

THE REFORMATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF WORLD CHRISTIANITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that if Christianity is to be regarded as a truly world religion, Christians must pay serious attention to the ways in which the Reformation legacy has taken roots and found contextualized expressions around the world, particularly in the global South. If Christians from the North Atlantic fail to acknowledge and take this fact seriously in their theological reflection, it will be to the detriment of their own spirituality and faith tradition. The other, who may well be one's coreligionist, can help one construct one's identity by providing a mirror to one's own self. The structure of the present paper is built around four "sola" principles that succinctly capture the Reformation legacy. As such, contextual interpretations from the global South of *sola fide*, *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *solus Christus* will be introduced and discussed. In conclusion, some remarks will be made on these interpretations from a post-communist perspective.

Key words

Reformation; World Christianity; Global South; Hermeneutics; Contextualization; Ecumenical theology; Bible; Church; Culture; Transformation

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1. Introduction

1.1 "You are a sinner in need of a savior, just like Africans": The life-story of Bishop Josiah M. Kibira

What is the relationship between local traditions and cultures of Africa and global Christianity?¹ This question became one of the main

¹ This paper is part of research project no. 17-00987S "Transformations of Tradition: Implications for Contemporary Ecumenical Theology", funded by the Czech Science Foundation.

quests of Tanzanian Lutheran bishop Josiah Mutabuzi Isaya Kibira (1925–1988) in both his ministry and writings. Turning this issue into a very practical task, Kibira strove throughout his life to build bridges between the Lutheran church in Tanzania and the worldwide ecumenical movement.

Josiah Kibira was born in late August of 1925 in the harbor city of Bukoba, Tanzania.² Having miraculously recovered from a serious illness that he contracted a mere week after his birth, his father, Isaya Kibira, named the boy Josiah (Hebrew for “the Lord has healed”) Mutabuzi (Haya for “He is a savior”). Having lost his father as a four-year-old, his mother looked after the upbringing of young Josiah. He became actively involved in church life from early childhood, being a member of a congregation run by German missionaries. As a man in his early twenties, Kibira had a radical conversion experience on March 21, 1947. That night, he prayed to Jesus for the forgiveness of his sins and accepted Christ to his heart. In 1957, he was awarded a scholarship from the German Bethel Mission to study theology at Bielefeld, Germany. While pursuing his studies from 1957–1960, Kibira continued practicing the revivalism that was new to some Germans. He openly preached that missionaries were also sinners who needed a savior, just like Africans.³ Soon after his return to Tanzania it had become clear that there was a lot of potential in this young minister and theologian. As such, Kibira was not only nominated to be a member of the Faith and Order Commission in 1961, but also received another scholarship, this time from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), to pursue a master’s degree in theology at Boston University from 1962–1964. In 1964, he was elected assistant bishop, despite the disapproval of many missionaries who feared “radical views and his outspoken attitude.”⁴ He became the first African to hold the office of bishop in the Evangelical Church of Buhaya (Tanzania). Throughout his office he actively worked toward renewal in his church, a church that struggled with the

² This passage is based on Angolwisye Isakwisa Malambugi, “Josiah Mutabuzi Isaya Kibira,” in *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* (DACB), cited online at <http://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/i-k/kibira-josiah-mutabuzi-isaya-1925-1988/> (accessed September 5, 2017). Cf. also Veronika Ullmann et al. (eds.), *Reformation auf dem Weg: Menschen verändern die Eine Welt*, Berlin: Brot für die Welt/EMW, 2015.

³ Per Larsson, Bishop Josiah Kibira of Bukoba: In an International Perspective, Dodoma: Central Tanganyika Press, 1992, 14.

⁴ Malambugi, “Josiah Mutabuzi Isaya Kibira”.

culture and social challenges of Tanzania. In 1977 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Bishop Kibira became the first African to be elected president of the Lutheran World Federation, a position he held until 1984.

Kibira's legacy to the church worldwide can be summarized by the words of Friedrich Koenig, the editor of the *Lutheran World Information*, which he wrote in 1988 when Kibira resigned as bishop of Bukoba:

It would be worthwhile to list and in the future to take up many of the recommendations that undaunted African man of the church made in life about basic foundations for peace and about the right understanding of the Reformation church's task of mission. Then no one will be able to overlook the words of Josiah Kibira. Lutheranism owes its first senior representative from Africa many thanks for his unswerving veracity, his pious witness to his faith and above all his encouraging example for the youth to whom he was especially committed.⁵

Similarly, Kibira's fellow Tanzanian, Angolwisyé Malambuigi, describes him as a very gifted leader at both the local and international levels. Malambuigi underlines several areas Kibira made unique contributions to, including the quest for justice, especially but not exclusively for Africa; his commitment to discipleship and the cross of Christ; and his robust advocacy for the ecumenical movement that took into consideration the aspects of both the local church and the worldwide *oikoumene*.⁶ Furthermore, one should certainly mention the work Kibira accomplished in the inculturation of Christian faith and the appropriation of non-African, particularly European Lutheran, traditions in African contexts.⁷

⁵ Quoted in Malambuigi, "Josiah Mutabuzi Isaya Kibira".

⁶ Cf. Malambuigi, "Josiah Mutabuzi Isaya Kibira".

⁷ Some of Kibira's relevant publications include Josiah Mutabuzi Kibira, "A Study of Christianity Among the Bahaya Tribe: West-Lake Region, Tanganyika." Thesis (S.T.M.). Boston University School of Theology, 1964; Josiah Mutabuzi Kibira, "Afrika: Hat Luther Afrika 'erreicht'? Zeugnis eines verwirrten Lutheraners," in Hans Christian Knuth and Christian Krause (eds.), *Hat Luther uns erreicht?: Antworten aus fünf Kontinenten*. Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1983; Josiah Mutabuzi Kibira, *Aus einer afrikanischen Kirche*, Bethel bei Bielefeld: Verlagshandlung der Anstalt Bethel, 1960; Josiah Mutabuzi Kibira, *Church, Clan, and the World*, Lund: Gleerup, 1974; Josiah Mutabuzi Kibira, "The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania: North-Western Diocese (ELCT-NWD)," in Martin Pörksen, Otto Waack, Justus Freytag, and Gerhard Hoffmann (eds.), *So sende ich euch; Festschrift für D. Dr. Martin Pörksen zum 70. Geburtstag*, Stuttgart: Evang. Missionsverlag, 1973; Josiah Mutabuzi Kibira, "Law and Grace in Pastoral Practice," in Paul E Hoffman (ed.), *Theological Education in*

1.2 Christianity as a truly world religion: Introducing the thesis

In his 2002 book that became an academic best-seller, *The Next Christendom*, Philip Jenkins calls attention to the shift from North to South that is taking place in Christianity today.⁸ Due to demographic trends and population explosions it is the global South,⁹ Jenkins claims, that will play a key role in Christian expansion in the twenty-first century.¹⁰ Subsequently, the academic discourse in missiology, intercultural theology, the study of World Christianity, and other disciplines has been accepted the thesis that “the center of gravity of Christianity is no longer to be found in Europe and North-America; it has moved south, to Latin America, Asia, and Africa.”¹¹ Although one can legitimately debate the appropriateness of the term “center of gravity,” arguing that there has never been nor currently is there one single center of gravity for Christianity while referring to the heterogenous and polycentric nature of the Christian faith throughout the history, it is undoubtedly true that Christianity in the global South is receiving increasingly more attention, not only due to mere demographics but also, and more importantly, due to its key contribution to the richness of Christianity. Perhaps somewhat in contrast to the post-Jenkinsian discourse that focuses on the shift of the center of gravity, one can argue that the most significant development in Christianity in the recent decades is the intentional contextualization of faith, its expressions, and theology. Bishop Kibira, whose story we briefly outlined, represents a case in point. Just like many other people from the global South, men and

Today's Africa: The Theological Faculty Conference for Africa Sponsored by the Dept. of Theology of the Lutheran World Federation at Lutheran Theological College Makumbira, Tanzania, July 15–22, 1969, Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 1969; and Josiah Kibira, Carl Mau, and George Lindbeck, *Zwischen zwei Vollversammlungen*. Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1980.

⁸ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, revised and expanded edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, passim, but especially chapters 1 and 5.

⁹ I am grateful to my anonymous referee for pointing out that the term “global South” implies a high degree of generalization. Being aware of this fact, I still timidly opt for using it for want of better terminology. Nevertheless, I have decided to employ the term “North Atlantic,” rather than the “West,” as the counterpart of the “global South” to keep in line with my argument in this article. The quest for the terminology that would do more justice to differences further remains part of our common effort.

¹⁰ Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 93ff.

¹¹ Henk van den Bosch, “A New Reformation in Africa? On the Impact of the Growth of Pentecostalism,” *Religious Studies Review* 34, 2 (June 2008), 63–69, here 65.

women, lay and ordained, Kibira can rightfully be counted among the reformers of the church.

It is striking that the Reformation is often introduced as a European, or western, phenomenon, or a phenomenon of primarily western importance. While very little attention is paid to the construing of reformation as a dynamic process of renewal from the perspective of World Christianity, the Reformation principles, paradoxically, have played – and continue to play – a leading role in the life and theology of Christian churches from the global South. Moreover, these churches have contributed to the Christian *oikoumene* not only with a considerable number of their own reformers, like Kibira, but also with original interpretations of the Reformation ideas. It is the latter that this paper will focus on.

This paper seeks to introduce the following thesis: if Christianity is to be regarded as a truly world religion, Christians must pay serious attention to the ways in which the Reformation legacy has taken roots and found contextualized expressions around the world, particularly in the global South. If Christians, especially Protestants from the North Atlantic, fail to acknowledge and take seriously this fact in their theological reflection, it will be to the detriment of their own spirituality and faith tradition as the other, who may well be one's coreligionist, can help one construct one's identity by providing a mirror to one's own self.

For the purposes of this paper, I will use the term “world religion” to refer to a religion that is not based on the intellectual export from only one context (i.e., the North Atlantic), but strives for a coherent whole of authentic expressions from different contexts. Or in the vocabulary of the ecumenical movement, a religion that strives for unity in diversity.

Furthermore, World Christianity will here be both a term that strives to convey the global nature of the Christian faith and the academic study thereof.¹² In particular, this paper will concentrate on non-west-

¹² The literature on World Christianity is immense and further growing rapidly. Most important works in the field include Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact of Culture*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989; Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996; Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001; Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Vol 8: World Christianities, c. 1815 – c. 1914*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006; Hugh McLeod (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity. Vol. 9: World Christianities, c. 1914–2000*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006; Dana L. Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009; Jehu J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Mig-*

ern Christianity, or Christianity in the global South, that is, in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. It should be borne in mind that diasporic forms of Christianity in Europe and North America are an important part of this phenomenon.

The structure of the present paper is built around four “sola” principles that succinctly capture the Reformation legacy. As such, contextual interpretations from the global South of *sola fide*, *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, and *solus Christus* will be introduced and discussed.¹⁵ In conclusion, some remarks will be made on these interpretations from a post-communist perspective.

2. Reformation from the perspective of World Christianity

2.1 *Sola fide*

In their recent book on the re-imagining of the Reformation at the margins, Alberto García and John Nunes, “evangelical catholic theologians and pastors” and “children of the diaspora,”¹⁴ argue that “the gospel and the witness of justification by faith are crucial to the re-imagining of the Reformation faith.”¹⁵ However, the *sola fide* principle, that is, the realization, or the reminder, proposed by the Reformation that God’s pardon for humans as sinners is granted and received through faith alone, excluding all “works,” gets a new twist in the reading of

rations, and the Transformation of the West, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives*, Louisville, KY: Westminster and John Knox, 2007; Amos Yong, *Renewing Christian Theology: Systematics for a Global Christianity*, Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014; Peter C. Phan, *Christianity with an Asian Face: Asian American Theology in the Making*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005; and Peter C. Phan, *In Our Own Tongues: Perspectives from Asia on Mission and Inculturation*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005. For a reliable introduction see William R. Burrows, Mark R. Gornik, and Janice A. MacLean (eds.), *Understanding World Christianity: The Vision and Work of Andrew F. Walls*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011.

¹⁵ While these principles were only first systematically articulated as such in the 20th century, the intention of especially the first three, *sola fide*, *sola scriptura*, and *sola gratia*, goes back to the Reformers. Additionally, two *solae*, *solus Christus* and *solus Deo Gloria*, were first mentioned in Johan Baptist Metz, *The Church and the World*, New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1965, 143. For the purposes of this paper, *solus Christus* only will be considered from the additional two principles as global South theologies have brought many intriguing insights in the field of Christology.

¹⁴ Alberto L. García and John A. Nunes, *Wittenberg Meets the World: Reimagining the Reformation at the Margins*, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017, xiv.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

these two theologians through the lens of what they call postcolonial theologizing. The latter lies in an attitude of suspicion towards “the use of correct and proper theological premises for the sake of enslaving the strange communities of faith with idolatries of power.”¹⁶

In this kind of theology, then, justification by faith is closely, and, indeed, inseparably, linked to justice. There is a certain dynamic between the two, and not merely a cause-and-effect nexus. This argument is based on the doctrine of incarnation and, specifically, on the situatedness of all aspects of God’s salvific work among people and within creation.¹⁷ To put it differently, one cannot speak about salvation from sin and the gift of the eternal life, while overlooking injustice that takes place in this temporality (*Weltlichkeit*). García and Nunes maintain that this commensurability of justification and justice is a lesson Christians from the North Atlantic can learn from theologians from the global South. They put this insight in terms of equivalence between the awareness of one’s own justification and the practice of justice in the world which is, ultimately, God’s justice in God’s world.¹⁸ African theologian Tom Joseph Omolo formulates it as follows: “On the basis of our justification, we are not expected to consciously and deliberately perpetrate systemic or structural sin of any kind against God’s creation. In this regard Luther remains relevant to Africa, a continent which has suffered much socio-political injustice.”¹⁹ The accent on structural sin is frequently neglected in mainline churches and it is a somewhat ironic fact that Christians from the North Atlantic are reminded of this aspect of the Reformation legacy in general, and Luther’s theology in particular, thanks to the work of global South theologians.

However, there can be yet another interpretative thread followed on this subject due to the richness of the semantic field of the Greek term *dikaiosyne*. In the biblical discourse, *dikaiosyne* can be variously translated as righteousness, i.e., the condition acceptable to God in a double sense of the doctrine concerning the way one may attain a state of being approved by God, on the one hand, and integrity, rightness, and

¹⁶ Ibid., xv–xvi.

¹⁷ See *ibid.*, 32.

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 36.

¹⁹ Tom Joseph Omolo, “Luther in Africa,” in Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and Lubomír Batka (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 621–626, here 622.

purity of life, on the other hand; and as justice.²⁰ While the latter alternative has been discussed above, the hermeneutically rich first option is also pursued by García and Nunes in their book in their interpretation of God's righteousness. Their thesis is that God does not grant God's righteousness as "a mere imperative to right moral conduct or a call for retributive justice."²¹ Furthermore, it is not an external gift coming from above, either. On the contrary, it is "a living bestowal of his righteousness in action. It is an offer and gift of God's transformative renewal of our borderland experience."²² The reference to "borderland experience" is a unique contribution of the postcolonial critique of the authors rooted in the diasporic situation. In a borderland reading of the Bible and Christian tradition, they argue, the righteousness of God is closely linked to a passion for life.²³ They explicitly state that the emphasis on "borderland experience" is one of the key contributions of global South Christians to the *oikoumene*.²⁴

While one can argue that the discovery of borderland experience is a particular insight of global South (or, even more precisely, diasporic) theologians, the nexus between God's righteousness and the transformation of life and reality that García and Nunes also point out evokes a wider resonance. In this respect, Kenneth Mtata, a Lutheran theologian and church representative from Zimbabwe, speaks of social transformation. Reassessing the Reformation legacy for today from a global South perspective, he seeks to explore

elements of the Reformation for their potential to energize social transformation today through a particular combination of the "old" and the "new" catalyzed by the Holy Spirit, focusing on law (addressing power asymmetries), the gospel (embracing emerging life), and the scriptures.²⁵

Mtata's observations are to be valued not only because of the regard he pays to the dynamic between Scripture, tradition, and contemporary

²⁰ Cf. Blue Letter Bible, term *dikaiosyne*, cited online at <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=g1343> (accessed September 4, 2017).

²¹ García and Nunes, 22.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Cf. *ibid.*, 24.

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 9.

²⁵ Kenneth Mtata, "The Political Theology of Commemoration: Global South Perspectives on 500 Years of Reformation," *The Ecumenical Review* 69, 2 (July 2017), 164–175, here 164. Mtata's paper was originally published as "Die Politische Theologie des Gedenkens: Ein Blick aus dem globalen Süden auf das Reformationsjubiläum 2017," *Ökumenische Rundschau* 1/2012.

experience, but also because of his holistic focus, embracing all dimensions of life, and his fresh interpretation of classic Christian concepts, such as law and gospel.

However, theologians from the North Atlantic also pay attention to this transformative potential of God's justification of humans by faith alone. Drawing insights from Paul Tillich, Konrad Raiser, a former general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), speaks of the Protestant principle that he explains in detail as follows:

... the Protestant principle is rooted in the central insight of the Reformation as expressed in the affirmation of the free gift of God's grace through justification by faith alone. This principle for Tillich manifests itself in an attitude of criticism and prophetic protest over against any autonomous and absolutized structure of power, whether religious or secular. The principle acknowledges the ultimate power of God that has been revealed through Jesus Christ. God exercises power not as domination, but as grace and love. The Protestant principle is the result of the rediscovery of the truth of the gospel of Christ at the time of the Reformation, but it should not be turned into a privileged marker of the identity of historic Protestantism over against other Christian traditions. Its central truth remains valid for all traditions and throughout the history of the church.²⁶

While "the Protestant principle" indeed resides among the family silver of the churches of the Reformation, Christians around the world are indebted to global South theologians for pointing out and elaborating such important aspects and implications of *sola fide* as the inseparable link between justification and justice, the all-inclusive purview of God's righteousness, embracing the whole of life, and the existential category of borderland experience.

²⁶ Konrad Raiser, "What Kind of Reformation? The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation and Today," *The Ecumenical Review* 69, 2 (July 2017), 189–200, here 197. The original version was delivered as a keynote address at the International Refo500 Forum in Seoul, Korea, in March 2017. Reference made is to Paul Tillich, "The Protestant Principle," in *The Essential Tillich: An Anthology of the Writings of Paul Tillich*, edited by F. Forrester Church, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999, 78–79.

2.2 *Sola scriptura*

In another best-seller, *The New Faces of Christianity*, Philip Jenkins argues that one of the dimensions of the shift taking place in Christianity today lies in the way the Bible is read and interpreted. His thesis is well captured by the volume's subtitle, *Believing the Bible in the Global South*, and illustrated by the story with which Jenkins opens his book:

On one occasion, two bishops were participating in a Bible study, one an African Anglican, the other a U.S. Episcopalian. As the hours went by, tempers frayed as the African expressed his confidence in the clear words of scripture, while the American stressed the need to interpret the Bible in the light of modern scholarship and contemporary mores. Eventually, the African bishop asked in exasperation: "If you don't *believe* the scripture, why did you bring it to us in the first place?"²⁷

And indeed, *sola scriptura*, the formal principle formulated by the Reformation as a theological doctrine that upholds the exclusive nature of the Christian Scripture as *the* infallible rule of faith and practice, has become central to Protestants, and, to be sure, to Christians generally, in the global South. There are several reasons behind this development. First of all, when European and North American missionaries brought the Bible to the global South as part of their evangelistic endeavors in the 19th and early 20th centuries, it was to the places that had been familiar with the concept of sacred writings and that highly esteemed the power of words. This prepared the field for the Bible to effectively replace the older holy scriptures in many contexts. In addition, the successful reception of the Bible was to a great degree enabled and facilitated by the spread of literacy.²⁸ This was even further reinforced by the fact that the Bible was for many people in the global South the only written text they had at their disposal.²⁹ Another significant enhancing factor in the advance of the Bible in the global South was the frequent use of the vernacular. Lamin Sanneh argues that the translation of the

²⁷ Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006, 1, emphasis in the original.

²⁸ Van den Bosch, "A New Reformation in Africa," 65. See also Werner Ustorf, "What's Wrong with Mission History?," in Volker Küster (ed.), *Mission Revisited: Between Mission History and Intercultural Theology*, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2010, 3–13, here 4; and Brian Stanley (ed.), *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001.

²⁹ Van den Bosch, "A New Reformation in Africa," 66.

Bible into local languages constituted Christianity as a vernacular movement, making use of indigenous words and idioms to express the gospel message. In addition, the translation of the Bible in some cases revitalized local cultures and strengthened the sense of national and communal identity.⁵⁰ All of these contributed, *inter alia*, to the laying of the foundations for Christianity, in words of Werner Ustorf,

to break free from its western cultural moorings and become a true world religion: that is, to move on with the help of maps and charts that were no longer defined by its occidental heritage, and, at the same time, to encourage an incredible diversification of ecclesiological models and theological approaches.⁵¹

Ustorf's discussion points to another related aspect of this issue, namely, that theological reflection in the global South on the *sola scriptura* principle has brought up several unique insights with implications for Christianity at large. First, one needs to make note of the communal reading of the Bible. While Northerners and Westerners usually prefer reading alone in silence, Christians from the global South often read their Bible out loud in communal settings.⁵² Jenkins illustrates this crucial point very powerfully by retelling a story by African theologian Musimbi Kanyoro:

She reports reading a Pauline text in a northern Kenyan community, concluding with the good wishes that Paul sent two thousand years ago to the Corinthian church, "My love be with all of you in Christ Jesus." "The community, which had been listening silently, responded in unison, 'Thank you, Paul.' They were thanking Paul for sending them greetings, not the reader for reading the text to them."⁵³

This beautiful story not only captures the pivotal role of the communal reading of the Bible among Christians in global South contexts, but also underlines that believers here commonly perceive themselves as the primary addressees of the biblical message. As Kenneth Mtata puts it,

⁵⁰ This is his main thesis in Sanneh, *Translating the Message*. Other classic scholarly discussions on this topic are to be found in Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*; and Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*.

⁵¹ Ustorf, "What's Wrong with Mission History," 4. Cf. also van den Bosch, "A New Reformation in Africa," 66.

⁵² Van den Bosch, "A New Reformation in Africa," 66.

⁵³ Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity*, 26–27.

In the global South, the biblical text is not only read for its literary content; the biblical text is read through the lens of contextual concerns relating to culture, gender, local traditions, and socio-economic issues. In this interpretive frame, the biblical text must question but also help respond to communal and individual existential issues.⁵⁴

This kind of reader-response interpretation is frequently viewed with suspicion by post-Enlightenment approaches to biblical exegesis, rooted in historical-critical tradition, that deem it as unscientific. Although global South approaches to biblical interpretation should certainly not be accepted hook, line, and sinker, their outright dismissal is not appropriate either, as these approaches effectively, albeit perhaps unintentionally, follow more recent theories of reading and interpretation that accentuate the role of the communities which receive and use the texts in question.⁵⁵

Another unique contribution from the global South related to biblical reading and interpretation is the introduction of postcolonial criticism into biblical studies. Although this issue was already touched upon earlier in the discussion of García and Nunes, it is well-worth delving deeper into the problem here. Postcolonial theory was introduced to biblical criticism in the mid-1990s. One of its main proponents, Sri Lankan biblical scholar R. S. Sugirtharajah, views its input as follows: “What postcolonial biblical studies does is to focus on the whole issue of expansion, domination, and imperialism as central forces in defining both the biblical narratives and biblical interpretation.”⁵⁶ Similarly, Hong Kong theologian Kwok Pui-lan defines the project of postcolonial criticism in biblical interpretation as an endeavor that “challenges Eurocentric frameworks of interpretation, foregrounds the power dynamics within imperial-colonial contexts, and focuses on the marginalized

⁵⁴ Mtata, “The Political Theology of Commemoration,” 174.

⁵⁵ Cf. Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity*, 41. See also Hans de Wit et al. (eds.), *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible*, Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies & Amsterdam: Vrije University, 2004. The latter reports on and analyzes the findings from a major international and ecumenical project in which some 120 Bible study groups from around the world read the same passage of the Scripture (John 4), subsequently sharing with at least two other groups from other parts of the globe. The volume represents a fascinating account of this exceptional exercise in both contextual and intercultural hermeneutics.

⁵⁶ R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 25.

voices that have been suppressed.”⁵⁷ A special subcategory of biblical reading from the global South has been developed by Musa Dube of Botswana, who has proposed a postcolonial feminist interpretation that draws from the experience and readings of ordinary women from the African Independent Churches as an alternative to North Atlantic male as well as feminist ways of biblical interpretation.⁵⁸ The appropriation of the *sola scriptura* principle in the global South clearly shows that biblical interpretation, while keeping its critical posture, must be inclusive to welcome and take seriously the many and various voices who “enrich our understanding of God’s word in building true human society and living harmoniously with creation.”⁵⁹

2.3 *Sola gratia*

The 12th Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) that took place in Windhoek, Namibia, in May 2017 explored the theme “Liberated by God’s grace”. Insisting emphatically and unequivocally that neither salvation nor human beings nor creation are for sale, it gave a fresh and strong contemporary expression of the *sola gratia* principle, the emphasis of the Reformation that “salvation and wholeness, healed relationships, [and] life in dignity”⁴⁰ are all free gifts of God’s grace that can be neither purchased nor deserved.

In their book, García and Nunes take this Reformation emphasis a step further when they argue that the God who justifies by grace is the God of life, despite death. It is the God who meets people in the midst of their marginality and death.⁴¹ The two authors thereby effectively draw from Luther’s affirmation of the God of creation as the God of redemption.⁴² Central to their thesis, if I understand them correctly, is the concept of transformation, granted by God in the power of the Holy Spirit in the form of new life for the whole creation.⁴³ These thoughts bear

⁵⁷ Kwok Pui-lan, “Reformation Unfinished: Economy, Inclusivity, Authority,” *The Ecumenical Review* 69, 2 (July 2017), 237–248, here 248.

⁵⁸ See Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000.

⁵⁹ Kwok, “Reformation Unfinished,” 248.

⁴⁰ Cf. LWF, “Salvation – not for sale”, cited online from <https://www.lwfassembly.org/en/theme-and-sub-themes/salvation-not-sale> (accessed September 5, 2017).

⁴¹ García and Nunes, *Wittenberg Meets the World*, 13.

⁴² Cf. also Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther’s Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, translated by Thomas H. Trapp, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007, 95–120.

⁴³ García and Nunes, *Wittenberg Meets the World*, 14. See also Samuel Solívan, “Sources of a Hispanic/Latino American Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective,” in Ada María

much resemblance to the recent World Council of Churches (WCC) ecumenical affirmation on mission and evangelism, *Together towards Life (TTL)*. This statement also professes the belief in the Triune God who is the creator, redeemer, and sustainer of all life. Moreover, God continues to work in the world “to affirm and safeguard life”.⁴⁴ The task of Christians as servants of this Triune God is, then, to proclaim “the good news to all humanity and creation, especially the oppressed and the suffering people who are longing for fullness of life.”⁴⁵ *TTL* interprets the *sola gratia* principle within the framework of the economy of God that is based on the values of love and justice for all, rather than on the monetary logic of the free-market economy. The mission of God, in which Christians are invited to take part, is “to denounce the economy of greed and to participate in and practice the divine economy of love, sharing, and justice.”⁴⁶

One of the major implications the *sola gratia* principle in the theology pursued by Christians from the global South is the emphasis on human equality and dignity. This theme is elaborated in several facets. First, most global South theologies exhibit a genuine and strong concern for the poor. Roberto Goizueta provides a succinct summary of the case for God’s preferential option for the poor in one of his essays.⁴⁷ His argument follows from the premise that since our world is one of division and inequities, God’s love for all people cannot be neutral. Rather, it adopts different forms with respect to those who have power than to those who are powerless. The latter are loved preferentially, Goizueta maintains. God identifies with the powerless and victims ultimately in Jesus’ crucifixion but not in order to “privilege victim-hood... but precisely to reveal, once and for all, the absolutely gratuitous and universal character of God’s love for creation.”⁴⁸ Goizueta interprets the *sola gratia* principle in terms of the logic of gratuity when he concludes that “in the person of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, God pronounces

Isasi-Díaz and Fernando Segovia (eds.), *Hispanic/Latino Theology*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000, 137–141.

⁴⁴ WCC, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes. With a Practical Guide*, edited by Jooseop Keum, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013, #1.

⁴⁵ *TTL* #101. Cf. also #102.

⁴⁶ *TTL* #108.

⁴⁷ Roberto S. Goizueta, “The Preferential Option for the Poor: Christ and the Logic of Gratuity,” in Robert Lassalle-Klein (ed.), *Jesus of Galilee: Contextual Christology for the 21st Century*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011, 175–186.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 178.

the victory of the logic of gratuity over the logic of *suum cuique* (“to each what is due him or her”).⁴⁹

Second, the axiom of the equality and dignity of all human beings has often found its expression in education of women and girls. Kwok Pui-lan reminds that since some knowledge of the Bible was required for baptism, “missionaries opened schools and initiated literacy campaigns to teach people how to read. Bible women were hired to teach women and girls to read the Bible, while missionaries opened schools to provide female education.”⁵⁰ These, originally North Atlantic-originated, educational initiatives generated much intellectual capital that subsequently contributed to the subversion of colonialism and North Atlantic theological domination, since “graduates of the catechetical seminaries and high schools of the missions not only became leaders of the emerging local church; often they were leading figures of the anti-colonial discourse as well.”⁵¹

And third, human equality and dignity also represents a strong impulse for the liberation of people. Chilean theologian Martin Junge, who currently serves as general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, provides two good examples of this tenet. The first one comes from the theological discourse elaborated by the Dalit people of India who construe the incarnation as liberation. In the Dalit theological imagination, the incarnation became God’s way of escaping untouchability:

Indian theologians reflected about their liberating experience and thereby developed a completely new thought form to interpret God’s incarnation in Jesus Christ: on the basis of their experience of being untouchable, they interpret God’s incarnation in Jesus Christ as God’s very own way of escaping untouchability. God could not and did not want to suffer the pain and isolation of being untouchable; God sought and found the way out of untouchability by becoming human in Jesus Christ, thereby justifying and inspiring the exodus from untouchability experienced by the Dalit people.⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid. See also Daniel M. Bell Jr., *Liberation Theology after the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering*, New York: Routledge, 2001, 144–153; and Roberto S. Goizueta, *Christ Our Companion: Toward a Theological Aesthetics of Liberation*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009, 25–45.

⁵⁰ Kwok, “Reformation Unfinished,” 246.

⁵¹ Ustorf, “What’s Wrong with Mission History,” 4.

⁵² Martin Junge, “Reformation and Enculturation: Toward the Five Hundredth Anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation,” *Word & World* 34, 2 (Spring 2014), 109–122, here 116.

For Dalit Christians, the God of and in Jesus Christ, the incarnated God, God with creation, becomes both a metaphysical guarantee of their own action and a companion on the way, liberating them not only from social and political stigmatization, but also from existential estrangement.

The second example Junge gives reveals explicitly the gratuitous nature of God's grace. Recounting his experience of a pastor to a poor and marginalized congregation in inner-city Santiago de Chile, Junge explains that for his congregants, "lastingly marked by daily exclusion and marginalization, Holy Communion had become a festival of inclusion, of unconditional acceptance and of the overcoming of structures of marginalization."⁵³ The Lord's Supper was intuitively recognized by these Christians as the great gift given to the people of God. The words with which Junge interprets the meaning of this story can, at the same time, serve as a succinct rendering of the *sola gratia* principle: "The group of the 'damned of the earth' is at the same time the community of those accepted by God, and Holy Communion is a key place to both receive and claim this new sense of citizenship."⁵⁴

2.4 *Solus Christus*

It can be argued that all Christian theology is the pursuit of the question: Who is Christ? The realization of the Reformation understanding that human salvation is obtained through the work of Christ alone, formulated through the principle of *solus Christus* (or, alternatively, *solo Christo*, "through/by Christ alone") gives a particular focus to this quest, drawing the attention of Christians to the fact that Jesus the Christ is the only mediator between God and humans. At the same time, it implies an existential dimension of this theological issue that can be expressed in the Bonhoefferian question: Who is Christ for us today?⁵⁵

Global South theologies put much emphasis on the "us" and "today" part of this question as they are decidedly contextual.⁵⁶ It means that

⁵³ Martrin Junge, *Reformation and Enculturation*, 117.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letter to Eberhard Bethge, April 30, 1944. Cited online from <http://www.internetmonk.com/archive/45807> (accessed September 7, 2017).

⁵⁶ Cf. Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Jesus Christ," in Elizabeth A. Johnson (ed.), *The Strength of Her Witness: Jesus Christ in the Global Voices of Women*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016, 141–161, here 141. Originally published in Susan Frank Parsons (ed.), *The Cam-*

their proponents hold that every generation is required to search for an answer to this question for themselves, bringing together Scripture and the wisdom of those who came before them on the path of faith as well as their own historical experience and contextual particularities.

Due to its scope, this paper can by no means do justice to the vastness and intricacy of the subject. What follows is a brief survey of several insights global South theologians have contributed to the Christological debate. It should be noted that in this discussion, denominational belongings and commitments play no key role as similar emphases can be found across ecclesial borderlines. Therefore, a number of theologians considered below will not necessarily feature a Protestant identity.

One of the founders of Latin American liberation theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez of Peru, works with the Christological image of Jesus as the Good Samaritan.⁵⁷ Interpreting the so-called parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:3–37), he suggested that the Samaritan character is meant to be seen as a representative of Jesus himself, and, by implication, a role model for the church.⁵⁸ Like the Samaritan, Christians today are called to become neighbors for the other, including especially the poor, weak, and marginalized. Evangelization is sharing “the good news of God’s gratuitous love, which calls us to commit ourselves to the promotion of justice and to liberation from every kind of oppression.”⁵⁹

In the South Korean context, *minjung* (Korean for “common people”) theology emerged in the 1970s as a powerful contextual theology out of the suffering of the Korean people during the struggle for liberation. However, after several decades during which South Korea has established itself as a technologically advanced and affluent society, *minjung* theology seems to be losing its appeal and profound spiritual power. The *minjung* Jesus is out of reach for common Korean Christians. South Korean-born Catholic theologian Sophia Park attempts to

bridge Companion to Feminist Theology, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 151–170.

⁵⁷ Cf. Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Going to Meet the Other,” in Robert Lassalle-Klein (ed.), *Jesus of Galilee: Contextual Christology for the 21st Century*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011, 39–51, see especially 47–48.

⁵⁸ Cf. Gutiérrez, “Going to Meet the Other,” 49. He even speaks of “a Samaritan Church” in this respect.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

redefine the Jesus of *minjung* for today.⁶⁰ She constructs a post-*minjung* Jesus, using the resources of Korean spirituality and taking into account the peculiarities of the contemporary Korean society such as the globalized market economy, the capitalist system, a broader middle class, etc. She argues that post-*minjung* Christology is an invisible Christology. The post-*minjung* Jesus is invisible, appearing only when his disciples share memory, break bread together, and perform hospitality to strangers, including immigrant workers, genocide survivors, victims of catastrophes, etc.⁶¹

Although using very similar theological resources, Park's fellow Korean, Chung Hyun Kyung, introduces somewhat different images of Jesus. Having in mind the specific question, "Who is Jesus for Asian women?", she divides Christological images typically used in Asian feminist theology into traditional and newly emerging categories.⁶² In one such reflection, for example, the traditional concept of Jesus as Lord (*Kyrios*) interprets Jesus' lordship in terms of a challenge to patriarchal domination, the liberation of Asian women from false authority, and their empowerment to obey God only.⁶³ The new emerging images include, among others, those of Jesus as mother and shaman. Drawing inspiration from scriptural passages such as Matt 23:37, the mother image of Jesus deconstructs "the paternalistic, authoritarian and hierarchical patterns" in human life and reconstructs the relationships among people with an emphasis on "maternal, compassionate, sensitive, bearing and upbearing" aspects.⁶⁴ Similarly, the image of Jesus as shaman is coined since shamans in traditional Korean culture are usually women, perceived as "big sisters" who take care of all the deprived members of a community. Marginalized and oppressed Korean

⁶⁰ Cf. Sophia Park, "Jesus of *Minjung* on the Road to Emmaus," Robert Lassalle-Klein (ed.), *Jesus of Galilee: Contextual Christology for the 21st Century*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011, 149–159, especially 151.

⁶¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 157.

⁶² Chung Hyun Kyung, "Who Is Jesus for Asian Women?," in Elizabeth A. Johnson (ed.), *The Strength of Her Witness: Jesus Christ in the Global Voices of Women*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016, 103–119. A longer version of the article was originally published in R. S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Asian Faces of Jesus*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995, 223–246.

⁶³ Cf. *ibid.*, 107.

⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 111. The quotations are from Marianne Katoppo, "Mother Jesus," in Alison O'Grady (ed.), *Voices of Women: An Asian Anthology*, Singapore: Asian Christian Women's Conference, 1978, 12.

women can therefore look up to Jesus as their defender and support, as their “big sister”.⁶⁵

Speaking from an African context, Kenyan theologian Teresia M. Hinga also offers some alternative images of Christ. From an African perspective, she argues, Jesus Christ represents first and foremost the personal savior and personal friend to those who are lonely and sick and who need to be healed.⁶⁶ Second, Jesus Christ comes to be identified as the embodiment of the Spirit. As such, he is able to grant the Spirit to those who follow him. This image of Christ, popular especially in the African Independent Churches, seems to effectively blend Christology with pneumatology.⁶⁷ A third “face” of Jesus Christ Hinga discusses is that of an iconoclastic prophet who challenges social injustice and marginalization of some people in the society.⁶⁸ Her conclusion is that Jesus Christ for Africans, and particularly for African women today, is a personal salvific figure who engenders hope and takes side with the powerless, dismantling unjust social structures and empowering the marginalized and victims.⁶⁹

Although most of theological reflection on the person and work of Jesus Christ from the global South can be admittedly counted among the instances of so-called “low Christology,” there have also been theological projects that elaborate the emphases and facets of “high Christology.” One example is Francis Minj of India with his notion of Jesus Christ as *Paramādivāsi* that represents an indigenous Indian (Ādivāsi) analogy to the concept of pre-existential *Logos*.⁷⁰ This term, Minj argues, provides contextually rooted and relevant tools to describe both Jesus’ divinity and humanity in a metaphorical way. In his project, Minj furthermore develops some specific aspects of Christ’s person and work, such as ancestor, liberator, high priest, and healer.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Cf. Chung, “Who Is Jesus for Asian Women?”, 111.

⁶⁶ Cf. Teresia M. Hinga, “Jesus Christ and the Liberation of Women in Africa,” in Elizabeth A. Johnson (ed.), *The Strength of Her Witness: Jesus Christ in the Global Voices of Women*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016, 131–140, here 137. Originally published in Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro (eds.), *The Will to Rise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992, 183–194.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Cf. Francis Minj, “Jesus Christ *Paramādivāsi*: An Indian Ādivāsi Construal of Jesus Christ,” in Robert Lassalle-Klein (ed.), *Jesus of Galilee: Contextual Christology for the 21st Century*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011, 187–205.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 190–200.

While there exists a colorful variety in global South Christologies, it can be argued that most of them emphasize the historical reality of Jesus and the early church, bring to the foreground Jesus' (and God's) preferential option for the poor and marginalized as well as his insistence on the impending character of the reign of God, and pay much attention to intercultural and power (postcolonial) dynamics. In contrast to much of the conventional teachings on Jesus Christ, Christologies constructed by global South Christians do not aspire to be atemporal, universal and abstract, but rather are intentionally aware of their contextual, particularistic and pluralistic nature. Moreover, these theological projects are also of immense importance for missiology as they reflect on the concept of the mission of the church today and seek to elaborate its relevant and up-to-date modes. It seems that most of them agree that the primary missionary task for the church today consists in taking crucified people(s) down from the cross and being God's partners in inaugurating God's reign in the contemporary world. In all of these undertakings, Jesus Christ remains central and irreplaceable, albeit perhaps interpreted in ways unfamiliar and even uncomfortable to some Christians from the North Atlantic. The *solus Christus* principle is thus effectively upheld in the perspective of Christians from the global South.

3. Conclusion: Toward an appropriation from a post-communist perspective

Similar to Bishop Josiah Kibira's admonition addressed to his German sisters and brothers in the late 1950s that they needed a savior just like Africans, contemporary voices of Christians from the global South can also contribute significantly to the ecumenical discussion and practice around the world. The concluding section of this paper is a reflection on this contribution from a post-communist perspective. As the focus and the scope of the paper does not allow for a thorough exploration, some crucial points and directions for possible research in the future will be sketched briefly.

First, the emphasis on the inherent connection between justification and justice for the whole of humanity and creation can be very useful for Christians living in post-communist contexts. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, very little public theology has been pursued by Christians

in the former Eastern Bloc. Notwithstanding rare exceptions,⁷² churches here have been neglected their public engagement in areas such as social justice, reconciliation initiatives or public advocacy, withdrawing into the “sacred space” of their churches and contenting themselves with the roles of defenders of “traditional values” and advisers of the media on “spiritual” or “religious” issues. However, God’s reign has an inclusive outlook, encompassing the overall reality of life. God stands with humans in their daily joys, struggles, and endeavors, not only those related to religion and spirituality, but also economy, politics, culture and the environment. Therefore, I believe that eastern and central European Christians can learn a lot from the holistic approach of Christians from the global South to both theology and ministry, in the pursuit of justice, peace, and reconciliation for the whole of creation.

Second, the model of communal and contextually-relevant readings of Scripture as practiced by many global South Christians and churches has much potential to help overcome the gap between collectivism and individualism that has over the last decades emerged in many post-communist societies, also affecting churches in the region.⁷³ Being repulsed by the strong collectivist emphasis in the communist ideology, many people, including Christians, have after the political changes readily embraced the doctrine of individualism that would, they believed, guarantee them freedom and autonomy. However, subsequent developments have often shown this to be an illusion that, to the contrary, led many to estrangement, solitude, and despair. The approach of the communal reading of the Bible can become one of the ways to show the interdependence of human beings. Balancing between the Scylla of collectivism and the Charybdis of individualism, the interdependence

⁷² See, for example, the work done by the prematurely deceased Peter Losonczi, including especially Peter Losonczi, Mika Luoma-Aho, and Aakash Singh (eds.), *The Future of Political Theology: Religious and Theological Perspectives*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011; Peter Losonczi and Aakash Singh (eds.), *From Political Theory to Political Theology: Religious Challenges and the Prospects of Democracy*, London and New York, NY: Continuum, 2010; and Peter Losonczi and Walter van Herck (eds.), *Secularism, Religion, and Politics: India and Europe*, New Delhi and Abingdon: Routledge, 2015. However, one should also note that Losonczi’s work is a contribution to the general discussion on political theology, and not necessarily a political/public theology written from a specific post-communist (Hungarian) perspective.

As far as theology of culture is concerned, for one particular and very constructive attempt, see Ivana Noble, *Theological Interpretation of Culture in Post-Communist Context: Central and East European Search for Roots*, Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2010.

⁷³ Cf. Anne-Marie Kool, “Trends and Challenges in Mission and Missiology in ‘Post-Communist’ Europe,” *Mission Studies* 25, 1 (2008), 21–36, especially 31–33.

model underlines the web of many and various relationships between human beings that points to the essential human need for one another, while upholding the inalienable value and dignity of each human being.⁷⁴

Furthermore, the sensitivity to context in this kind of reading may remind Christians in post-communist settings that the Bible is not only a remedy to spiritual ailments, but also has much to say on everyday matters. What is still anticipated in this part of the world is the emergence of praxis-oriented contextual readings that are the fruit of the serious and honest interaction between the Scripture and contextual issues, including socio-economic and cultural matters.

Third, the accent on the equality and dignity of humans as a radical interpretation of the *sola gratia* principle can become a powerful impulse for post-communist societies. After a halt to the state-imposed equality, or one should say sameness, of all during the communist regime, differences started to emerge in the early 1990s, largely due to the often unfair and “wild” process of privatization and democratization. As a result, social stratification has increased based on the access to political power and economic opportunities. In such environment, the value of a human being is often assessed only according to his or her socio-economic status. Christians from post-communist countries may be inspired by their sisters and brothers from the global South to challenge this logic and call for the effective realization of the radical equality of all God’s children.

Finally, the “discovery” of Jesus Christ by many Christians from the global South as a personal savior and friend who gives hope to the desperate, empowers the weak and marginalized, and sides with the victims, could also find a vibrant response among people living in the post-communist reality. Disillusioned from the “brand new world” of democratic politics and free-market economy, many lose hope and the meaning of their existence, either withdrawing into the private sphere or, more dangerously, becoming easy prey to various populist and xenophobic predators. The insight that Jesus Christ is the Lord of all creation, liberator from unjust structures, deliverer from anxiety and despair, and companion on the road of everyday life is liberating and

⁷⁴ Cf. also David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991, especially 362.

appealing, I am convinced, not only to global Southerners but also to people living in post-communist societies.

During the five hundred years since the Reformation, Christianity has come a long way. Not only figures such as Bishop Josiah Kibira, but also the theologians whose works have been introduced in this paper, and countless other Christians make it clear that Christianity is now a truly world religion with churches around the world, including the global South, being self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating, and, as this paper has demonstrated, also self-theologizing. If the commemoration of the Reformation quincentenary is to be truly faithful and meaningful, Christians in the North Atlantic need to construe it as radically ecumenical. That is, to take seriously insights coming from our sisters and brothers from the global South.

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