so-called' nonetheless reflect social realities and associations that preceded 'modern politics', or constitute the rock from which statism has carved its monsters. The indigenous defines its claims over place more persuasively than the ethnic. It not only denotes a 'firstness' among peoples to a given *topos*, but more than often a relative smallness, implying that a vulnerable, survivalist group had reached its 'place in the sun' before modern times through a slow and steady osmotic process.[3] (In reality, sometimes whole clusters of related small groups may have moved in waves - as with the African 'Bantu' - and these developments need to be reconsidered as comparable to the mobile 'ethnic composites' seizing their opportunities in well known historical periods. In the latter respect, I

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1 Cf., e.g., G. F. Mosse, *Masses and Man; nationalist and Fascist perceptions of reality*, New York, 1980, yet notice the leftovers of the extreme statist-racist connections in new anti-establishment gang-like activity, see P. Hockenos, *Free to Hate: the rise of the Right in post-Communist Eastern Europe,* New York and London, 1993 (Germany); W. Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*, Princeton, 1984 (Russia). Cf. also P. Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, London, 1974; N. Chomsky, *The Political Economy of Human Rights*, Sydney, 1980, etc.

2 See e.g., R. Petrie, *The Fall of Communism and the Rise of Nationalism; the index on censorship reader*, London, 1997, cf. A. Simic, 'Obstacles to a Development of a Yugoslav National Consciousness; ethnic identity and folk culture in the Balkans', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 1/1, 1991, pp. 18-36.

3 For geographic orientation, start with J. Burger, *The Gaia Atlas of First Peoples: a future for the indigenous world*, Melbourne, 1990, cf. K. Hastrup, *A Passage to Anthropology: between experience and theory*, London and New York, 1995, ch. 8.

think especially of the late antique 'Barbarian incursions' all but finalizing the pattern of present European ethnicities, and later, mediaeval movements, such as the Mongol invasions, or even the Norman conquests. The organic concept of nation solidified with the outcomes of these 'transmigrations', *nationes* being a pre-statist notion of a dominant *ethnos* settling among prior, sometimes *indigenous* peoples).[1]

Religion begs to be written into the equation. In this piece I am mainly concerned with the Christian tradition, yet one must be fully attentive to the uses of all major religions in varieties of new nationalisms, religion being deployed to confront prevenient states as 'secular', and therefore as hollow and unfulfilling devices.[2] Turning to consider Christianity, what we speak of as the Church (or more historically and specifically the various major, non-sectarian churches), shares in common with the ethnic and the indigenous this 'pre-statist' past, but of course the *ekklêsia* is famous—some might say notorious—for engendering an *alterum genus*, and thus a focus of allegiance, putatively cross-cultural, against which blood, soil and the 'imagined community' of the state must compete.[3] By the late 1990s, mind you, in ways that would take too long to clarify, though urbanism and social mobility have much to do with it, the 'modern-political', the 'ethnic and indigenous', as well as 'the ecclesiastical' (or 'institutional-religious', to speak more broadly), have become variably inter-penetrated and inter-reactive, so that we are asked afresh to consider what we are dealing with sociologically, and to admit into the analysis the politics of a host of 'rhetorically invented' (or at least reinvented) social identities overlaying more authentically traditionalist claims. Thus a whole plethora of *neo*-ontic forms, or *neo*-ethnicities, including ideologies of ethnicity, or new regional, neo-tribal and micronationalist pressures now utterly complicate this 'post-modern' foil against bureaucratization and

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1 Start with, I. Schapera, *The Khoisan Peoples of Southern Africa*, London, 1930 (cf. B. Davidson, *Africa: history of a continent*, London, 1972 edn., chs. 1-2); J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West 400-1000*, London, 1967 edn.; P. Brent, *The Mongol Empire*, London, 1976 (Mongols). The quotation goes back to Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* [1621], Dent edn., London, 1932, vol. 1, pp. 212-3.

2 See esp. M. Jurgensmeyer, *The New Cold War? religious nationalism confronts the secular state*, Berkeley and Oxford, 1993 (esp. on Islam, Sikhism and Buddhism); T. Tschuy, *Ethnic Conflict and Religion: challenge to the churches*, Geneva, 1997.

3 M. Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, London, 1970, ch. 1. Cf. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London, 1983.

the practical hegemony of the (usually armed) state. The 'new Congolese' of central Africa, Melanesian Bougainvillean independence forces and Indian hilltribe Nagar revolutionaries immediately come to mind. And what we may call 'the less attestably ethnic' (e.g., with urban enclaves and 'minorities' in New World contexts) or 'less attestably indigenous' (e.g., most politically vocal Amerindian and Australian Aboriginal activists), and the 'synthetico-' and 'post-Christian' factor (e.g., New Agers), make for further confusion.[1] The points of compromise and tension between Church and State across the globe would take many books to unravel.[2]

(Some caveats have to be voiced, admittedly, about reappropriations of the State to bolster ethnic, indigenous and religious aspirations. In the central Asian situation, I have noticed, ethnicity has counted to set Uzbek, Tajik and western Mongols in their allegedly rightful lands, but for the common people the state structures set up by Moscow remain almost salvific against the dangers of new 'free-floating' mafia elements. Hutus hunting to kill Tutsis, and Serbian anti-Muslim 'ethnic cleansers', for other types of examples, have appealed for legitimacy to a preconceived state apparatus. Added to the global maelstrom, I also do not want to forget, are other forces working against the modern state. There are famous internationalist organizations [e.g., UN, ECC)] but I do not consider these subversive of statism; others genuinely manipulate state jurisdictions for trans-national - 'neo-super-tribal'- business interests [with new fixtures, such as the MAI, raising the possibility of international law cases against individual states]).[3]

Missiologists have the onerous task of plotting and evaluating the role of missions and Mission in these socio-political intricacies.

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1 Most of the issues are covered by articles in Trompf (ed.), *op. cit.*, note esp. chs. 8-9, 12, cf. also *idem*, *Payback*, Cambridge, 1994, ch. 7, and more recently 'Gangs and Politics', *Current Affairs Bulletin* 71/2 (1994): 32-7. On gangs as 'tribalist', e.g., P. Neuburg, *The Hero's Children: the post-War generation in Eastern Europe*, London, 1972, esp. pp. 235 ff. On the new problematic of social identity, S. Hall and P. Du Gay (eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London and New Delhi, 1996; and on defining minorities as distinct from ethnic or indigenous groups, J. Vincent, *The Race Race*, London, 1970. For clues to the socio-political implications of the New Age, W. J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, Leiden 1996, esp. ch. 15.

2 Start with S. Mews,(ed.), *Religion in Politics: a world guide*, London, 1989, cf. José Comblin, *The Church and the National Security State*, Maryknoll, N.Y.,. 1979.

3 Start with K. Suter, *Global Change; Armageddon and the new world order*, Claremont, Ca., 1992.

In the light of Professor Eric Sharpe's writings I am particularly concerned with the world of Christian missionary endeavour,[1] and here I focus on issues of *indigenous theology*, and in doing so try to ask intelligent questions about how to 'place' missiologists and indigenous theologians in the complexities briefly introduced. It seems that fundamental, tricky problems are beginning to present themselves about the very *plurality of indigenous theologies,* and about the *intrinsic boundedness of* (what I will call) *missiological expectation* about the way the Gospel should be imbibed. *Apropos* plurality, there is an obvious tension between the current enthusiasm (especially in critical missiology) to welcome indigenous theologies and a long-inured management mentality (locatable in missiologists' ongoing attention to actual missions and young churches themselves) that matters should not get out of control—so that plurality, in other words, let alone the ethnic and the indigenous, are not celebrated for their own sakes. Missiologists, to move on, typically prescribe for themselves (whether individually, or through a kind of 'consensus among cronies') *criteria of expectation* as to what indigenous theologies look like, or (at least implicitly) *should* look like. In this latter case there is a subterranean problem, identified by African American Professor Lamin Sanneh (in his opening address to the 1996 Yale-Edinburgh work group on mission history), that missiologists will like to see indigenes cast as their own preconceived moulds, give or take a few degrees in life's 'pressure-cooker'. The problem here is of the preconstructed boundary, beyond which will lie the 'deeply disturbing', 'the unacceptable', or for those using more conservative discourse, 'the heretical' or perhaps the 'syncretistic compromise' of the pure Gospel. Within this *problématique,* of course, lies the possible danger (who am I to be really certain?) that what is authentically indigenous theology will be passed over for what can readily be made amenable to existing (often 'mainstream' structures and beliefs), so that what we are expected to heed is more 'schooled up' and perhaps for that reason more 'pseudo-indigenous' than what is desirable (theologians may want to add: 'what arises through the Spirit of God'). There is always that likelihood of cultivating an unwitting extension of the missiologists' own civilizations and 'comforts of the familiar', or, more deliberately, the encouragement of the brightest local minds into

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[1] Cf. Sharpe, e.g., *Not to Destroy but to Fulfil: the contribution of J. N. Farquhar to Protestant missionary thought in India before 1914* (Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia VI), Uppsala, 1965; *Karl Ludwig Reichelt: missionary, scholar and pilgrim*, Hong Kong, 1984.

international (very often Western-influenced) theological colleges that are elitist and out of touch with the grassroots.

On the other hand, who is *expecting* of missiologists' expectations a throwing of caution and traditional-critical sense to (the post-modernist?) winds? Admittedly the critique of structure will and has already made most missiologists turn from 'exporting the Gospel with modernity' to contextualization.[1] The events in the Communist world during the 1990s open up the possibility of an 'unstructured' future, of a 'post-historical' order without a coherent framework of values of decisive political importance.[2] But it belongs to the nature of the missiologists' orientation that there are ongoing ideational and institutional durabilities independent of the vicissitudes of political economy. It is in-built into the missiologists' agenda that basic questions of truth, tradition and ethics are at stake, and anybody who does not know where the boundary-lines *have been* (at least generally) drawn is not going to make an intelligent comment about the distinctiveness, or perhaps the very provocativeness and challenge, of any unusual indigenous theological thrust. *Qua* discipline, in any case, especially if its theological dimensions are not to be eviscerated into methodology, historism and objectivism, missiology ought not to have its potentiality for prophetico-critical judgement taken away from it. For, though its protagonists may be more or less flexible over expressions of belief and doctrine, or liturgical practice, they may have very good reason to be bounded about the *actions consequent* upon these expressions (including, one would hope, given introspection, expressions of their own). It is a law of nature that what runs wild can be dangerous and missiologists are expected to express their worries, not only about the political abuses of Christianity, as they have done, for example, from Las Casas to Sobrino in the southern Americas, but also about espousals of the

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1 Start with Theological Education Fund Staff, *Ministry in Context: the third mandated programme of the Theological Education Fund (1970-77)*, Bromley, 1972; and M. I. Zafar, 'Christian Missionary Approaches in the 20th Century', *Hamdard Islamicus* 19/2 (1996): 65 ff. (with the literature cited there). Inculturation is a term tending to replace contextualization for implying less extraneous activity, cf. L. J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures: new perspectives in missiological anthropology* (American Society of Missiology Series 12), Maryknoll, N.Y., 1988, ch. 3.

2 I first heard these issues raised in a general forum at the New College centennial Seminar, University of Edinburgh, August, 1996, and the broad conclusions I see complementary to my opening gambit above.

faith that go over some edge, whether to destabilize 'the fold' or 'the truth'.

You will sense that I am now bound to ask how what is culturally restraining and theologically constraining in missiology affects approaches to developments in indigenous theology. The 'assumptive world' of missiology is to 'play safe', and always to nurture a 'working norm' in the maintenance of a perceived orthodoxy. This, I will have to admit, does not mean dispensing with critical sense. As I have argued elsewhere,[1] categorization in the social sciences was actually born out of the work of the early Church Fathers to label a hundred and one different group responses to Jesus in the early 'Christian' centuries. I could also add here that, as a detectable yet ghostly *corpus scientiae,* reflection about what *missio* means and entails at the 'Christian frontiers' has possibly been the most enduring, stable, continuous form of 'social enquiry' in world history. Yet its 'canonical burden', making it the less susceptible to vagaries and revolutionary changes in intellectual style, make it a kind of 'Holy Office' among modern social studies disciplines, letting us know all the time, even if sometimes subterraneously, where and why the Christian faith succeeded and spread and where and why it was constricted in influence. I suspect that the proper and solidly researched study of all these matters is one of the best ways to introduce oneself to the world of religions in general and to discover what are the key points of contention concerning preferred methodologies and evaluative tools in the study of religion.[2] Perhaps this is because the modern study of comparative religion was as much made possible from missionaries' field reports or literary output and from missiological debate as any other 'clustered input' from intellectual history.

My frank point is, however, that missiology itself needs a veritable 'injection in the arm', and is getting one in any case, apparently against most of its practitioners' wills, from fresh challenges around the globe, and very importantly in our *fin-de-siècle/millénnium* context. It is the substance of this paper that missiology will only be working on the cutting edge by bracing itself through processes of serious discomfort, its practitioners

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1 'Missiology, Methodology and the Study of New Religious Movements', *Religious Traditions* 10, 1987, pp. 96-7.

2 Cf., e.g., H. Kraemer, *World Cultures and World Religions* (Stone Lectures 1958) (Lutterworth Library), London, 1960, cf. C. F. Hallencreutz, *Kraemer towards Tambaram; a study in Hendrik Kraemer's missionary approach* (Rev. K. Bradfield) (Studia Missionalia Upsaliensis 7), Lund, 1966, with references to other relevant mission-involved theorists of religions along with Kraemer.

allowing themselves to be decisively arrested by the most disturbing, the most eruptive, struggling indigenous theological voices in different contexts. Obviously something of methodological import has to be faced here. The mainstream disciplinary temperament of Religious Studies calls us to be *phenomenological* (eschewing prejudice, pursuing [an admittedly unattainable] objectivity, limiting [a partly inevitable] reductionism, testing for apt comparisons, attempting empathy, and tolerantly honouring the self-inscriptions of the believer). The more reflective mode of the discipline (Theory and Method, the Philosophy of Religion, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis and philosophical theology) will raise critical questions over and against the phenomenological and social scientific *personae* of the discipline, and these will be more especially about *significances*: how one distinguishes objects of study; why one aspect will have greater importance than another; why the subject-matter may be elusive yet still be crucial, etc.

Missiological groundwork will not have been done without feeling the weight of these exercises, as well as addressing the panorama of local, regional and global conditions we at first outlined, including the challenges, resiliences, avoidances or reticences *against* different forms of missionary activity (or even against general principles of missionization) currently in existence. On the one hand, missiologists have to face up to their own commitments—theological, social-idealist, globalist, etc.—and wrestle with the growing variety of opinions about the function and future of Mission and evangelization as a long-inured socio-dynamic inheritance of Christianity. Some missiological thinkers these days, for instance, are prepared to speak only of *Missio Dei*, daringly stressing that which is preveniently 'sent' by God as a given in every human culture within or without 'the Christian world'; while in an opposite discourse others will conceive missionaries as warriors in an eschatological battle between 'the world, the flesh and the devil(s)', especially in 'obviously non-Christian' contexts.[1] On the other hand, missiologists are in a better position axiologically, if they look fearlessly outside their own safety-nets, to face the *powerfully arresting* - or 'cerebrally shocking', radically subversive, and intensely captivating - responses that refuse to be *just* 'phenomenologically interesting' or

[1] For the theology of *missio Dei*, I am thankful to Vladimir Korotkov for drawing my attention to a range of relevant, often post-modernist theological, literature in this connection. For relevant Biblical hermeneutics, J. Squires and E. Raine 'The "Mission Myth"', *Uniting Church Studies* 3/2, Aug. 1997, pp. 30 ff.

'theoretically significant'.[1] They present something so fresh, they so combine elements of the 'scandalous' with 'rightness' which belongs to the already subversive power of the Gospel, that they expose luminously or radically how 'religion' can actually snatch the scholarly subject away from the orbit of objectivity and relative significances—however momentary. The average practitioner of Religious Studies, admittedly, is more likely than not to suck these challenges into a classificatory system and place them as varieties of response to Christianity. Missiologists are in a theologically-oriented zone in which they initially intuit some curious threat to the Faith yet are enticed to explore further, perhaps coming to recognize that light has been strangely shed on the human condition despite their own discomfort. They may react first at what looks to be, and may indeed be, a counterfeit of the Gospel, but then look again and grasp, in a kind of *Gestalt* experience actually *necessary for the more complete life of scholars of religion*, what is paradoxically, if not genuinely profound. And in this reactivity missiology provides something of a sealer in the Religious Studies' maintenance-kit of scholarship, for, even if scholars in no way committed to a mission outlook were to *imagine* what it was like if they were, they would empathize with a critical nodal point at which the believer, scholar or otherwise, was being snapped out of normalcy or complacency, and caught between alarm and 'minor revelation'.

Of course missiologists (and missionaries) themselves can present what is profoundly striking in their own positioning, from Bartolomé de Las Casas defending the image of God in the American Indians, for example, and Peter Claver licking the ulcerated sores of black slaves before their arrogant colonial owners in Bogotá, down to Samuel Stokes' rejection of the 'institutional missionary' to become a humble Indian villager or Bede Griffiths' 'baptism' of the Ashram and 'Hinduization' of the Eucharist.[2] But

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1 I admit to have taken the phrase 'cerebrally shocking' from the language of the esoterist R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz, fully conscious of the fact that I could write an essay about Esotericism as being in a comparable space to Missiology in the 'field of religious reflective and practical activities'. I cautiously mention Mysticism as another possibility (my caution having been instructed by Professor Sharpe), and certain aspects of liturgical or worship studies.

2 See G. Sanderlin (ed.), *Witness: writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas*, Maryknoll, NY., 1971, esp. pt. 2; A. Valtierra, *Peter Claver: saint of the slaves*, London, 1960, pt. 2, ch. 3; W. Emilsen, *Violence and Atonement: the missionary experiences of Mohandas Gandhi, Samuel Stokes and Verrier Elwin in India before 1935* (Studien zur Interkulturellen Geschichte des Christentums

it is theology (re-)woven at the hands of indigenous thinkers that demands my attention here, and the identification of certain specimens of theological activity that recognizably dare, disturb, even sting, in stretching the open horizon of possible relationships between the Christian faith and locally- or regionally-based indigenous pressures.

In some of my other writings I have considered certain grassroots or popular responses to mission messages along these lines. So-called cargo cultism looms as among the most fascinating of these. The hopes for the supernatural arrival of European-style commodities among primal Melanesian peoples strikingly 'mirrors' the surrogate religious assumptions about what is taken as the necessary possession of a select range of items to make oneself feel worthwhile in a modern Western society. So-called 'primitive' and 'high-tech' materialism stare at one another, accusingly, mockingly, and yet paradoxically sharing the same *Onar* (or myth-dream).[1] With reference to methodological procedures and the phenomenology of distinctiveness, moreover, it is false to generalize about Melanesian responses to Christianity and the colonial impact only in terms of cargo cultism; there is a whole range of reactivity, from small armed rebellions to independent or 'breakaway indigenous' churches, and the so-called 'cargo cults' comprise one, albeit distinctive, arresting and intriguingly common, component.[2] Within the complex one may defensively dub cargo cultist, moreover, there are manifestations of popular indigenous theology, varying in their complexity and compelling character. Some are naively syncretic, a few seem to embody a 'universal significance' or 'archetypal quality'. Occasionally the scholar is left astounded, wondering whether the whole approach to the subject has to be rewritten. Once, for example, when I straightforwardly confessed my confusion to Dakoa Takaili of Bali or Unea island (in the middle of the Bismarck Sea) why he had put so much organizational energy into building a wharf to receive the ancestral spirits' cargo ship, and constructing rituals to prepare for the new

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89), Frankfurt am Main, 1994, ch. 9; J. Swindells (prod.), *A Human Search: the life of Father Bede Griffiths* (MTI films), Sydney, 1993. cf. Griffiths, *The Marriage of East and West*, London, 1982.

1 Trompf, 'On Wondering about Wonder: Melanesians and the Cargo', in J. K. Olupona (ed.), *Beyond Primitivism* (forthcoming).

2 See C. E. Loeliger and Trompf (eds.), *New Religious Movements in Melanesia*, Port Moresby and Suva, 1985, pp. xi-xvii.

goods, the 'cult leader' staggered me in his retort: *emi simbol tasol* ('it's only [or basically] symbolic').[1]

Other village-based and grassroots 'social statements' beckon our attention and press to receive more than a passing reference. The interface of black spirit movements and charismatic elements in Christianity in the Americas come to mind, or the meeting of the shamanic and the evangelical, as in South Korea, these with attendant theological experimentation.[2] It is on less popular or more sophisticated indigenous theologies, however, that I am wanting to focus, to draw threads together. I will conclude by considering three remarkable cases; from Aboriginal Australia; India; and black Africa (even though, from the balance of my research interests, it might have been expected that I consider various examples of more highly wrought Melanesian theologies as well).[3] I chose the particular cases and issues I have because Professor Sharpe, in whose honour this piece is presented, was always eager to sponsor research into Australian Aboriginal religions; was long engaged in the question of dialogue between Christianity and Indian (mainly Hindu) religion(s); and reckoned that perhaps his greatest teacher was the Swedish missiologist Bengt Sundkler, the recently deceased doyen in the study of African Independent Churches.[4]

To start closest to home, with indigenous Aboriginal theology, we must acknowledge first the wide spectrum and rich diversity of theological stances. Even crude-looking populist appropriations of Biblical stories have their special force - in the simple teaching that God appointed Australia for the Aborigines after the Flood, and anyone coming later must realize they are visitors to a Land not assigned to them through the sacred order. From the quieter, visionary spirituality of the more conservative-sounding Anglican Aboriginal bishop Arthur Malcolm, to the stirring prophetic voice of Charles Harris calling for an Independent Aboriginal Church, there is enough fascination and compelling theological energy for justice and liberation to challenge Australian expatriate Christian

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1 Foreshadowing my work with L. Mongi, *Minding Your Own Business.*

2 P. C. Phan, 'Experience and Theology: an Asian liberation perspective', *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 77, 1993, pp. 99-121. A controversial figure here is the 'shamanic theologian' Chung Hyun Chung.

3 See e.g., my *Melanesian Religion*, Cambridge, 1991, ch. 11.

4 Along with those of S. G. F. Brandon and Nathan Sörderblom, Professor Sharpe kept a photograph of Sundkler on his office wall in the Griffith Taylor Building, University of Sydney.

complacency.[1] Yet the most jolting, even jarring voice is that of a woman, Anne Pattel-Gray, a product of the so-called Stolen Generation (from a family tragically ripped from their place by Australian officialdom), a strong-willed woman who struggled out of 'mission training' and, as the mother of five, was the first Australian Aboriginal person to be awarded a doctorate in Religious Studies and evidently the first female in Indian history to be appointed to a Foundation and full Professorship.[2]

If other black Australian thinkers have brilliantly exposed problems in particular aspects of the Australian system - to do with political, legal, or ecclesiasical control - there has been no aspect of the settler capitalist heritage that has been left untouched by Pattel-Gray's uncomfortable analysis. She was the first to bring the details of the Stolen Generation to a large international forum, at the meeting of the World Council of Churches in Canberra in 1991.[3] All the overwhelming modern processes in the great southern continent are set in the context of 'The Great White Flood' overtaking the original dwellers in the Land, riddling the whole floating fabric of 'invented Australia' with an inevitable racism. Even at her university she was appalled to find that within the programme entitled Aboriginal Studies there was no voice representing the 'Kooris' or 'Murris' ('New South Wales' and 'Queensland' Aboriginals respectively) at the lecture podium; and the idea of a 'Localization Policy' - of cultivating academic opportunities for Aboriginal scholars - had not crossed the administration's mind.[4] Most embarrassingly of all, Pattel-Gray accused the Australian churches of a Christological heresy, that of not properly recognizing the Aboriginal peoples as 'equal members' of the human species.[5] This is a theology without

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1 Start with A. Pattel-Gray and Trompf, 'Styles of Aboriginal and Melanesian Theology', *International Review of Mission* 82/326, 1993, pp. 170-5. Cf. T. Swain, 'Charles Harris,' 'Arthur Malcolm', in J. R. Hinnells (ed.), *Who's Who of World Religions*, London, 1991, pp. 147, 254.

2 At the time of writing she was preparing to take up the Foundation Chair and Head of the new Department in Mission and Ecumenics at the prestigious United Theological College at Bangalore.

3 Pattel-Gray, *Through Aboriginal Eyes: the cry from the wilderness*, Geneva, 1991.

4 Pattel-Gray, G. Paulson, H. Spykerboer and Trompf, proposal for 'An Aboriginal Institute of Religious Studies' (Report sponsored by the National Council of Churches of Australia, presented to the Vice-Chancellor, University of Sydney), Sydney, 1995.

5 Pattel-Gray, *The Great White Flood* (American Academy of Religion: Cultural Studies 2), Atlanta, 1998.

compromises: its prophetism sometimes too close to recrimination for comfort, yet we are taught to place the anger as the justified cry of agony. Liberal and New Age Westerners may resile at the apparent implications of guilt, only to discover that social guilt does have to be faced after all. Redemption lies in working for liberation through an undistorted account of a shadowy 'colonial psycho-history'. The incorporative qualities of Aboriginal societies, furthermore, both in their traditional survivalist mode and in their creative response to the unpreconceivable mass-assault on their lifeways, remain as terrifying signs to those who, stung into reawakenness, want to heed afresh the challenge that 'the Gospel is Not Western'.[1]

My second, the Indian example, is a similarly awkward missiological challenge when correctly understood in both indigenous and multicultural perspectives. Once again we are tested by a woman, albeit one more serenely adapting to the arena of high level politics,[2] and negotiating intriguingly with the distinctly Indian profiles of *guru* and *avatara*. I refer to Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi (previously commonly referred to as 'The Mother'), founder of the modern movement of Sahaja Yoga, and honoured in it as the 'avatar' of Mary, Mother of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.[3] This by now well seasoned traveller and international 'guru' and her intriguing 'spiritual elite' deserve a serious book, but I will reserve my comments to a placement of her within a nexus of pertinent missiological issues, and so disclose and recognize the extraordinary importance of Shri Mataji in the interface between Hindu-Indian culture and the Christian faith.

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1 Trompf (ed.), *The Gospel is Not Western: black theologies from the southwest Pacific*, Maryknoll, N.Y., 1987. Note that Pattel-Gray's *Great White Flood* has been partly informed by J. Kovel, *White Racism: a psychohistory*, New York, 1984. See also Pattel-Gray (ed.), *Martung-Upah: black and white Australians seeking partnership*, Melbourne, 1996, cf. H. Reynolds, *The Law of the Land*, Melbourne, 1992 edn., ch. 3 *et passim*; T. Swain, *A Place for Strangers: towards a history of Australian Aboriginal being*, Cambridge, 1993.

2 Cf. C. P. Shivastava (husband to Shri Mataji), *Lal Bahadur Shastri: Prime Minister of India 1964-1966; a life of truth in politics*, New Delhi and Oxford, 1995, pls. 8-9, pp. 10, 399-400.

3 Of works on Shri Mataji, some are too adulatory or mystical to be useful, cf. e.g., G. de Kalbermatten, *The Advent*, Bombay and London, 1979. P. Pullar (who does the rounds of the Indian *guravah* and then settles on Shri Mataji - albeit sceptically - as the most significant and acceptable one) is the most balanced commentator, in *The Shortest Journey*, London, 1981, pp. 222 ff. Beyond superficiality, however, Shri Mataji deconstructs her own guruship with the teaching 'you are your own guru'.

The encounter between Hindu and Christian has been a matter of prolonged preoccupation for Professor Sharpe, as also with some of his new-found colleagues at Sydney.[1] What has been so commonly missing from the lively, sometimes heated exchanges between these traditions has been a thoroughgoing integration of vital Hindu and Christian composites of spirituality into an indigenous theology doing genuine justice to both sides. Much of the early rapprochement was distinctly 'high-religious', much missiological focus - as with the great John Nicol Farquhar, for instance - being on the claims of two bodies of scripture and the way Biblical faith 'crowned' the best of Hinduism (or such heights as the *Gita*).[2] In the colonial setting most of the interchanges amongst the intelligentsia resulted more in neo-traditional reactions, and thus a shoring up of newly invented 'Hinduism' as possessing a superior body of spiritual writings and insights over and against Christianity.[3] Occasionally the encounters produced remarkable instances of spiritual and theo-sophical blending, as with Sundar Singh earlier this century and with Christian Advaita Vedantans more recently (surrounding the Frenchman Abhishiktananda), although these attempts are rather 'schooled-up', if not high-brow.[4] At the village level, in a diversity of regional situations from Nagaland to Tamil Nadu the appeal of the Christian faith has lain in its promise of a more just and fulfilling social lifeway, an attraction

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1 Sharpe, *Faith Meets Faith: some Christian attitudes to Hinduism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, London, 1977. Cf. also G. A. Oddie (ed.), *Religion in South Asia: religious conversion and revival movements in South Asia in medieval and modern times*, New Delhi, 1991 edn.; Emilsen, *op. cit.*

2 Sharpe, *Not to Destroy, op. cit.*, esp. ch. 11, cf. pt. 2.

3 Sharpe and Hinnells, *Hinduism*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1972.

4 Even in Abhishiktananda's *Prayer*, Delhi, 1972 edn. The best examples of a modern learned Indian Christian theologians and hermeneutes would include Ishanad Vempeny; see esp. his *Inspiration in the Non-Biblical Scriptures*, Bangalore, 1973; D. S. Amalorpavadass cf. his editing of the *Research Seminar on Non-Biblical Scriptures*, Bangalore, 1974, cf. Sundar Clarke, *Let the Indian Church be Indian*, Madras, 1988. . And for a great Religious Studies intellectual. Raimundo Panikkar, see F. X. D'Sa, 'Der "Synkretismus" vom Raimundo Panikkar', in H. P. Siller (ed.), *Suchbewegungen: Synkretismus - kulturelle und kirchliches Bekenntnis*, Darmstadt, 1991, pp. 95-105, cf. Panikkar's *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: icon-person-mystery*, London, 1973, and (with N. Shanta *et al.*), *The Vedic Experience: Mantramañjari*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1977. With regard to Sundar Singh, his intuitive and visionary aspects - Sharpe has somewhat contentiously argued - may have had a Western derivative, in Emanuel Swedenborg; *idem*, 'The Legacy of Sadhu Sundar Singh', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 14/4 (1990): 161-7.

eventually reflected in millions of conversions to circumvent the *jati* (or 'caste') system in southern India. Dalit theology, as an Indian version of liberation theology, currently expresses the compelling claim the Christ can have in saving people from an allegedly karmically-ordained wretchedness, although, along with other 'contextual theologies', the message stresses redemption from invidious Indian culture rather than releasing the *missio Dei* from the Hindu heartbeat itself.[1] While some expatriate souls, such as Stokes and Griffiths, have shown the more radical way, we seem to have been a long time waiting for a palpably 'genuine' Hindu-Indian indigenous Christian theology to unfurl, and probably entertained secret fears about what it might entail when it arrived. After all, when the larger religious traditions are considered together, Christian Buddhism, Jewish Christianity, Confucio-Christian morality, Taoist Christian existentialism, and Islamo-Christian fusions all look more possible than Christian Hinduism or vice versa.

The project to conceptualize the 'Christianity' of such a crucial figure as Mahatma Gandhi is obviously pertinent here, and a paper in this very Festschrift by William Emilsen whets our appetite for the further revelations of research on this matter. For significantly, Nirmala Devi was Gandhi's 'Little Grandmother' in his renowned Sevasgram ashram. The daughter of the first Indian Christian Congressman, and of the first Indian female mathematician and headmistress of a Catholic secondary school as well, Nirmala emerged as guru from a distinctly Christian ambience, while also being arrested, along with her parents, in defence of the Gandhian, pacificistically-oriented strategy for Indian independence.[2] Her thought remains staunchly anti-colonial or 'Indianist', and trenchantly against the shallow and 'plastic' quality of Western life-styles.[3] Yet she rejects popular Hinduism, or, more significantly, seeks to transform it by new-and-proper fulfilment rather than

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1 Cf. Tissa Balasuriya, 'Toward the Liberation of Theology in Asia', in C. Cadorette, M. Giblin, M. L. Legge and M. H. Snyder (eds.), *Liberation Theology: an introductory reader*, Maryknoll, NY., 1992, pp. 31 ff.

2 Shivastava, 'Speech on the Occasion of the Birth Centenary Celebrations of Pujya Shri Prasad Rao Krishna rao Salveji at Nagpur on 24 Dec., 1983', *Nirmala Yoga* 5/27, 1985, pp. 48-9; Yogi Mahajan, *Great Women of India*, Milan, 1991, pp. 63-4. Cf. E. S. Jones, *Mahatma Gandhi*, London, 1948, ch. 9. In comparing Shri Mataji's Christian lineage with other *guravah*, J. Thomas, 'Looking Foward; Looking Back: Mother figures in contemporary Hinduism' (Honours dissert., University of Sydney), Sydney, 1994, pp. 23 ff.

3 Shri Mataji, *Meta Modern Era*, Bombay, 1995, esp. ch. 5.

destruction. The nub of the problem in the confrontation between Christianity and Hinduism is an old one already prefigured in the entrance of Islam on to the sub-continent, and in the 'mediatory yoga' (*sahaja yoga*) of the Sikhs within Hindu-Islamic conflict.[1] For non-Indian monotheists commonplace Hinduism carried with it the so-called scandal of idolatry (quite apart from whether 'idol worship' accurately describes what takes place in the varieties of Hindu ritual).[2] Shri Mataji's solution to this tension is surprisingly Zoroastrian- (and we might also say Elohistic-)looking. The Hindu gods are turned into 'deity principles' (like 'Immortals' or 'Aspects' of the One), and these are also related to the energy systems of the human subtle body (in the classic Ayurvedic medical and *kundalini* systems). The Father Almighty can be worshipped authentically under the names of the supreme Divinity as Indians know them (Shiva being especially favoured as the name); Christ is the only avatar in the literal and historical sense of God incarnate, and other avatars are taken in the (often misunderstood) traditional mythico-spiritual sense;[3] while the Holy Spirit is now revealed for the Final Age (*satya* [not *krta*] *yuga*) in her living presence and in the 'cool breeze' - the 'wind' and experiental 'tongues of [energy] fire' that arise - as the Eastern charism - up through the unblocking of the 'subtle [body][system'.[4] The Holy Spirit is one and the same as Shakti power (the consort energy of the supreme indigenous Deity) and 'the feminine face of the [universal] God', as Leonardo Boff has put it in his different context. The 'more transcendent' God-imaging of monotheism(s) locks into the greater immanentism of Indian consciousness, while the divine Procession manifests in the cosmic union between Mary and the Spirit (the Biblical *ruach*, remember, being feminine in Hebrew).[5]

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1 I am grateful to Jess Lal for informing me especially of Guru Nanak's usages referring to being in but not of the world, as a 'lotus in mud' (in anticipation of her Masters thesis on archaic Punjabi literature).

2 On the problem of misconceptions, esp. S. N. Balaganghadhara, *'The Heathen in his Blindness...' Asia, the West and the Dynamics of Religion* (Studies in the History of Religions 64), Leiden, 1994, pp. 80 ff., 372 ff.

3 Shri Mataji, Videotaped Puja Teaching, Burwood Ashram, Sydney, April 1992 (though in various other contexts Christ will be in the list of incarnations, even along with Muhammad). On the misunderstanding (and the idea of traditional Indian avatarship as literal-historical being insulting), Balanganghadara, *op. cit.*, pp. 408 ff., p. 480.

4 Shri Mataji, *Meta Modern, op. cit.*, pp. 5-7; 244, cf. *idem*, *Sahaja Yoga, Book 1*, Delhi, 1982, pp. 78-9.

5 See Boff, *The Maternal Face of God*, London, 1989, cf. S. McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: models of God in religious language*, London, 1982,

The theological integration of the Hindu and the Christian turns out to be stunning. From the social and practical viewpoint, admittedly, each of the two major groupings (from the Hindu and Western Christian backgrounds) enter Sahaja Yoga with their own prior world-views predominating, but they merge in spiritual union and practice. The Christ, however, is in no sense an afterthought in this movement (as, for instance, with Sai Baba);[1] he is intrinsic even if he tends to be 'read' more as removing our inability to forgive, as well as our ignorance, than our sin.[2] Sahaja Yoga, of course, is by now a decisively international affair; and it is striking how sahajis have no difficulty in intuiting that what is Indian-originated here is also universal, as if the holy land had somehow been translated eastward. The same paradox applies with our third and final case, from Nigeria, Africa, with what seems the most internationally exposed black Independent Church of the moment.

Black (largely southern and equatorial) African indigenous theology is a vast arena from which to single out a 'staggering instance'. In a detailed sociology of black African theological knowledge, a wide and complicated spectrum may be drawn between the great, studied and influential minds - from Tutu and Boesak in South African, and Nyere in Tanzania[3] - across to the leaders of over 7,000 Independent Churches scattered through a vast continent, some of the latter having mobilized millions and precipitated entrance into the World Council of Churches (as with the Congolese Kimbanguists) and others only touching tiny pockets in squatter settlements or reflecting some local rural area's stamp in adopting the introduced faith to its own special needs and 'separatist psychology'.[4] Certainly, under the circumstances,

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though there is more that might be said here about Catholic theology on Mary 'securing the gift of the Holy Spirit for us' at Pentecost. Cf. also Yogi Mahajan, *The Ascent*, New Dehi. 1986, from the 'Indian-cultural' side.

1 As shown of Sai Baba in a forthcoming doctoral dissertation by J. Thomas (Studies in Religion, University of Sydney), on appropriations of Western religion in Indian guru cults. Sai Baba, often called [the] Jesus Christ [of India], made no mention of Christian themes in the earlier years of his movement.

2 E.g., Mataji, *Sahaja, op. cit.*, pp. 53-5; *Meta, op. cit.*, pp. 250-2.

3 Start with J. Parratt (ed.), *A Reader in African Christian Theology*, London, 1987.

4 M. L. Martin, *Kimbangu: an African prophet and his church*, London, 1975 (on the largest African Independent Church, now in the World Council of Churches); Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets of South Africa*, London [1948] 1961 edn., and *Zulu Zion and Some Swazi Zionists*, Oxford, 1976 for South African squatter settlement and very localized Independent Churches.

because they present such riches in terms of 'Africanizing' Christianity, and in terms of challenging the inauthenticity of black Africans swallowing Western religious patterns and worship, I am bound to turn to the Independent Churches.[1] But to single out one as most engrossing is nightmarish.

I will rely on experience. Four years ago, I received a knock on my Sydney office door, opening it to three beautifully robed Africans who had set out to visit me from London. A man and two women, their robes were starched bright white though carrying bands of red; and, coming in, they declined to shake hands at first but fell to floor and pressed their faces to the ground at my feet! I encouraged them to hasten and get up; insisting I was hardly worthy of the treatment! They rose up, and the man declared, gently but solemnly, that they had come to present me with a simple message: '*Love God; love your fellow human beings; and love the Earth*'. And with the addition of the third injunction, coming so unexpectedly, and revealing the meaning of their kiss, I must admit that I then and there received, in its simplicity and succinctness, the most 'indelible' message I have received in my adult life. (And, though I had been to African, even Zulu Zionist country, this was the first time I had encountered African Independency in full regalia, and in the privacy of my own den!)

The three were members of the Brotherhood of the Cross and Star, the 'sole spiritual head' of which is the Efik-speaking Olumba Olumba Obu (1918-) of Calabar. As distinct from avatar theology, Olumba's sermons and the treatises written by others around him confirm the understanding of a special Black Messiahship. That configuration is hardly unknown for Africa - witness the late, great Zulu Isaiah Shembe[2] - yet in Olumba we discover a decisive sharpening of this motif into a more theologically challenging statement. There is a new Incarnation associated more with the Mothering of the Earth, even if ultimately going back to the Sky-

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1 Cf. Sundkler, *The Christian Ministry in Africa*, London, 1962 edn., esp. ch. 5. See also W. J. Hollenweger, 'The Theological Challenge of Indigenous Churches', in A. F. Walls and W. R. Shenk (eds.), *Exploring New Religious Movements: essays in honour of Harold W. Turner*, Elkhart, Ind., 1990, pp. 163-7.

2 Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets, op. cit.*, esp. pp. 159 ff., 277 ff. For another important case, P. Hinchliff, 'African Separatists: heresy, schism or protest movement?' in D. Baker (ed.), *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest: papers read at the Tenth Summer Meeting and Eleventh Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society* (Studies in Church History 9), Cambridge, 1972, pp. 403-4.

Father.[1] It is the Comforter, a second Christ-figure foretold in the Gospels (Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7)[2] who realizes the Kingdom of God in a very specific, concentrated place - Calabar - from whence Olumba never departs or travels.[3] Out of this very African topocentricity has issued a mission - at present the (largely Anglophone yet international) New World Mission - dedicated to the fully practised Cross-bearing love of God, Humanity and Earth, close to the end of Old Time.[4] This Mission pitches itself against the monopoly of any race over the Truth, and yet the eschatological Light is now revealed at the hands of the deprived 'black man' - the 'put-down primitive', the 'stone which the builders rejected' (cf. 1 Pet. 2:7, cf. Lk. 20:17, Acts 4:11). Women now find true equality with men in a way both African chauvinists and Western female liberationists need to heed; and the preaching of the ecological Gospels, which is an especially striking feature of this movement, should leave no one undisturbed.[5]

Obviously much more analysis of these and other pertinent cases is required better to justify such an adventurous *tour d'horizon.* Perhaps some will see me 'skating on thin ice' when I illustrate what is 'powerfully arresting' missiologically without trying to estimate how may case studies would be necessary to clinch the argument. I am not sure whether a quantitatively measurable sample is even pertinent. Some may ask whether I would place recourses to violent revolutionary action on the agenda of possibilities. I have my reasons for declining to do so, which would take too long to flesh out here, though for certain I would consider the appropriations of modern weapons technology a debasement of indigenousness, let alone the Gospel (even if I accept the most powerful of indigenous

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1 See esp. D. Ogbonnaya Agwu, *Jehovah God in Human Form: He is Olumba Olumba Obu* [Lagos, 1993), ch. 5.

2 Esp. J. Ihienonukwi Emefiele, *Humanity of God as a Subject*, Lagos [1990s], p. 11.

3 J. Goring, 'The Brotherhood of the Cross and Star', *New World Magazine* , Sept. - Oct., 1992, pp. 15-21.

4 E.g., Olumba Olumba Obu, *The Universal Leader in the Year 2001 is Born of a Woman* (Bible Class Lecture Ser.), Calabar [1992], *idem, What is the Cross?* (pamphlet), Port Harcourt [1991], etc. cf. various articles in *The New Times*, 1- (1992-).

5 On women, e.g., *idem, Forgiveness is the Key to Godliness* (publ. serm.) [Calabar, 1991], etc. For other Independent Churches' slants on the salvation of the Earth, M. L. Daniel, 'African Independent Church Pneumatology and the Salvation of all Creation', *International Review of Mission* 82/326, 1993, pp. 143 ff.

theologies to sting with *ritorsione*).[1] For comparable reasons, I do not want to treat responses to the Christian message which cleverly mock it, reject it intrinsically in some striking way, or proffer some cunningly negative desconstruction of it. Even if theological insights were to be used quite brilliantly in this negativity, it is not the point of this exercise to be considering them. Perhaps, methodologically, I should have adapted to a post-modernist approach which allowed each striking example to speak for itself as subversive of norms, and thus, when exegeted as a statement in its own right and as a challenging 'alteration of the Received Text', left ready to stir imagined institutional totalisms.[2] That I have set the case studies in a prior discussion of more expected and familiar methodological ploys, however, only goes to reveal that I take the new penchant for 'the subjectivist' and 'the intellectually independent' as a means of glorifying the marginal, or of beating normalcies with a stick, to be seriously flawed, unhelpful for future attempts to make intelligibility of the world, and often unredemptive ethically. It corresponds more to reality to re-recognize history as teacher, albeit offering us lessons we must needs struggle to discern with a renewed critical gaze, than to declare history 'un-real' for always being invented by the powerful.[3] In these days we must be wise as serpents, in any case, to grasp why the modern state is at risk, and whether those forces that undermine it combine both healthy revitalizations with energies that can generate new conflicts. For ethnicity and indigenousness are not neutral pressures.[4] And missiologists, along with any intelligent 'religion-watchers', have the onerous task of testing their own boundaries and negotiating skilfully with burgeoning spiritual energies that feel like bomb-blasts against cherished universalism(s). Before this confusion, a good scholar can easily become, too readily, a part of 'the mess' as

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1 Cf. Trompf, 'The logica della ritorsione e lo studio delle religioni della Melanesia', *Religioni e Società* 12/28, May-Aug. 1997, pp. 48 ff.

2 Cf., e.g., M. Perniola, *Bataille e il negativo*, Milan, 1977; M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977* (ed. and trans. C. Gordon), New York, 1977.

3 See K. Jenkins (ed.), *The Postmodern History Reader*, London and New York, 1997,. Start with ch. 3, cf. E. Canetti, *The Conscience of Words* (trans. J. Nerugroschel), London, 1979, pp. 55 ff. Cf. the healthy neo-Marxist critique of post-modernist theory by F. Rella, *The Myth of the Other: Lacan, Foucault, Deleuze, Bataille* (trans. N. Moe) (PostModern Positions 7), Washington, D.C., 1994.

4 Cf. also H. F. Haber, *Beyond Postmodern Politics: Lyotard, Rorty, Foucault*, London, 1994; S. Hall and P. Du Gay (eds.), *op. cit.*, for other and related issues in 'the politics of difference'.

an accepted inevitability, and thus subject to it; a deeper scholar, if I may appeal to one inspiring aspect of Professor Sharpe's work, is to understand it, detect in the turbulance its best possibilities and hidden pitfalls, and ride it out in pursuit of its unforeseen meaning - for a clearer, purer vision to aid earth's inhabitants to come.[1]

[1] Cf. Sharpe's last methodological reflects to date, 'The Compatibility of Theological and Religious Studies: historical, theoretical, and contemporary perspectives', *The Council of the Societies for the Study of Religion Bulletin* 26/3, 1997, pp. 52-9.