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Mission and the Ephesian Moment of World Christianity: Pilgrimages of Pain and Hope and the Economics of Eating Together

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Abstract

The historic 1910 Edinburgh missionary conference was a watershed moment for world Christianity as it established a framework for international cooperation in the task of bringing the whole gospel to the whole world.' That goal has more or less been realized. In fact, with the shift of Christianity's center of gravity from its traditional heartlands in Europe and the US to the "Global South" of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the focus of mission must also shift from a preoccupation with 'transmission' so as to engage the wider issues of the teleology of *missio Dei*. Using Andrew Walls' depiction of the Ephesian Moment, the author explores mission as God's activity of bringing together diverse social fragments (as bricks of a single building or as parts of the same body) so as to realize what Paul describes as the 'very height of Christ's full stature.' In describing the Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope and a visit to an organic farm in Uganda, the author offers "pilgrimage" as an example of mission practice, which reflects and advances this telos. The act of eating together, which pilgrimage fosters, is not only the expression and the test of the Ephesian moment it is the context within which the most pressing theological, pastoral and ecclesiological issues of world Christianity are illumined and engaged.

Keywords

Ephesian moment, world Christianity, eating together, pilgrimage, Edinburgh 1910, *missio Dei*, mission trips, Africa, land

But in our own day the Ephesian moment has come again, and come in a richer mode than has ever happened since the first century. Developments over several centuries, reaching a climax in the twentieth, mean that we no longer have two, but innumerable, major cultures in the church. Like the old Jerusalem Christians, Western Christians had long grown used to the idea that they were guardians of a "standard" Christianity; also like them, they find themselves in the presence of new expressions of Christianity, and new Christian lifestyles that have developed or are developing under the guidance of

the Holy Spirit to display Christ under the conditions of African, Indian, Chinese, Korean, and Latin American life. And most of the world's Christians are now Africans, Asians, or Latin Americans.

– Andrew Walls

My dear, you can have all this and more because you are still so young. *But first, you have to learn to bend your knees.*

– Josephine Kizza

Introduction

For the last eleven years I have lived in North Carolina, serving as a professor of theology and world Christianity at Duke Divinity School. This simple statement of my context may easily obscure the interesting and multiple intersections that I find myself negotiating on a daily basis. For as an African in the United States; a Catholic priest at a Methodist seminary; a scholar who co-directs a center for reconciliation, I find myself moving between many stories and many worlds, which often tend to exclude each other.¹ If living within these multiple intersections has been challenging at times, it has also offered me a unique glimpse into the gifts and opportunities of the reality of world Christianity. In 2002, I started leading journeys, which eventually came to be known as 'pilgrimage of pain and hope' from the U.S. to Africa as a way of highlighting some of these gifts and opportunities. In this essay, I would like to reflect on the experience of these pilgrimage journeys as a paradigm for mission in the era of world Christianity.

The overarching goal of the essay is to extend Andrew Walls' notion of the "Ephesian Moment" by showing that the transformation of Christianity into a non-Western religion provides a unique opportunity for Christians from different backgrounds to eat together in a way that not only opens up the possibility of transformative friendships across divides, but also illumines our belonging together as members of God's household. This is the reality that the pilgrimage journeys both seek to foster and model. More specifically, I would like to show that it is the opportunity and experience of eating together that illumines the economic, social and political implications of mission in a way that allow Christians to grasp something of the "very height of Christ's full stature."

¹ For an extend reflection see my "A Tale of Many Stories," in Darren C., Marks (ed.), *Shaping a Global Theological Mind*, Burlington, Ashgate, 2008, pp. 89–94; see also, "From Tower Dwellers to Travelers," interview by Andy Crouch, *Christianity Today*, July 2007.

My argument moves in three sections: In the first section, I note how the era of World Christianity provides an opportunity to lay aside the “burden” of mission (as transmission) so as to rediscover the Ephesian moment in World Christianity. In the second section, I show how the pilgrimage journey framed around “eating together” is one example of living into the Ephesian moment of World Christianity, which not only forms friendship across divides but also presses questions of Christian identity and mission. In the third and last section, I use the story of Josephine Kizza and her St. Jude’s farm, which we visited on a recent Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope as an example of the economics of eating, concretely experienced within a world Christianity missional encounter.

I. The Shift in World Christianity: From Transmission to Ephesian Moments

The shift of Christianity’s center of gravity from its traditional heartlands in Europe and the US, to the “Global South” of Africa, Asia, and Latin America has precipitated an interesting crisis (“dangerous opportunity”) that has left many Western Christians groping for new paradigms in mission and mission theology.² For until now, as Christianity spread beyond Europe and became a largely nonwestern religion during the twentieth century, the challenge of mission has largely remained one of transmission – that is, the transmission of the gospel to the whole world. That is why the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary conference remains a watershed event, for not only did it help to bring mission issues into the consciousness of Western Protestant churches, it also established a “framework for international cooperation in the task of bringing the whole gospel to the whole world.” (Walls, 2002:62)

Within this missionary project, Western nations and Christians had an important role to play. The countries of the West were the ones to offer not only the stable conditions, but the financial, human, and ideological framework from which the evangelistic enterprise would be undertaken. It is

² Philip Wickeri’s essay, “Mission from the Margins: The *Missio Dei* in the Crisis of World Christianity” *International Review of Mission*, vol. 95, no. 369, 2004, pp. 182–198, provides a good background to the crisis and how the crisis has been emerging in stages over the last century. His own recommendation of rethinking mission from the “margins” is very well argued and persuasive, even though in the context of the argument of this essay, the recommendation of “reverse mission” still leaves much of the theological and ideological underpinnings of mission unquestioned (see more below).

therefore not surprising that given this close identification between Christian mission and the historical mission of Western nations and churches, Western Christians have borne a sense of mission obligation, as evidenced from the way they constantly imagine and talk about “doing mission,” “engaging in mission,” or “participating in mission.” Given this close identification between Christian mission and western churches, it has not always been easy to separate Christian mission from other forms of the “white man’s burden,” which have historically been associated either with humanitarianism and/or Western political and economic interests. In fact, even when, in response to post-colonial criticisms, mission discourse has come to increasingly assume the language of “solidarity” and “partnership,” mission practice has continued to assume and be grounded within a Western outlook. That this is the case is evidenced by the way the “technology” of mission dominates mission conversations and conferences: thus the preoccupation with maps, numbers, models, trends, frontiers, indicators of success, etc. – all reflecting a modernist worldview of the West.³

Perhaps less obvious, but no less reflective of the Western outlook is the *spiritual* imaginary through which Christian mission has been primarily viewed. Given the modern, Enlightenment outlook within which much of Western Christianity operates, the Gospel, whose transmission to the whole world was at heart of the 1910 Edinburgh mission conference, is understood as a *message* which is primarily directed to the *inner* world of a person’s convictions and beliefs. No doubt, this inner spiritual world has a relation to the external world of economic and politics within which the Christian lives. But it is distinct from it. Even with the growing realization and calls for a holistic evangelization, the Gospel is still essentially viewed as a spiritual force, which is accompanied by a “social” concern (a “social” concern that also draws from or assumes Western economic and political models). Thus, whether it is humanitarian assistance (AID), or development, or social advocacy⁴ that

³ The IRM has been a major forum within this conversation. For founded soon after the conference, as the missiological quarterly of the World Council of Churches, IRM reflects both the visions and the evangelistic goals of the Edinburgh conference. True, there have been variations to and developments within this outlook, but these can more aptly be seen as shifts, nuances, extensions, and developments within a mission discourse grounded within a Western outlook and dominated by the overarching preoccupation with evangelism and transmission (see e.g. Kalapati 2010). Schreiter (Schreiter 2005) provides another helpful historical survey of the developments, which he names as “paradigms,” and in the end, recommends “mission as healing and reconciliation” as the latest and most relevant paradigm of mission for the twenty-first century.

⁴ One of the outcomes and key contribution of The Lausanne Movement has been to bring the “social” dimension of the Gospel to a more visible and conscious attention within the Evangelical

constitutes the social concern, it is assumed that these efforts merely accompany the Gospel, but do not constitute the proper or even primary mission of evangelization.

This is the context within which “mission” has been engaged in the post-Edinburgh world. In many ways the goal the Edinburgh participants sought – the transmission of the Gospel to the non-Western world and its appropriation there – has been realized, even though as Andrew Walls rightly notes “not in the ways, or by the means, at the times, or even in the places that they expected, and so quietly that the Western church, caught up in its own affairs, has still not noticed that it has taken place” (Walls 2002:70). There is therefore a lot to celebrate as we mark 100 years of the historical Edinburgh conference. However, the fact that the goal of Edinburgh 1910 has been by and large realized provides an opportunity for new directions in mission thinking and practice. Among other things, the era of world Christianity provides a good opportunity to lay aside the “burden” of mission, which means that Western Christians and churches can now stop feeling that inordinate sense of responsibility for the agency and transmission of the Gospel. This is not simply because others – Koreans, Africans, Latin Americans have come to relieve them. Quite often, claims about “reverse mission” whereby yesterday’s mission recipients feel it is now “our turn” to re-evangelize the West, continue to operate within the same imaginary and assumptions of mission, but simply flip the power relationships between the agents and assumed recipients of mission.⁵ A full appreciation of the moment of World Christianity involves not simply substituting the agents of mission, but a thorough re-assessment of mission. Why mission? Mission toward what? Whose mission? Raising these and similar questions will hopefully bring the worldwide communion of Christians into a lively conversation,

World. Thus in the wake of the first Lausanne Congress of 1974 and subsequent congresses, organizations like World Vision International and the International Justice Mission have been major expressions of Evangelical social concern. The most recent Lausanne Congress (Cape Town, 2010) had as a major focus “critical issues of our time – other world faiths, poverty, HIV/AIDS, persecution, among others – as they relate to the future of the Church and world evangelization,” <http://www.lausanne.org/cape-town-2010/about.html>

⁵ I am of course convinced that there is a lot the North/West can learn from the recently evangelized countries of the South/East. However, the proposals for “reverse mission” operate within the same Western outlook of the gospel as primarily a spiritual force and within a discussion of mission focused on who has the power, resources, numbers, and strategies to “send” missionaries. Reverse mission only flips the power relationships between the “agents” and assumed “beneficiaries” of mission. However, the moment of world Christianity provides an opportunity to move beyond this paradigm – or, as Mark Noll suggests, to “toss in the air” the once fixed notions of “sending country” and “receiving country” so as to discover new historical perspectives of what it means to engage the *missio dei*. (Noll, 2009:10).

but point to and begins to unmask the embedded notions of “power” that lock (neatly polices) mission within a “spiritual” framework, and within stable geopolitical boundaries. Another way to make this claim is to note that the moment of World Christianity creates an opportunity for Christians scattered around the world to live into a new sense of communion – of belonging together in ways that cut across and interrupt the neat geopolitical divisions of our current existence. The moment of World Christianity creates concrete possibilities for Christians from different parts of the world to learn to eat together. For, it is in the process of eating together as Asian, African, North and South American, and European Christians that Christians glimpse their true call and identity, as members of God’s household, but also catch glimpses of the full range of social, spiritual, economic, and political possibilities that that identity opens up. It is this new world of possibilities that constitutes the full power of the Gospel’s salvation – or in the words of Paul, the “very height of Christ’s full stature” (Eph. 4:13).

Andrew Walls is thus right. The reality of World Christianity offers fresh opportunities for a new Ephesian Moment. In his essay, “The Ephesian Moment: At a Crossroads in Christian History,” (Walls 2002:71–81) Walls describes the original Ephesian Moment as the coming together for the first time of Jewish and Gentile Christians. It is this coming together of two communities historically separated – the breaking down of the wall of separation brought about by Christ’s death (Eph. 2:13–18) – that Paul writes about and celebrates in the letter to the Ephesians. The theological significance of the occasion, Walls notes, was to confirm that Jewish and Gentile Christians “belong together” as “bricks – used in the construction of a single building – the temple where the One God would live” (Eph. 2:19–22). Jewish and Gentile Christian thus do not constitute two separate communities, but one community, of which they are both members, constituting as it were (and now Paul uses another image, of the body) different parts of a single body of which “Christ is the head, the mind, the brain, under whose control the whole body works and is held together” (Eph. 4:15–16). Walls goes on to note:

As the body of Christ is thus built up, “*we shall all come together* to that oneness of our faith and knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph. 4:13); the coming together of diverse elements from different quarters produces common convictions, a common assurance, about Christ. This in turn brings the church’s maturity, “the very height of Christ’s full stature” (Eph. 4:13) (Walls 2002:77).

Two elements within Walls’ description of the Ephesian Moment require special attention, as they speak in a particularly poignant way into the current

situation of World Christianity. Both elements relate to the fact of Jewish and Gentile Christians coming together, as the moment at which the “the very height of Christ’s full stature” becomes real and visible. First, cultural diversity is built within the vision of the church as the one body of Christ. But it is not the mere fact of cultural diversity that Paul celebrates, but their coming together (as bricks of a single building; or as parts of the same body). It is the “coming together” of the different cultural elements that reveals the “very height of Christ’s full stature.” As Walls states:

The very height of Christ’s full stature is reached only by the coming together of the different cultural entities into the body of Christ. They belong together as one of them is incomplete without the other. Only “together,” not on our own, can we reach his full stature (Walls 2002:77).

What the above description points to is the fact that the coming together of the different cultural elements creates something new. Christ’s full stature is about this new and odd communion of believers that is neither Jew nor Gentile. This is what is going on in at Antioch, where the term “Christian” was first used. In a unique Ephesian moment, Jews and Gentiles came together. Their coming together created a new “we” that required a new name. No one had needed such a term when they existed independently as only Jew and Gentile.

Secondly, as Walls notes, the expression and test of that coming together was the meal table: “two cultures historically separated by the meal table were not able to come together at table to share the knowledge of Christ” (Walls 2002:78). Thus, the meal table – the institution that had once symbolized the ethnic and cultural division – now became the hallmark of Christian living. It is this experience that was reproduced at Antioch, Jerusalem, and other places as “one of the most noticeable features of life in the Jesus community,” for “the followers of Jesus took every opportunity to eat together” (Walls 2002:77).

The social, political, and economic implications of this observation are far reaching. It means that the “very height of Christ’s full stature” is connected to, and revealed in, the very concrete, mundane reality of “eating.” It is the “eating together” that not only confirms the “belonging together” of the different cultural segments of Christ’s body, it is the also the “eating” that draws these segments into the full power (very height) of Christ’s saving power. To the extent that the “very height of Christ’s full stature” is about the material, social, economic, and political possibilities of the Gospel, it is the “eating together” that locates us into the *Missio Dei*.

This is what makes the era of World Christianity particularly exciting as it locates us within fresh possibilities of the Ephesian moment, since there are

not only two, but an infinite number of “segments of particularly converted social realities within the church” as Walls claims:

But in our own day the Ephesian moment has come again, and come in a richer mode than has ever happened since the first century. Developments over several centuries, reaching a climax in the twentieth, mean that we no longer have two, but innumerable, major cultures in the church. Like the old Jerusalem Christians, Western Christians had long grown used to the idea that they were guardians of a “standard” Christianity; also like them, they find themselves in the presence of new expressions of Christianity, and new Christian lifestyles that have developed or are developing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to display Christ under the conditions of African, Indian, Chinese, Korean, and Latin American life. And most of the world’s Christians are now Africans, Asians, or Latin Americans (Walls 2002:78).

In order to take advantage of this moment, we need new initiatives and experiments in mission that simultaneously foster practical ways for Christians from different backgrounds to “eat together,” illumine the new “we” of our belonging together, and also grapple with the social, practical, material as well as ecclesiological implications and possibilities of that “eating together.” It is these opportunities of the Ephesian moment of World Christianity that I have been trying to get at through the Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope and other journeys. Therefore, in order to make explicit the implications of the claim I am making here, let me outline the background to these journeys and the possibilities they present.

II. Experimenting with Pilgrimage: Unless you hear the mouth eating . . .

Since 2002, I have been inviting students, parishioners, colleagues, and friends from different parts of the world to Africa and leading them on two-week journeys in Uganda and Rwanda. These journeys, which have with time come under the more formal program of the Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope run through the Duke Center for Reconciliation and the Office of Black Church Studies,⁶ have been one way to live into the moment of World Christianity. A number of factors came together and led me to invite people on these pilgrimages. First, even after I joined the faculty at Duke, I continued to offer courses in Uganda (both at Katigondo National Major Seminary and at Uganda Martyrs

⁶ <http://www.divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/center-reconciliation/programs/pilgrimage-pain-hope>.

University), and under the special arrangement of my position, I would spend six months in Uganda and six months in the U.S. At that time, I was also teaching, every January, a one week module on African Thought at St. Augustine's College, South Africa. While spending time in these locations allowed me to experience their different modes of Christian expression, it also heightened my frustration about how little Christians in one part of the world knew about Christians in other locations. Additionally, I came to realize that whatever knowledge Christians in North America, for instance, have of Christians in Africa is informed not primarily by Christian sensibilities but by other – political, economic, cultural and anthropological – perspectives.

Secondly, working in these multiple locations involved a lot of travelling on my part. On these trips I quite often encountered, in airport terminals and on planes, many Christian groups, especially students at Christian colleges in the United States on their way to Africa. This is particularly true in the summers when thousands of U.S. students descend on Africa for some kind of experiential trip, mission, or service outreach. The range of the outreach often feels as dizzying as the number of groups: from supplying mosquito nets to a village; to reaching out through sports ministry (e.g. teaching lacrosse and building lacrosse fields); to working at orphanages; to teaching in a school, and so on. Even as I found the good will, commitment, and desire to serve the needs of Africa of these Christians groups impressive, I was often reminded by the truth of an African proverb: “unless you hear the mouth eating, you cannot hear the mouth eating.” The proverb points to the significance of friendship that emerges from the act of eating together, and how only through and out of such “eating together” is one able to hear another's cries or discern their genuine needs. Accordingly the more groups heading to Africa on mission that I encountered the more I lamented the fact that neither the design nor the built-in expectation of going to Africa “to help” offered an opportunity for American and African Christians to eat together in ways that illumined our sense of belonging together as members of the same household. Benevolence notwithstanding, African Christians and Western Christians continued to live in two separate worlds, which connected only through occasional incursions of Western “humanitarian assistance”.

The events of 9/11 heightened my awareness of the isolation of Christians around the world. This particularly become obvious to me when I was invited by a Catholic college to speak on the topic “Why do they hate us so much?” (Katongole 2005:49–70). In the talk, I pointed out that it was not the case that the rest of the world hated Americans, but I also warned against allowing the events of September 11 to draw a wedge between America and other countries.

I was particularly concerned that in the wake of 9/11, the rhetoric of “securing the homeland” might isolate American Christians from other Christians, and easily draw American Christians into imagining a world that was neatly divided between “us” and “them.” The need to resist this vision of the world was not only obvious, it was also clear to me that any initiatives in this direction would have to invite American Christians to step outside the political and cultural reality of America. It was also clear that such stepping out would have to assume a different starting point than the assumed good will of America and American philanthropy to the rest of the world. Such initiatives would have to be grounded in practices of “eating together,” framed by the Christian story that Christians around the world shared.

It was then that I decided to invite members of St. Michael’s Church in Cary, North Carolina – where I was serving as a priest in residence – to join me on a “come and see” journey to Uganda. Eleven people signed up. We had more than six months to prepare, and met every month to talk about the journey. Most of our early discussions centered on clarifying what we were going to do, and the appropriate name to call what we were planning for. Even though the parish bulletin announced it as a ‘mission trip’, I immediately made it clear that this was not a mission trip. Calling it a “mission trip,” I feared, would easily reproduce expectations of going to Africa to help. I explained that what I was inviting them on was a journey to meet other Christians, eat with them, learn about Africa, and deepen a sense of common belonging. One of the members of the group suggested that we call it an “experiential trip,” which I also resisted. My concern was that “experiential” trips still assumed and evoked much of Western anthropological knowledge of Africa as “other” – with all the connotations of “dark continent,” primitive, exotic, quaint, tribes. Instead, what I hoped to cultivate through the journey was an anthropological naiveté that would allow travelers an opportunity to stand within and see Africa and Africans in a fresh way – not as aliens and strangers, but primarily as Christians, fellow citizens, and members of the same household (Eph. 2:19). Therefore, we settled on just calling it a “come and see” journey.

On the actual twelve day journey through Uganda in the summer of 2002, I invited three seminarians and three other Christian leaders from Uganda to join our group as we visited places of historical significance, met and interacted with various leaders and groups, shared life together, and did a lot of eating along the way. In every place we visited, the hospitality was overwhelming. We had so much fun on the trip that I decided to do it again in 2003. That year, I was teaching a course on the Rwanda Genocide and so invited some of the students in the course, as well as others, to Rwanda on a similar journey.

Around that time, my colleague, Peter Storey, the retired Methodist Bishop from South Africa, was also organizing a similar journey of students to South Africa, which he had come to model on Trevor Hudson's Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope. As I talked to Peter Storey and read Trevor Hudson's *A Mile in My Shoes* (Hudson 2005),⁷ I realized that the three central elements in Hudson's Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope – *Encounter, Reflection, and Transformation* – provided a good framework and account of what I was trying to accomplish through the “come and see” journeys.⁸ With the support of Tiffney Marley, the then director of the Office of Black Church Studies at Duke Divinity School, I set up the Uganda/Rwanda Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope as a formal program.

In his description of the Ephesian Moment, Andrew Walls states that the “coming together of diverse elements from different quarters produces common convictions, a common assurance, about Christ” (Walls 2002:77). This has certainly been the case with the pilgrimage of pain and hope experience. Here I can only name some of these convictions and gifts, which have emerged from or are often the point of much conversation on the pilgrimage journeys. These convictions serve as glimpses of into “very height of Christ's full stature.”

- (a) Friendship and identity. Even though the pilgrimage journeys are brief, they often generate friendships and opportunities for ongoing relationships across continental, racial, and other cultural divides. These friendships not only expand the horizons of the pilgrims, they actually have the potential of pressing issues of identity. For, as one discovers deep connections with others who are not supposed to be “my” people, our own sense of identity and community begin to be questioned and reframed. It is in

⁷ Hudson describes the birth of his eight day program, the Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope, through which he invited his largely middle-class suburban congregation into poor and distressed neighborhoods as “pilgrims, not tourists; as learners, not teachers; as listeners, not as talkers.” The program was based on Hudson's conviction that such an “immersion into the struggles and joys of our suffering neighbors,” was not only a way to remain connected to the poor and suffering brothers and sisters, it was an opportunity for personal transformation (into “greater Christ-likeness”) as well as a way of learning to see and experience hope even in the midst of pain and suffering.

⁸ Writing about the pilgrimage of pain and hope as an encounter with the pain of our brothers and sisters and our shattered and fragmented societies, Hudson writes, “Alongside this encounter with pain in pilgrimage experience comes an encounter with hope. Throughout these deprived communities we discover those who resiliently refuse to become prisoners of helplessness and despair. Often unsung and anonymous, these hidden saints bring rays of faith, hope, and love to the lives they touch. . . . Encountering these signs of hope challenges the pilgrims to examine their own faith response within their lives and communities.” (Hudson 2005:20).

the context of these pilgrimages that I began to grapple with questions about my own identity (Katongole2007 & Katongole 2009).

- (b) The glimpse of a new “we.” The pilgrimages offer an opportunity for pilgrims to step out, even if temporarily, of their national, racial, or cultural identity into a space that is framed and predicated on a different, but shared narrative of the Christian story. In this connection, the fact that the entire pilgrimage, and each day of the pilgrimage is introduced by and framed through scripture, explores the sense of shared heritage and the possibility of a frame of reference that reveals the lie of our so called “natural identities” as it offers a glimpse of a new experience of “belonging together” across national, racial, or cultural divides.
- (c) Idolatry of fragments. In designing the pilgrimages, the goal is always to have a group that is made up of Christians from different cultural backgrounds, but also from different Christian traditions: Catholics, Evangelicals, and Protestants of various stripes. As we get to learn from one another, not only do the gifts but also the limitations of these various fragments become visible. Thus, through the pilgrimages one comes to see more clearly the tragedy of our current situation, in which, as Father Alexander Schmemmann rightly notes, “each fragment wants to be the whole . . . and passionately denies the others. Each one perceives Christ only through his own experience, his own vision. No one sees his limitations, his own relative character in Christ” (Schmemmann 2000:92). Without a doubt, the pilgrimages have helped to confirm that the different segments belong together and that only together can the fragments come to the “very height of Christ’s full stature.”
- (d) The church’s mission in the world. The pilgrimage journeys have thus led to a deeper appreciation of the reality and gift of the church as an “assembly” (Greek: *ecclesia*), which is to say, a gathering of different segments of converted social reality; an odd communion that is neither Jew nor gentile. It is this conviction, confirmed through pilgrimage experience, that led me to make the claim, which some have found to be rather problematic, namely that the church’s primary mission “is not to not to make America more Christian, but to make American Christians less American, and Rwandan Christians less Rwandan” (Katongole, 2009:156).⁹ The

⁹ In making this claim, I was aware of Andrew Walls’ claim that mission is characterized equally by both an indigenizing principle (making the Gospel at home in each culture) and by a pilgrim principle (which makes the gospel a stranger to any culture (Walls, 1996:3–15). While this is true, the historical reality is that while we have taken the indigenizing principle seriously, we

church's primary mission has to do with the calling and formation of a new people in the world.

- (e) The gift and discipline of Lament. The pilgrimage journeys through Uganda and Rwanda have brought us in touch not only with the most vibrant expressions of Christian faith, but also with some of its darkest and most painful past. This has been especially true in Rwanda where the memory of the genocide of 1994 remains fresh. As we listened to stories of survivors and/or visited sites where Christians slaughtered other Christians, we had to learn to stand in silence. In these places, as well as in camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) in Northern Uganda, we have been introduced to the discipline of lament. But learning to see, stand and feel the depth of anguish and betrayal, without giving in to despair or cynicism has also confirmed a truth about Christian life, namely, that there can be no genuine hope without lament. Christian life, to the extent it is a life of hope, is lived and nurtured at this intersection of pain and hope.
- (f) Stories. The pilgrimages have been a great opportunity to hear and see some of the most amazing examples of the performance of Christianity in Africa. This was particularly the case with the 2009 Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope. Bringing together twenty four Christians from around the world: seven from Malaysia, two from Europe, eight from the U.S; seven from Uganda, the twelve day journey through Uganda involved a one day visit to St. Joseph's Farm in southern Uganda, founded by Josephine Kizza. Josephine's story provides a glimpse not only of some of the challenges that Christians in Africa face, but also the space and imaginative possibilities Christianity opens up in the midst of those challenges. Telling her story is therefore a good way to display how issues of power, poverty, development, indeed an entire economics of "eating," can be reframed from within a World Christianity perspective.

III. The Economics of "eating": Josephine Kizza and St. Jude's Farm¹⁰

John and Josephine Kizza were school teachers in Kampala. Paid poorly by the government, they gave up their teaching career in 1982 and started a trading

have not sufficiently attended to the pilgrim principle. It is the pilgrim principle that I wished to draw attention to (and even overstate) given how little attention has been paid to it.

¹⁰ I am grateful to Dr. Jeffrey Goh, one of the pilgrims, who captured very well Josephine Kizza's story, which she shared with us on July 29, 2010. My account here relies heavily on Dr. Goh's reconstruction of the story on his blog: <http://www.jeffangiegoh.com/?s=kizza>

business, buying and selling beans and other food products. They were doing very well for themselves when the war intervened in 1986. With the failure in agricultural production as a result of the war, John and Josephine had no income and were threatened with poverty. They came to Masaka to visit John's parents. When it was time to return to Kampala, they found to their horror that the route was completely blocked, the main bridge between Kampala and Masaka having been destroyed by the rebels. Now, they were stranded indefinitely in Masaka.

John felt compelled to return to his parents' house, but Josephine vehemently refused to do so. Having lived on their own in Kampala all these years, and having been independent professionals – first as school teachers and then business people – she just couldn't return to the old patriarchal customs that were practiced in the household of the parents of her husband. So she insisted that on returning to Masaka she would live on the three and a half acre plot of land that John had inherited from his grandfather. But since they had not started cultivating it – it was all bush and there was no house on it – John proceeded to his parents' home thinking that she would follow him. But she did not. Instead she made a makeshift shed under a tree in their bushy plot of land. She borrowed a cooking pot from the neighbors, who also gave her some bananas, and allowed one of their teenage girls to come give her company.

In the morning, realizing that his wife was determined not to move in with his parents, John joined her, and together they tried to figure out how to make a living. Half-heartedly, they started to till the land and plant some vegetables. They grew food to live on, thinking that the war would soon end and they would return to Kampala. When the war eventually ended, eighteen months later, and they were finally able to make a trip back to Kampala, they found to their dismay that all they had in their apartment had been looted. There was nothing to salvage there – neither in the residence nor in the trading business. Their only option was to return to the village, to their plot of land, and to begin to learn to cultivate it.

The situation seemed pretty hopeless, for John and Josephine knew nothing about farming. They turned to God. And they named their farm St Jude's Farm – hoping that the patron of hopeless cases would help them – and every day, Josephine was down on her knees "praying hard" for the saint's intercession. They began with two piglets, given by John's father, and in two and a half years these produced 45 pigs. Proceeds from the sale of the entire herd were used to buy an eight-month old German heifer. That marked the beginning of high yielding, high quality, specialized and higher priced agricultural production at St Jude's. With some money saved, Josephine attended a course on

compost-making and organic farming. That proved another important break, for after that course St Jude's started organic farming and Josephine's husband became her "first student." A few years later, lecturers from the UK who conducted the compost-making course in Kampala came to St Jude's on a follow-up visit. They liked what they saw and knew the potential of St Jude's contribution. A scholarship was put together that enabled Josephine to do a degree in specialized modern agricultural technology. Leaving her husband to take care of their two year old daughter, she went to the UK and on her return, working hand in hand with her husband, she began to transform their three and a half acres of land into a booming organic farm that included crop husbandry, poultry, fish-farming, bee-keeping, mushroom and vegetable growing, compost, and biogas and storm water harvesting. More recently she has added a food processing unit which processes and packages fruits, some of which are sold in Uganda and the rest exported to Europe.

St. Jude's farm now serves as learning center – the St Jude's Family Project and Rural Training Centre for Sustainable Integrated Organic Agriculture – where local farmers, mostly women from neighboring villages, come to learn. To date, over 200,000 farmers from the local communities have received skills training in organic farming from St Jude's. The training staff provides effective support through follow-up visits to the trainees' village communities. In a region that has been devastated by war, AIDS, poverty, and food shortage, St. Jude's farm stands as a remarkable sign of hope and a model for sustainable and integrated agriculture in Africa and beyond. The day we visited the farm, an American university student and another student from Japan were among the residential interns receiving training at the farm. President Museveni, who has applauded Kizza's efforts and called her "*Muzuukusa*" (one who awakens) has visited twice, and on his second visit brought his entire cabinet with him.

On the pilgrimage Josephine shared with us what she describes as the principles behind the success of St. Jude's farm: *a culture of learning* – "always be open to learning from others"; *a culture of saving* – "every farmer must learn to save"¹¹; *family involvement* – husband and wife, for example, working together; and *soil and environmental care*. The slogan at St. Jude's farm is: "Feed the soil so that it feeds you." Over and beyond these four principles, Josephine confirmed it is her Christian faith that stands behind St. Jude's farm. It was her faith in God that allowed her not to give up hope when things were desperate,

¹¹ Jeffrey Goh notes that on hearing this the Malaysian Chinese pilgrims in our group whispered softly to each other: "She's a Chinese!" <http://www.jeffangiegoh.com/?s=kizza>.

including the time when her husband had a stroke and died in 2007. Josephine's faith did not simply offer her motivation and encouragement it provided a framework and thus a practical theology of integrated organic farming. The story of creation in the book of Genesis is one of Josephine's favorite stories. "Tilling the land," she pointed out to us on the pilgrimage, "is what God does – and that is what He commands us to do."

What Josephine understands to be doing is to live within the Christian creation story and work out its practical implications in the context of Ugandan history and at the intersection of her and John's story. It was particularly powerful to "see" the performance and hear her reflecting on the fact that it was the gift of her faith that opened up these possibilities. Equally significant was her explicit conclusion that the same possibilities are opened up to anyone who is willing to live within a Christian imagination. When Monica, a young Ugandan woman in our group who runs the L'Arche community near Kampala, said to Josephine that she so admired her and wished to become like her, Josephine simply replied: "My dear, you can have all this and more because you are still so young. But first, you have to *learn to bend your knees*" (emphasis mine).

I find those words by Josephine to be a powerful summary of what St. Jude's farm is about: the disciplines of prayer that locate one within the Christian story of God, and a willingness (submission) to live inside that story and work out its personal, social, and practical implications. For Josephine, locating herself within that story provided resources and opportunities with which she was able to re-imagine traditional gender roles, but re-formulate, together with her husband, their relationship to issues of power, development, land, agriculture – in a word, an entire "economics" of land. This is the true meaning of "conversion," which, as Andrew Wall notes, is not so much about content, as about direction: the turning of *everything* into the direction of Christ. If conversion is the telos of Christian mission, then Josephine Kizza's story provides a good illustration of the gifts and possibilities of mission in Africa.

But the visit to St. Jude's Farm was also a unique and powerful Ephesian Moment. At the end of the tour, Josephine and her staff hosted us to one of the most sumptuous and fresh meals we had eaten. As we drove back to Kampala that afternoon, our conversation in the bus was animated, but also very concrete. The conversation of this ragtag "ecclesia" of pilgrims from America, Malaysia, Europe, and Uganda talked excitedly about land, animals, plants, food – yes, especially the wonderful, fresh food we had eaten from Josephine's farm. The day at St. Jude's farm provided another glimpse in the gifts of World Christianity: an opportunity for Christians from different parts of the world to

eat together and to engage in a fresh conversation about what we eat, how we eat, with whom we eat, from where we eat.

Conclusion

I tell the story of Josephine Kizza for a number of reasons. First, I tell it to highlight the significance of new missiological postures (in this case, pilgrimage) as the context and opportunity for discovering the most pressing theological questions of global Christianity. To be honest, it was something of a 'surprise' to discover such a vibrant (at the same time thoroughly theological) innovative engagement with land and food in an African village. From my own Western formed theological instincts, I would have expected issues like Holy communion, church doctrine, biblical inerrancy and (perhaps) even same sex marriages to be the most pressing missiological issues of our time. On further reflection however, I realized that given that the majority of African Christians live on and with land, the way these Christians engage (or fail to engage) with land is one of the most critical theological and missiological question. The point here is that even to discover what the most pressing theological issues in the era of world Christianity requires journeys, which cultivate a posture of hospitality and patterns of attentiveness, listening, looking and learning to see where and how the Gospel is engaging and being engaged in ways that birth new life and hope in the lives of Christians around the world.

Secondly, telling the story of Josephine Kizza and St. Jude's farm is intended to advance Andrew Walls argument of the Ephesian moment as the telos or goal of Christian mission. In the Era of world Christianity, there are many issues that will leave Christians feeling divided. The differences between Catholics, Conciliar-Protestants, and Evangelicals are real and many; the approach to Scripture by Western Christians may be radically different from how Africans read (or hear) the Bible; even within the same Evangelical or Pentecostal communion, there might be different interpretations of what constitutes healing or the gifts of the spirit; Catholics will continue to disagree on the question of whether divorced and/or separated Christians should be allowed to receive Holy Communion; cultural and linguistic differences can easily place Christians of the same denomination on opposite sides of a pastoral issue. In the era of world Christianity these differences are not going to become less but more felt. What the Gospel promises us in the midst of these differences (whether real or perceived) is not some kind of 'doctrinal clarity' or authority to force

others to the truth, but a vision of a new communion – a great crowd, drawn from every nation, tribe and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb (Rev 7:9). Ephesian moments provide us with glimpses and an actual experience of this vision. But as Andrew Walls notes about the original initial Ephesian moment, created through table fellowship, it is the simple act of ‘eating together’ that locates us within this new communion, which constitutes *missio Dei*. Accordingly, amidst the many issues that may divide or threaten to split a congregation, denomination or global fellowship of believers, there may be no more hopeful way forward than a commitment to shared journeys, which provide Christians concrete and regular opportunities to eat together. These moments of eating together offer glimpses of the ‘very height of Christ’s full stature’. It is this Ephesian moment that was glimpsed in and through the pilgrimage to St. Jude’s farm. Thus, even though I do not deal with a number of doctrinal, ecclesiological or theological issues that we face, I hope that the essay provides an overarching framework and paradigm through which the exciting possibilities of *missio Dei* can be engaged in the era of world Christianity.

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