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## **New voices in the grassroots ecumenism – an outline of the postcolonial theological thought<sup>1</sup>**

### Abstract

Postcolonial theology is, beside liberation theology, contextual theology and intercultural theology, another theological approach that emerges on the theological margins and inspires many grassroots ecumenical organizations when adopting the postcolonial theory to theology. Like postcolonialism, it is not an orderly and integrated system of beliefs, rather it is a broad stream of thoughts, postulates and interpretations that often has little in common. Nevertheless, there are elements that set a common denominator. These might be classified in two groups of theological claims, firstly, deconstruction of the theological tradition, secondly, liberation from the bonds of Christian imperialism. The latter is regarded by postcolonial theology in two perspectives as well: socio-political and epistemological. According to postcolonial thinkers, the Church cooperated, assented and legitimised political power that down the centuries, maintained the structures of oppression, exclusion and subjugation. This conviction leads the postcolonial approach to the positions close to these of liberation theology, in particular, to the principle of the “option of the poor”. Secondly, postcolonialism claims Christianity must knock down the epistemological wall of its imperialist theologies, built only and exclusively on the European philosophy and European civilization. The article presents the crucial points of postcolonialism and its theological application. It shows that, on the one hand, its claims are often too revolutionary and too one-sided, on the other, the postulate of the epistemological change might be regarded as a proposal answering the crisis in the Western Christianity.

**Keywords:** postcolonialism, deconstruction, liberation theology, epistemological change, grassroots ecumenism.

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## Nowe głosy w ekumenizmie oddolnym: zarys postkolonialnej myśli teologicznej

### Streszczenie

Teologia postkolonialna jest, obok teologii wyzwolenia, teologii kontekstualnej i teologii interkulturowej, kolejnym kierunkiem, który wyłonił się na teologicznych peryferiach i stanowi inspirację dla wielu oddolnych grup ekumenicznych, adaptując teorię postkolonialną do teologii. Podobnie jak postkolonializm, nie jest uporządkowanym i zintegrowanym systemem przekonań, raczej jest szerokim prądem myśli, postulatów i interpretacji, które niekiedy mają ze sobą mało wspólnego. Niemniej jednak można wyszczególnić elementy, które stanowią wspólny mianownik. Mogą być one sklasyfikowane w dwóch postulatach: po pierwsze, dekonstrukcji tradycji teologicznej; po drugie, wyzwolenia z więzów imperializmu chrześcijańskiego. Imperializm chrześcijański jest zaś ujmowany w dwóch perspektywach: społeczno-politycznej i epistemologicznej. Pierwsza odnosi się do wieków współpracy i legitymizacji przez Kościoły chrześcijańskie władzy politycznej, która utrzymywała struktury przemocy i wykluczenia, druga – do budowania systemów teologicznych wyłącznie na kategoriach filozofii i cywilizacji europejskiej. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie głównych punktów postkolonializmu i jego teologicznej aplikacji. Prezentacja ukazuje, że postulaty teologii postkolonialnej są z jednej strony często zbyt rewolucyjne i zbyt jednostronne, z drugiej zaś dążenie do zmiany epistemologicznej może stanowić szansę w poszukiwaniu odpowiedzi na kryzys chrześcijaństwa w świecie zachodnim.

**Słowa kluczowe:** postkolonializm, dekonstrukcja, teologia wyzwolenia, zmiana epistemologiczna, ekumenizm oddolny.

Postcolonial theology emerges at the junction of approaches from the theological margins: liberation theology, contextual theology and intercultural theology. It is another theological path which strongly inspires and influences reflection of different grassroots ecumenical organizations, it also is another one example of how non-Western theology, which hitherto left on the peripheries of the theological world, influences Christianity in the universal perspective. The principal assumptions of postcolonial theology are, in essence, derived from the contents of its theological siblings, the above mentioned liberation theology and contextual theology. Yet these assumptions have their methodological background laid down by the broad ideological current of the postcolonial theory. In fact, in the relevant literature both postcolonial theology and postcolonial theory are converging and interchangeably used. The highlighting of this convergence is the main purpose of the article. The content is systemized by the following research question: What are the key assumptions of the postcolonial theory? How do they influence epistemology? How does postcolonialism reflect in theology? What are the main points of the postcolonial criticism of Christian imperialism? The presentation uses analysis of the relevant literature of which results are synthetically exhibited in the conclusion.

## 1. What is postcolonial theory?

As mentioned above, postcolonial theology reflects the broad approach of postcolonial theory in its application to the political, economic, cultural and social criticism of the condition of postcolonial countries. When describing this approach, Stefan Silber, the German theologian assumed that „the main interest of post-colonial criticism is to demonstrate how and to what extent the colonial, imperial or neo-colonial power have entered the epistemological and hermeneutic field so that the production of knowledge throughout the centuries of Western colonialism served the interests of the colonial powers”<sup>2</sup>.

Silber seems to refer to the Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality (*gouvernementalité*). By this notion the French philosopher emphasizes that the contemporary political governments must not be viewed as the ones that pass and enforce legal acts only but as the power that quests for means of expanding a control over society by shaping and spreading such ways of thinking in this society that converge with their desired ends. When exercising their power they use a method of discourse, understood as a set of assumptions and premises helping to organize the knowledge and to construct truth. The concept of governmentality has been employed by Edward Said in his watershed book *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient* that launched a development of the postcolonial theory in a global scope<sup>3</sup>.

Yet besides of the political aspect of this theory, it embraces more dimensions and fields. Bill Ashcroft, for instance, notices that postcolonialism deals with many things and encompasses a range of critical approaches. Nevertheless, in his opinion the postcolonial theory is not a theory in a strict sense but a sort of methodology referring to two functions: firstly, to the research of strategies employed by the postcolonial societies in order to consider various effects of colonialism; secondly to deal with the resemblances and differences in how these strategies were applied by the societies<sup>4</sup>. A different meaning of postcolonialism is also discerned by Sri Lankan theologian Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah who claims that this concept must not be explained as a theory in a *stricte* sense for it requires a deep personal involvement: “Postcolonialism, it has to be stressed, has a multiplicity of meanings, depending on location. It is seen as an oppositional reading practice, and as a way of critiquing the totalizing forms of Eurocentric thinking and of reshaping dominant meanings. It is a mental attitude rather than a method, more

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<sup>2</sup> Stefan Silber. 2014. “Among Sisters. An Overview of the Critique of Liberation Theology by Postcolonial Studies”. *Voices from the Third World* 37 (1): 151–162.

<sup>3</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Hellen Tiffin. 1998. *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies*. London – New York: Routledge, 41.

<sup>4</sup> Bill Ashcroft. 2001. *Post-Colonial Transformation*. London – New York: Routledge, 6.

a subversive stance towards the dominant knowledge than a school of thought (...) It is a critical enterprise aimed at unmasking the link between idea and power, which lies behind Western theories and learning”<sup>5</sup>.

When considering the non-Western paradigm of the postcolonial concepts, Garcia and Nunez put the stress on the communal aspect of such postcolonial attitude: “Postcolonial thinking subverts the Cartesian dictum «I think therefore I am». Postcolonial thinking affirms first and foremost «I am where I think». Our universal thinking begins with this particular «I am». We are also cognizant that our communities of faith understand this «I am» as communal. There is no identity or theologizing apart from our communities of faith”<sup>6</sup>.

The postcolonial theory therefore refers to the debates carried on in the fields of various social sciences as well as in politics, culture and art in the 1970s, when a number of the postcolonial countries had to face a deep disenchantment of early independence. At the very outset the notion of postcolonialism had a purely chronological meaning relating to the period following a state of colonialism. It has taken on a more descriptive and valuing significance when employed by many researchers and politicians who were becoming more and more aware of various cultural effects of colonialism. This awareness sparked a theory which assumes various ends and at least three functions: interpretative, political and first of all transformative one. As Ashcroft noticed, the book of Said and, furthermore, the works of American Indian philosopher Gayatri Spivak as well as English-Indian cultural researcher Homi Bhabba, paved the way to the so-called “cultural theoretical discourse” that assumed concrete proposals of transformation. It is worthwhile to mention a significance of an orthographical change concerning the notion of postcolonialism. In the very beginning it was written with the hyphen, as “post-colonial”, yet as the theory was developing, the hyphen has been intentionally removed. This would have highlighted the continuity between colonial and postcolonial epoch, and moreover, the postcolonialism as new form of colonialism, particularly in the field of economy and epistemology. Khan for instance, when defining the neoliberal paradigm of economic globalisation noted that “globalization is what we in the Third World have for several centuries called colonization”<sup>7</sup>. The postcolonial epoch is therefore not a “time after colonialism”, rather it is its extension or, more precisely, its mutation<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Rasiah. S. Sugirtharajah. 2003. *Postcolonial Reconfigurations. An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Alberto Garcia, John Nunes. 2017. *Wittenberg Meets the World. Reimagining the Reformation at the Margin*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, xvii.

<sup>7</sup> Nayef Al-Rodhan. 2006. *Definitions of Globalization: A Comprehensive Overview and a Proposed Definition*. Geneva: Center for the Security Policy, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Mark L. Taylor. 2004. Spirit and Liberation. Achieving Postcolonial Theology in the United States. In *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*. Ed. Catherine. Keller, Michael Nausner,

## 2. Postcolonialism without hyphen

Nowadays the notion of postcolonialism is entangled in many polemics on its scopes, meanings and references. Also it reflects differences in its understandings, mostly depending on whether its users come from the former colonized or colonizing countries. Due to these discrepancies it is rather widely defined. Stephen Slemon described the notion in hermeneutical terms when observing that it was applied as a “way of ordering a critique of a totalizing forms of Western historicism; as a portmanteau term for a retooled notion of «class», as a subset of both post-modernism and post-structuralism (and conversely, as the condition from which these two structures of cultural logic and cultural critique themselves are seen to emerge); as the name of a condition of nativist longing in post-independence national groupings, as a cultural marker of non-residency for a Third World intellectual cadre; as the inevitable underside of a fractured and ambivalent discourse of colonialist power; as an oppositional form of «reading practice»; and – and this is my first encounter with the term – as the name for a category of «literary» activity which sprang from a new and welcomed political energy going on within what used to be called «Commonwealth» literary studies”<sup>9</sup>.

Slemon’s description appears as comprehensive, inclusive and descriptive. Another attempt to define postcolonialism, even more precise, was undertaken by Arif Dirlik, who distinguished as well as listed ways of understanding of the notion of “postcolonial”. On the one hand the list reflects the semantical diversity of the term, whilst on the other it highlights a confusion caused by this diversity. Dirlik assumes therefore that the most significant uses of the term refer to the three aspects. First, it is “a literal description of the conditions in formerly colonized societies, in which case the term has concrete referents, as in postcolonial societies or postcolonial intellectuals”. Second, it is “a description of a global condition after the period of colonialism, in which case the usage is somewhat more abstract and less concrete in reference, comparable in its vagueness to the earlier term *Third World*, for which it is intended as a substitute”. And finally, latter, it is “a description of a discourse on the above-mentioned conditions that is informed by the epistemological and psychic orientations that are products of those conditions”<sup>10</sup>.

This survey of definitions and descriptions could be completed by the concept coined by Marc Taylor. He confirmed the premise that the postcolonial

Mayra Rivera, 44. St Louis: Chalice Press.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Slemon. 1995. The Scrumble for Post-Colonialism. In *De-Scribing Empire. Post-Colonialism and Textuality*. Red. Alan Lawson, Chris Tiffin, 3–20. London: Routledge.

<sup>10</sup> Ashcroft. 2001. *Post-Colonial Transformation*, 8f.

theory is actually a heterogeneous set of various thoughts, strategies and ideas. Their number and distinctiveness of their approaches cause the need of a typology. Taylor therefore proposes a list of dyads declared to be a systemizing instrument of the postcolonial theory. He also unveils a latent and “default” thought contained in every postcolonial theory claiming, even though it sometimes seems to be not articulated, that its inherent driving force is a movement towards liberation from universal and deeply culturally embedded systems of power and social order that cause human suffering. The below-distinguished dyads gather in single “methodological” locus a range of notions used to develop a postcolonial theory.

The first dyad is marked by the juxtaposition of colonialism and imperialism. The interdependence of both notions is not obvious – it is enough to refer to the etymology. The term colonization derives from the Latin word *colonus*, thus “farmer” while the word “imperialism” derives from the Latin verb *impero* – “to command”. Thus unlike the first notion, the second semantically assumes usage of force or even violence. Furthermore, many definitions of colonialism by default contain latent suggestions to regard it as the phenomenon not linking to any specific historical epoch. An example of how colonialism is defined is provided by Jürgen Osterhammel: “the organized deployment of racialized and gendered constructs for practices of acquiring and maintaining political control over other social groups, settling their lands with new residents, and/or exploiting that land and its peoples through military and administrative occupiers”<sup>11</sup>. Such definition understands colonialism as a timeless phenomenon, yet, on the other hand, the common consciousness identifies colonialism with the concrete period that stretched from the 15th century up to middle of the 20th century. The term of imperialism may be referred to the groups of power who intend to subjugate particular social institutions and social groups within given society and the direction of these actions run from the centre to the peripheries. It is easy to observe that these definitions echo the so-called economic dependence theories explaining economic differences between the First and the Third World as well as the economic backwardness of the latter as a result of the externally imposed limitations<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Jürgen Osterhammel. 1996. *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*. Princeton: M. Wiener, 22–25.

<sup>12</sup> Piotr Sztompka. 2010. *Socjologia zmian społecznych*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo ZNAK, 94f. For instance Sztompka recalls the theory of Raúl Prebisch, Argentinian economist, who unveiled the division of the world economy into two fields: reach industrial centre and agricultural periphery. This concept made a background for the two versions of so-called economic dependency theories. The first version, more gloomy, assumed that Latin America (here as representative of the entire category of Third World) will fall into petrified economic backwardness due to politics of both Metropolitan countries and local, endemic elites which are interested in the maintenance of exploitation. The latter, more optimistic, described as the “theory of dependent development”, assumes

The second dyad derives from the juxtapositions of decolonization and recolonization. The first term refers to the historical process that began in the 19th century when the South-American countries gained independence and which reached its peak in the middle of 20th century when a new geopolitical map shaped Asia and Africa. Its symbolic moment obviously was the Indian independence in 1947 and the modern constitution adopted by the Indian state, which has rejected the caste system as the foundation of the socio-cultural order. Decolonization often converges with the recolonization, with the less formal or even informal subjugation of the former colonies by the metropolitan countries, international political organization and economic corporations. Recolonization stems from the fact that elites of the former colonies often follow cultural and political patterns of metropolises.

Finally the last dyad consists in the juxtaposition of neocolonialism and imperialism. The first term refers to the political tendencies and economic dependencies which is nowadays replacing former relationships of subjugation. Contemporary imperialism occurs mainly in the conditions of the globalizing world economy, reflected also in the increasing significance of the multinational corporations and political organizations<sup>13</sup>.

The above presented dyads coined by Taylor arrange a dispersed postcolonial theory. They also depict, while juxtaposing with definitions, how the term of postcolonialism enlarges its semantic scope, moving from the economic-political dependencies in the relationships between either nations or social groups, to all relations of oppression, subjugation or social exclusion that cause one's suffering. This shift is clearly illustrated, what has been already mentioned, by the orthographical tendency to remove the hyphen in the term "post-colonial" since it clearly suggests a distinction of two historical periods. Taylor also mentions other tensions arising from the notion of postcolonialism. First, he writes about "the near ubiquity of colonizing power" and refers it to an extrapolation of the historical meaning of colonization on other areas of subjugation, as, for instance, race, gender and class. These categories are nowadays "globalized" since the struggle with racial, social or gender discrimination becomes the geopolitical question<sup>14</sup>. Second, he states that the processes of postcolonialism occur in geographical contexts, either in the economic-political dependencies between the global North and global South (one speaks about tricontinentalism in the postcolonial conceptions<sup>15</sup>), or within so-

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that foreign investments lead to the emergence of the local modern enterprises. This in turn helps to emerge to the endemic middle class which spread new cultural patterns of modernity.

<sup>13</sup> Taylor. 2004. *Spirit and Liberation*, 42f.

<sup>14</sup> Taylor. 2004. *Spirit and Liberation*, 45.

<sup>15</sup> The term "tricontinentalism" derives from the founding gathering of the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America in 1966 in Havana, Cuba. Organiza-



cieties, including rich countries, where economic inequalities are increasing. Third, he quotes an observation of Gayatri Spivak who has written about the neocolonizing anticolonialism<sup>16</sup>. This weird expression refers to the mechanisms of inclusion of elites of former colonized societies in the conceptions outwardly developed, therefore alien.

Postcolonialism is therefore an all-encompassing revolt against colonization and consequently, against every form of domination. Even though it declares itself to be concerned with historical and cultural contexts, most of its approaches regard Western civilization as responsible for centuries of oppression and subjugation. Robert Young expresses it blatantly: “Colonial and imperial rule was legitimized by anthropological theories which increasingly portrayed the peoples of the colonized world as inferior, childlike, or feminine, incapable of looking after themselves (despite having done so perfectly well for millennia) and requiring the paternal rule of the West for their own best interests. A process that continues today under the flagship of modern globalization”<sup>17</sup>. This patronizing attitude reveals also, and even above all, in the epistemological perspective, as again Young: “Most of the writing that has dominated what the world calls knowledge has been produced by people living in Western countries in the past three or more centuries, and it is this kind of knowledge that is elaborated within and is sanctioned by the academy, the institutional knowledge corporation”<sup>18</sup>. According to the postcolonial theologians this premise refers also to the Christian theology.

### **3. Deconstruction of the Christian imperialism – the task of the Postcolonial theology**

“Postcolonialism is probably the more radical cultural and epistemological criticism ever risen (...). Being a Post-Colonial... will be the only way of being a Christian in the emerging adult world”<sup>19</sup>. This quotation by José María Vigil conspicuously illustrates the specific target of postcolonial theology. It is a de-

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tion initiated an alliance of various groups from three continents: Asia, Africa and Latin America, against imperialism. Ideas and political programmes of the organization are published by the leftist political journal “Tricontinental”. Robert Young. 2016. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Chichester: Wiley, Blackwell, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Taylor. 2004. *Spirit and Liberation*, 45.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Young. 2003. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Young. 2003. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> José María Vigil. 2014. “Being a Postcolonial Christian”. *Voices from the Third World* 37 (1): 44.



constructive approach to the traditional dogmatic systems of different historical Christian denominations. The above presented postcolonial theory is being used theologically and transformed in order to provide theological foundation for its internal driving force – broadly understood as emancipation. Theology is therefore substantial and axiological source to this emancipation.

Nevertheless it seems to be problematic to coin a strict definition of postcolonial theology, rather, more reliable would be to ask about its origins and its functions. Postcolonialism in theology traces back to the social and liberation movements in 1970s: “post-colonial theologies, like liberation theologies, arose out of the particular social experiences that had accompanied the liberation movements, not only in the countries that had been European colonies until the 1950s, but also in countries that had achieved social and political liberation for some time but continued to be dominated by the culture of the colonisers. Post-colonial theologies were created out of post-colonial thinking in the areas of modern philosophy, anthropology and sociology”<sup>20</sup>.

Moreover, the postcolonial theology is being defined in terms of its function. It strives to unveil multidimensional mechanisms of oppression and exclusion related to colonization and neocolonization. Its promoters almost univocally state that the most important and most insidious is the mechanism of epistemological oppression. Since it is often latent it may not be realized and therefore more difficult to refuse than either political or economic mechanisms of exclusion<sup>21</sup>. Functions of postcolonial theology are easier to distinguish than its definition, particularly when considering that it is still *in statu nascendi*. It is also important that between postcolonial theology, liberation theology and contextual theology the border is rather fluid: all of them intersect themselves and interchangeably use their methods and notions. Nevertheless one may, following the description of Marc Taylor, identify some resources specific to postcolonial theology. They stem from the theological application of the postcolonial theory and are to be found in the activities of the grassroots ecumenical organizations, as, for instance, *Kairos* Europa, Radicalizing Reformation Project or Ecumenical Organization of Third World Theologians<sup>22</sup>.

The first resource is the historical interpretation of early Christianity and the conviction that it was counter-imperialist and organized around the communitarian ethos of the opposition against the exploitation of power. This feature of the

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<sup>20</sup> Marcelo Barros. 2014. “Post-colonial Theologies and the Spirituality of Living Well”. *Voices from the Third World* 37 (1): 45.

<sup>21</sup> The Latin American Theological Commission of EATWOT. 2014. “Theology of Liberation and Postcolonial Thought. Presentation”. *Voices from the Third World* 37 (1): 10.

<sup>22</sup> Piotr Kopiec. 2018. “Ecumenical Ambiguities: The Case of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians”. *Studia Oecumenica* 18: 41–52.

primordial Church had been later worn down through centuries of the post-Constantinian “imperialist hermeneutics”. “Centuries of Christian imperialist hermeneutics have obscured the counter-imperial elements of Christianity’s own scriptural narratives: Jesus’ contesting imperial corruption in the temple-state of his time; gospel writer Mark’s portraits of Jesus’ action in opposition to Roman occupying soldiers; Jesus’ death by crucifixion, an execution usually for the seditious who threatened the religiously backed imperial order; the apostle Paul’s money-raising and community-building activity that kept him quite literally on the run across imperial terrain until he was executed in the capital city, Rome”<sup>23</sup>. Postcolonial theologians state that contemporary Churches, when returning to the social and religious movement developed around the Jesus’ message, must not avoid criticism of the centuries of Christian acceptance, and even affirmation of wars, racism, violence, repression and imperium<sup>24</sup>.

Postcolonial Christian communities which promote the broadly understood liberation theology can be regarded as the next resource of postcolonial theology. They even become a sort of its *locus theologicus*. According to Taylor, the most relevant examples are the Latin American liberation movements, Christian feminist theologians and so-called black theologians. It is worthwhile to stress that even though after the collapse of communism in the Eastern Europe liberation theology has experienced a deep crisis, the most of its content was adopted by the numerous Christian groups in both Americas, which, regardless of confession, in their symbols put the stress on values of liberation and emancipation. Particularly interesting is the case of rapidly increasing number of communities of Evangelicals and Pentecostals. They are in their majority strong conservative and, consequently, don’t accept the message of the liberation theology, yet, on the other hand, there is a part of them who looks for inspirations in the liberation movement. Taylor exemplifies such communities when writing about the Zapatista movement in the Mexican state of Chiapas, of which leaders are Presbyterians<sup>25</sup>, he also mentions the Evangelical groups who are political promoters of the counter-imperialist politics in Bolivia and Ecuador. Indeed Bolivia, governed by Evo Morales, is regarded as one of the leaders of the international front of fight for the rights of indigenous people and against neoliberal capitalism<sup>26</sup>. Also significant was the role of Brazilian Evangelicals who have contributed to the formation and development of the *Workers Party*, which today is declared

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<sup>23</sup> Taylor. 2004. *Spirit and Liberation*, 49.

<sup>24</sup> Taylor. 2004. *Spirit and Liberation*, 49.

<sup>25</sup> Rosemary R. Ruether. 2005. “Integrating Ecofeminism, Globalization, and World Religions”. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 132–135.

<sup>26</sup> Juan Sanahuja, *The Religious Tribalism of Evo Morales* (15.08.2019). [https://www.traditionaction.org/HofTopics/i99ht\\_002\\_TribalismBolivia.html](https://www.traditionaction.org/HofTopics/i99ht_002_TribalismBolivia.html).

to be one of the most important factors of the emergence of the World Social Forum, the institutional umbrella for the alterglobalist movement. It is worthwhile to notice that all examples mentioned above spark strong controversies and polemics both in the political and cultural area, also in international and ecumenical relationships.

The third resource of postcolonial theology is a liberation movement in the various areas of the Western Christianity, which, according to Taylor, emerged in the 17th century as the estuary of different cases of theological thoughts alternative to the Christian imperialist tradition. As the examples he mentions socio-religious movement of diggers and levellers from the times of the English Civil War, radical Protestant reformer Gerard Winstanley, Robert Wedderburn, Unitarian leader of the abolition movement and today's criticism of American imperialism at the turn of 20th and 21st century.

And finally the last resource comprises of the leaders who fight for justice, who represent various religions and who power the metareligious and interreligious movement, who gather, often *ad hoc*, around different actions and who express their commitment in their organizations striving for global justice<sup>27</sup>.

Taylor completed its presentation of postcolonial theology with the soft rejection of Christianity's religious exclusivism, when indicating both soteriological values in religions and epistemological ways in other cultures: "Indeed, the Jesus' movement often portrayed as a very Christian community, was in all probability rifer with other religious and cultural forms – and not just obviously with the Jewish ones (...) The sociocultural site of the Jesus movement's historicity was an emergent Christianity that was Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist, including element Persian, Greek and Roman, with key dimension of Palestinian rural indigenous traditions, as well"<sup>28</sup>. One might easily discern a postcolonial historicism in this fragment.

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Postcolonial theology appears as a revolt against the entire mainstream tradition of the both Western and Eastern European Christianity. It reaches the core of the Christian faith, Christian knowledge and Christian theology, calling for transformation or even rejection of centuries of petrified convictions and narratives. Like postcolonial theory, it is not an orderly and integrated system of beliefs, rather it is a broad stream of thoughts, postulates and interpretations that at times has little in common, and therefore it seems to be more appropriate to

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<sup>27</sup> Taylor. 2004. *Spirit and Liberation*, 51.

<sup>28</sup> Taylor. 2004. *Spirit and Liberation*, 52.

consider there being several postcolonial theologies. Nevertheless there are elements which set a common denominator: They might be classified in two groups of theological claims, firstly, deconstruction of the theological tradition, secondly, liberation from the bonds of Christian imperialism. The former is the instrument of the latter.

Christian imperialism is regarded by postcolonial theology in two perspectives: socio-political and epistemological ones. According to postcolonial thinkers, the Church cooperated, assented and legitimised political powers which down the centuries have maintained the structures of oppression, exclusion and subjugation. This conviction leads postcolonial approach to the positions close to these of liberation theology, in particular, to the principle of the “option of the poor”. Secondly, what appears even more important, postcolonialism claims Christianity must knock down the epistemological wall of its imperialist theologies, built only and exclusively on the European philosophy and European civilization, “on the assumption of metanarrative that there is only one true way to describe reality”<sup>29</sup>; both Greek and Latin philosophical and theological categories are not able to encompass all richness of human cultures and human spirituality. Theological postcolonialism understands its purpose as the liberation from such epistemological bonds.

Obviously, the postcolonial theology is on the margins of the Christian world. Its claims are too controversial and too revolutionary, going far beyond Christian orthodoxy. Some postulates, as, for instance, the affirmation of some elements of other religions’ traditions, are not accepted by theological orthodoxy, regardless of confession. The accusations of political imperialism also are too one-sided, they do not discern centuries of Church’s impact on humanization of culture and Church’s contribution to the foundation and development of the concept of human rights. Yet the call for epistemological change means also the call for more inclusiveness and more humility in the Christian theological centre. Christian churches must not stick in the cultural and social structures only for reasons of habit and tradition. The crisis we observe in the old Christian world in Europe and North America makes postcolonial theological research more required, particularly within the grassroots ecumenical groups of which members are often agents of the longings, difficulties and doubts of ordinary Christians.

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<sup>29</sup> Jojo M. Fung. 2014. “Postcoloniality and Contextual Theologies. Indigenous perspectives of Asia”. *Voices from the Third World* 37 (1): 88–94.

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