Theology without Borders
An Introduction to Global Conversations

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Not long ago Oscar was invited to speak at a conference on evangelism in the city of Suzuka, Japan. The host church in Suzuka consisted of Sansei and Nisei families whose primary languages were Spanish and Portuguese. The founding couple of this church, Peruvians by birth, migrated with their parents to Japan as adolescents and met while attending a Brazilian Pentecostal church in Suzuka. Over the course of time, they married and were called into ministry. In order to serve both the immigrant populations and their Japanese neighbors, they decided to plant a multilingual/multicultural church where services (and, where necessary, translation) would be in Japanese, Spanish, and Portuguese. To their surprise, young Japanese eager to make their way in a globalizing world were drawn to the church in increasing numbers.

Clearly such boundary-crossing hybrids and other forms of cultural mixing and matching are becoming increasingly common. While mainline and traditional denominational churches are declining in North America (and have almost disappeared in Europe), immigrant and ethnic churches of all kinds are proliferating. So it is not simply that the center of Christianity has shifted to the South (and East) as Andrew Walls argued a generation ago, but that the character of this church is undergoing massive transition: it has gone ethnic, even transnational. And accompanying this change in character is a geopolitical transformation that is equally significant: the church doesn’t necessarily depend on the economic and cultural resources of the West for its advance.

1. Sansei identifies Japanese-born (third-generation) immigrants, while Nisei identifies second-generation immigrants.
This has led observers to claim that we have entered into the era of what has been called global Christianity.\(^2\) Clearly the nature of Christianity has changed irrevocably over the last generation, but this has sometimes led to exaggerated claims about Christianity: that its fundamental growth has invariably taken place without significant missionary presence or after missionaries have left; that the Western church is in decline and no longer plays a significant role in defining Christianity; and that now missions will no longer be from the West to the rest, but it will be a reverse mission such as we are seeing in Western Europe. In 2009 sociologist Robert Wuthnow responded to these claims by arguing that the American church is not in decline and in fact is internationalizing itself and increasing its presence and influence in many places of the world. For better or worse, Wuthnow argues, US churches still play a significant role in the increasingly diverse world church.\(^3\)

In this book we want to avoid such polarized claims and simply acknowledge that the changing nature of Christianity, however it is understood, suggests that Christian reflection needs to be reconfigured in the form of a conversation between different parts of the body of Christ. Rather than seeing the flow of influences either as West to East (or South) or in the reverse, we want to argue that it needs to encompass multiple directions, including flows from South to South and within the Western churches.\(^4\) Specifically we want to ask what this new situation of the church means for our corporate and continuing theological reflection.

Now one might think that these changes would have deep reverberations within Western theological education. But outside of missions and some pastoral theology courses, not much has changed in the theological curriculum—this despite the call of accrediting agencies for multicultural literacy. We will explore the many implications of this new reality throughout this book, but in this preface let us lay out the presenting problem: despite the dramatically changing character of the Christian church and global presence, the dominant theological paradigm studied in Western seminaries, and often carried by missionaries abroad, has been the received Western theological traditions. The tension between the changing circumstances of Christian

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2. See Jenkins, *Next Christendom*. However, it is often unrecognized that Andrew Walls had been making a similar claim for more than a decade.

3. See Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith*. For its part, Wuthnow’s critique has been challenged as being unfair to the world Christianity hypothesis, insisting wrongly that it saw no continuing role for the Western and specifically American churches. See Shaw, “Robert Wuthnow and World Christianity.” A similar claim to Wuthnow’s can be found in Noll, *New Shape of World Christianity*.

4. This was the argument of an earlier book by one of us. See Engel and Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions*.
churches, along with the continuing focus on Western theology, constitutes what we might call the problem of global theology.

This book grows out of a set of observations about Christian theology today. First is the familiar claim that the Christian faith is changing: however one frames the changes, clearly the church has gone global. Not only is Christianity no longer predominantly a “Western religion,” but also its most rapid growth today is outside the West, so that most Christians now come from places other than Europe and North America. But second, in spite of these changes, the teaching of theology in most Western settings has not changed. True, there are some new voices: Gustavo Gutiérrez, James Cone, and, if you’re lucky, Kwok Pui-lan might appear on the syllabus of systematic theology, but the syllabus itself has not changed. Moreover, third, while theology is being done in many languages and settings, with ever-increasing variety and sophistication, these new theologians are frequently not in touch either with each other or, often, with much of what is discussed in Western theology classes. Perhaps this is a necessary result of the growing pluralism and multiculturalism of our settings. Or maybe it is simply a stage that we will pass through while a real global conversation emerges. In any case it is our assumption not only that this situation is changing but also that it needs to change in important ways.

This book will explore this state of affairs and do what it can to promote a more diverse conversation. We believe there are biblical grounds for such a project. In Ephesians 4, Paul lays out what he believes is God’s own program for the maturity of the church, the body of Christ. There he is clear that the Spirit, as a sign of Christ’s victory, has generously given a variety of gifts to the church (vv. 7–8). Further, these gifts are expressly given to equip Christians for the work of ministry, and the goal of this diverse endowment is that all might reach the “measure of the full stature of Christ” (v. 13). All of us, Paul insists, should reach maturity in Christ, “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love” (v. 16). Part of what this means, surely, is that the cultural, historical, and biblical reflections of the whole body—the products of its teachers, prophets, and evangelists—are necessary for us, together, to come to maturity. While the corporate and communal character of Paul’s appeal may sound strange to Western ears, it resonates widely with much of the church today. We need each other, in theological reflection as much as in economic, political, and cultural affairs.

We the authors recognize that the work of developing global conversations is not the work of any single book, or even a single generation, but a long
and slow process of learning to listen to unfamiliar voices. This book makes no claim to do anything more than introduce the problem and make some initial suggestions of what a global conversation in theology might look like. Beyond that, we hope to invite many others to join in this exciting project of watching the worldwide body of Christ grow into maturity in Christ.

We would like to recognize debts that we have accumulated in preparing this book. The book itself has grown out of attempts of a group of us to create a course at Fuller Seminary that would introduce students both to the discipline of theology as it has developed in theological education and to the growing global conversation about theology—a course we have titled “Doing Theology in a Global Context.” So we want first to thank our colleagues Charles Van Engen and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, who along with Bill and Oscar have contributed to developing this course. Additionally Chuck and Veli-Matti, in the course of many conversations, have helped us envision what we mean by a theology in global contexts. Bill would like to thank conversation partners in Africa, Latin America, and Asia as well as the United States for many stimulating conversations that influenced what appears in this book: James Nkansah-Obrempong, Melba Padilla Maggay, Lorenzo Bautista, Juan Stam, Elsa Tamez, Jehu Hanciles, Kwok Pui-lan, Dwight Hopkins, and Bryant Myers. Oscar would like to express appreciation to his students from the Centro Latino at Fuller Seminary (especially his wife, Karla); from Nuestra América colleagues from the FUSBC, UBL, as well as Francisco Mena Oreamuno; from the US Latina diaspora, many theological partners like Catherine Barsotti, Juan Martínez, Tommy Givens, Elizabeth Conde-Fraizer, Miguel De La Torre, Eduardo Font, Amos Yong, Luis Rivera-Pagán, Santiago Slabodsky, Claudio Carvalhaes, Gregory Cuellar, Débora Junker, and Gabriela Viesca (research assistant). Beyond this we thank our Baker Academic editors: Bob Hosack, for encouraging us to pursue the book and for supporting it through the approval process, and Lisa Cockrel and Brian Bolger, who made it a better book.

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Transoccidentalism and the Making of Global Theology

OSCAR GARCÍA-JOHNSON

A Banana Republic Theologian

I was born in the Banana Republic, a name for Honduras coined at the end of the nineteenth century by the North Carolina novelist O. Henry in *Cabbages and Kings*. My early childhood was spent in the port of Tela, a coastal city very much like Corallo in the story by O. Henry. These two cities belong together in O. Henry’s satirical narrative but also in the story of my own ancestral roots and upbringing. My great-grandmother took refuge in Trujillo when fleeing with her children from an uprising headed by Augusto César Sandino in the mines of San Albino, Nicaragua. Since my childhood, I have been told that the mines of San Albino were home to my British ancestors, the very scene of Sandino’s founding insurrections against the Nicaraguan conservative forces in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

I got to meet my great-grandmother when she lived in the port of Tela, 150 miles west of her arriving point. We called her Mama Sara, and she died at the age of 108. A refined and articulate old woman, she tended to retreat in the precincts...
of San Albino. She enjoyed pomposity, abundance, and status in her lifetime as a
member of the Europeans who came to the Americas to civilize the natives and
improve their land. She certainly made sure that her family would appreciate its
European pedigree, a distinctive heritage of a revered Western lineage distanc-
ing us from the local residents and Afro-Caribbeans. Memory and race were all
she had left, for she lost her fortune and prestige when migrating to Honduras.

My mother, whose white father was from the southern United States and
white mother was a British descendant, married a handsome trigeño (dark-
skinned) man. My father was quite a Latin American representation of mestizaje, a blending of Amerindian, black, white, and Middle Eastern. Naturally,
my grandmother never saw him as a fitting companion for a daughter with
“pure” white blood. Nevertheless, my father managed to get hired by the
prestigious United Fruit Company, a transnational Anglo-American banana
industry company later to be known as Chiquita Banana. Being one of the
two major companies that ruled the Honduran economy for several decades,
by the 1920s the United Fruit Company had acquired over 650,000 acres of the
most productive land along the Atlantic coast. La compañía (the company),
as we used to call it, had control of railroads, ports, and key politicians, since
bananas came to represent more than 80 percent of the nation’s exports dur-
ing the first half of the last century.

O. Henry’s novel astutely anticipates the keen Anglo-American entrepre-
neurship and political maneuvering that had yet to be fully realized in the rich
alluvial plains of Honduras’s Atlantic coast. O. Henry’s depiction is inviting.

Taken and retaken by sea rovers, by adverse powers and by sudden uprising of re-
bellious factions, the historic 300 miles of adventurous coast has scarcely known
for hundreds of years whom rightly to call its master. Pizarro, Balboa, Sir Francis
Drake, and Bolivar did what they could to make it a part of Christendom. . . .
The game goes on. The guns of rovers are silenced; but tintype man, the
enlarged photograph brigand, the kodaking tourist and scouts of gentle brigade
of fakirs have found it out, and carry on the work. The hucksters of Germany,
France, and Sicily now bag its small chance across their counters. Gentleman
adventurers throng the waiting rooms of its rulers with proposals for railroad
and concessions. The little opera-bouffe nations play at government and intrigue
until someday a big, silent gunboat glides into the offing and warns them not
to break their toys.

Due to my father’s employment status, I spent a good portion of my child-
hood and early adolescence living in designated areas built for the privileged

middle to upper management, which were located at the borders of the banana plantations. The local people referred to this area as *la zona Americana* (the American zone). The name was well earned, for it represented a life at the margins of the Honduran population—an elitist and privileged margin, I might add. *La zona Americana* was furnished with all the commodities that one would expect of an upper-middle-class lifestyle in the States transplanted into a “third world country.”

*La zona Americana* was a geographical icon that inspired a sense of amazement and fueled the aspirations of many locals to somehow and someday belong to such a splendid society and culture: the Anglo-American culture. It goes without saying that life outside the borders of this American zone, in the banana plantations, was a very different scenario. Ironically, it so happened that my maternal grandmother (daughter of Mama Sara) lived in such a neighborhood, and I got to spend three months of every year in that unappealing place. No better words can depict the life in the plantations than those of Ramón Amaya-Amador, a banana *bracero* (manual laborer) himself who had a gift for words and angst for social change. His provocative novel *Prisión verde* (Green prison), published in 1950, partially captures the living conditions affecting workers in the banana plantation.

Among that miscellaneous [scenarios] of *braceros* and bananas, sunshine and plagues, sweat and machines, creeks and malaria, the haughty cry of foremen was heard, [as well as] the whistle of moles, and the supreme power of the gringos gabbling with overconfident pride. So, all day, the grueling working of the *campeños* [field workers] was suspended until nightfall, when with tired shaky legs they would leave the green banana prison to embed themselves in the prison of soulless, empty barracks.2

As the political horizon changed and the land concessions granted to *la compañía* were challenged by a different generation of national leaders in Honduras, it began to move operations back home. Between the 1970s and 1990s, banana production in Honduras fluctuated significantly due to a number of hurricanes damaging the plantations and the spread of Black Sigatoka fungus. Consequently, most of the transnational operations of *la compañía* began to leave the country, leaving thousands of acres of land and thousands of *familias costeñas* (coast-based families) in ruins, jobless, and poorer than ever. *La compañía* left Honduras to go back home, but those who stayed home remained imprisoned in extreme poverty. Thus the life of many Hondurans on the northern Atlantic coast became intolerable to the point of exile or death.

Many embarked on a deadly journey north. Some left by plane and many others by train, but whatever the means, the journey was a potentially deadly one for los costeños as they trekked toward the United States of America.

This case illustrates quite well the point made by Juan González in his book *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America.* The harvest of Latin American immigrants González refers to is the result of the powerful Anglo-American companies’ manipulation of the economic, geographical, and political resources of Latin American nations for their own interests. Many immigrants—a harvest of empire—are coming to the United States, suggests González, on the very tracks built by the Anglo-American politico-economic machinery. My parents were part of this harvest.

After coming to the States and going through the acculturation process, I have had to come to terms with a question that sooner or later haunts every theologian who comes from a former European colony. It is the question of where exactly my home is when doing theological reflection: do I choose to do theological reflection out of the privileged “American zone” or the unappealing “green banana prison”? Throughout this book you will notice this struggle expressed in moments of self-questioning, self-affirmation, and reimagination. By the end of this chapter, I hope you realize that these two “universes” coexist along the continuum of a theological imagination that transcends the dichotomous categories of the West and finds a home in the transoccidental horizon of the global Triune God.

The Politics of Locality in Theological Studies

What is the point of beginning this book on global theology with a narrative that, although representing some trends among Latin American people, lacks the kind of universal representation we typically find in a theological manuscript? This is a pertinent question, since biographical theology has formidable objectors in the West. From their point of view, self-deception and self-fictionalization (“theology only of the self”) might be reasons to dismiss this theological genre. Interestingly, this suspicion vanishes when they approach documents such as Augustine’s *Confessions* or Boethius’s *De consolatione philosophiae.* Undeniably, the politics of location—where we do theology from and why—tends to inform the delivery and reception

4. As pointed out by Derek Nelson, the list of objectors includes Martha Nussbaum and a prominent list of German theologians. See Nelson, introduction to *Theologians in Their Own Words,* 7–9.
of knowledge broadly speaking. In this regard, Willie Jennings, the African American Duke theologian, has much to say in his book *The Christian Imagination*. He thinks that “the story of race is the story of place. Geography matters for race as well as for identity, vision, and the hope of how one might live life.” Concurrently, stories of ethnicity and migrations may enrich theological elaboration with insights that could help the theological eye perceive what might otherwise be overlooked in the making of Christian theology, namely, imported ideas, histories, and epistemologies that construct Western typologies while communicating the message of the gospel in the majority world.

It is widely known that Western knowledge (its epistemology) has always been tied to particular Western geopolitics, which has been transmitted to the colonies and the world at large in the form of notions, practices, and utopias. Latin America and Africa, for instance, have been experimental grounds for the historical projects pursued by the West. On the positive side, the rhetoric and practices of Western modernity have led to moments of emancipations, but the price that has been paid is great: ethnocultural neglect, discursive misrepresentation, and geopolitical dominance. Acknowledging the fact that predominant Western theologies have been operating out of an imperial-colonial core, influential theologians and missiologists in recent years have assumed the task of identifying theological paths bold enough to understand and meet the challenges presented by the epistemological captivity of the West in the theological process. Arguably, the so-called global theology enterprise is one of those paths. The goal is to carry out theological discourse while immersed in a post- or non-Western globalized context. Not surprisingly, this global trend in theology faces resistance from both ends of the theological spectrum: both classical theologians (in fields such as history, systematics, ethics, biblical studies, and philosophy) and theologians from the margin (Liberationists, feminists, ethnicists, indigenists, etc.) tend to resist such projects. The former seek to retreat to the “golden age” of Western scholastics, while the latter are suspicious of this path as a new attempt to regulate (or recolonize) the theological diversity accomplished so far.

In an elementary yet constructive treatment of North American church involvement in global missions, Paul Borthwick acknowledges that pluralism,
globalization, and territorialism are challenges Western Christianity faces.\(^8\) In the words of a Zimbabwean brother, “What you in the West call ‘globalization’ we call ‘Americanization.’”\(^9\) But this resistance to occidentalization exceeds the boundaries of the mission field; it has been fermenting in the theological establishment of the West for a while. Hence, Western theologies are under the charge of occidentalism\(^10\) and theological colonialism in respect to the way their classical and modern disciplines, methodologies, and conceptualizations represent God, the West, and the rest.\(^11\) Implicit in this charge is the insubordinate attitude of the non-Western/ethnic “subaltern” that resists being reduced to an object or subject of study and adopts instead a protagonist role when attempting self-interpretation and self-representation. The tendency in modern Western disciplines has been to investigate members of the non-West as “ethnographic subjects,” hoping that in the process they will speak for themselves, that is, become “subjects of study.” As long as the West continues to use its own paradigms and methodologies when investigating the non-Western other, the effort of discursive representation of the other will suffer from inaccuracy. As Gayatri Spivak has pointed out, in this condition of representational asymmetry (investigated/non-Western—investigating/Western), the subaltern cannot speak as a subject but rather only as a fabrication of the West.\(^12\)

This brings us to a central question: how appropriate is it for us to use the term “global theology” when talking constructively about discourses happening elsewhere? The representational asymmetry typical of Western discourse, I suggest, should prevent us from using the term “global theology” uncritically in a way that might give the impression that we are letting our subjects speak for themselves within our Western paradigms. This would make our theologies globalizing, not truly global. Correspondingly, we cannot properly be called global theologians if what we do is investigate and represent others in our

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9. Ibid., 75.
10. This term is used critically by Enrique Dussel to indicate how “Western culture has positioned all other cultures as primitive, pre-modern, traditional, and underdeveloped.” See Dussel, “Transmodernity and Interculturality,” 15. Walter Mignolo further develops its epistemological implications in Mignolo, “Postcolonialismo.” Obviously, “occidentalism” alludes to the groundbreaking work by Said, *Orientalism*, which underwrote the field of postcolonial studies. Yet occidentalism is not used in the same way Said uses “orientalism.” The former centers on the Occident as a self-projected representation that portrays superiority and universality. The latter centers on a series of Asian misrepresentations and stereotypes serving also to ensnare the West as a superior culture.
12. See Morris and Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*
scholarship while neglecting their self-representing paradigms. This would degenerate our theology into egology (speaking of the self). Let us make no mistake on this point—every theology carries within it a geopolitical, historical, and ideological prerogative and commitment that makes it contextual, whether this is acknowledged or not.

When the “Subaltern” Does Speak

The subaltern is speaking in the context of the wider world and is causing a disruption. The words by Homi Bhabha, a noted Indian-born postcolonial theorist, capture with precision the crucial moment of disruption in which Western theology finds itself at the present time. “Let us remember the terrible epiphany that overwhelmed Rahul Singh, the protagonist in V. S. Naipaul’s novel The Mimic Men, when he came to the realization that the great stone walls of London posed neither a unique weight nor an unsurpassed resonance; those stones were the same stones one could find anywhere, everywhere; other stones were not a pale shadow of London ones.”¹³ I contend that any attempt at doing theology in today’s globalized contexts, whether by Westerners or non-Westerners, must begin by taking into account Rahul Singh’s epiphanic realization that the Western ways are no longer considered “unique, superior, or unsurpassed.” In the same breath, a sense of astonishment (Verwunderung) and humility, to borrow from Karl Barth, might well be the proper attitude needed to discern where God is active, what divine movements point the way of God’s revelation, and which competencies and commitments are required of us as we move forward to fulfill the theological task in today’s globalized contexts.¹⁴ If one is open to being astonished, strives for humbleness, and becomes attentive to God’s manifestations around the world, an inevitable conclusion would be that the theological task as we have come to know it in the West is facing a transformation of its cartography and of its historical archives. The territory, texture, and phenomena of Christian practice are heading away from the West. The new cartographies of Christian practice, both in non-Western territories and also within the West in the form of “third spaces” or “back alleys of society,” are shifting to include a theological self-representation coming out of decolonial theological categories that neither necessarily abandon nor depend on Western culture but instead seek autonomy of thought.¹⁵

¹³. Bhabha, Nuevas minorías, nuevos derechos, 91–92, my translation.
¹⁴. Barth, Evangelical Theology. See chapter 6, “Wonder.”
¹⁵. The term “third spaces” refers to the marginalized communities living interstitially in the urban settings of developed countries (e.g., Africans in France, Southern Asians in the

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This insurrection against the theological status quo has been resented in the theological establishment of the West, which usually refers to these decolonial efforts with names such as “local theologies,” “ethnic theologies,” “Liberation theologies,” “Black theologies,” “Asian theologies,” “mujerista theologies,” “indigenous theologies,” “theologies from the margin,” “ecotheologies,” and so forth.

Today, non-Western and ethnic theologies are still being represented as subaltern theologies within the reigning academic and theological establishment. Classical theologies, on the other hand, are referred to simply by totalizing nomenclatures: “biblical theology,” “historical theology,” “systematic theology,” “Christian theology,” or simply “theology.” Nevertheless, the resurgence of multiple modes of theological reflection is a precondition for an autonomous epistemology. Therefore, the naming of different theological discourses is more than appropriate when such names express self-reflection and self-representation. We need the same thing to happen with Western discourse (e.g., “Anglo-European Christian history” and not merely “Christian history”; the same goes for “British-German systematic theology,” “Western spirituality,” etc.). Juan Martínez’s observation in this regard is judicious: “One of the most important contributions contextual theologies can make to U.S. evangelical theology is to help it name itself as a contextual theology. Because of the outsized influence of U.S. evangelicalism, it will be particularly difficult for it to name its theologies as contextual. But until that happens all ‘minority’ theologies will be marginalized.”

Two Views for Doing Theology in Global Contexts

A seminal question that should be dealt with when doing theology in global contexts is, To what extent is it necessary to use Western theologies in the construction of global theologies if indeed Western theology has been part of the problem in non-Western contexts? In this book the reader will face two distinctive approaches to this question. In spite of the cynicism surrounding the possibility of building a theological discourse of this magnitude in such a time as ours, William Dyrness and I believe that the coconstruction of theological discourse in globalized contexts not only is necessary and possible but also constitutes a communal act of worshipping the God of the global church as we learn to deal with our self-idolatrous tendencies.

United States, and Nisei Latinos/as in Japan). For uses of this term, consult Castells, Power of Identity; Davey, Urban Christianity and Global Order.
William Dyrness—who speaks for a growing community of committed Western theologians wanting to move forward with a constructive theological approach in globalized settings—will answer this question by affirming that the Western legacy is still an inescapable reality for non-Western Christianity. In the next chapter, Bill will point out that the Western church, for better or worse, has decided which cultural influences to accept and reject ever since early Christian times. The Western church produced the creeds, hymns, treatises, liturgies, artistic representations, and religious traditions that still influence Christianity today. Indeed, the Western church makes the Western heritage an inescapable reality for newer expressions of the Christian faith. Since the Western theological heritage is still inescapable for the theological task today, it would be impossible, if not dangerous, for younger churches and theologies to disregard it entirely. In order to develop a theological discourse in a way that is global enough, both Western theologians and non-Western theologians should disarm themselves of unnecessary cynicism and recognize that Western culture is generative and nuanced (not monolithic) and hence useful for today’s theologizing. In the same breath, Western theologians should acknowledge the fact that we are living in a “postimperial” world; thus, the typical Western-centric instinct so pervasive in Western theologizing must be acknowledged when doing theology in globalized contexts.

On the other hand, I will argue that what seems “inescapable” is not so much the historical products of Western Christianity but the fact that Western modernity/coloniality has occupied Western theologies and Christianity in a way that has projected an image of inferiority and codependency on the former colonies of Europe (occidentalism) in matters of doctrine, institutions, and social practices. Consequently, the elaboration of theology in a globalized context will be conceived of as a dynamic process of theological decolonization and glocal (global and local) dialogue by means of an interlocal and intercultural effort that does not assume the universal Western center but maintains its pluriversality and polycentricity. Naturally, I have reservations about the willingness and capacity of Western theologies alone to acknowledge and deal with issues of epistemology, colonialism, race, ethnicity, power, and privilege apart from the decolonizing process. Therefore, I argue, the task of elaborating theology collaboratively, interdisciplinarily, and interlocally entails an act of self-interpretation and self-representation in the form of a discourse that acknowledges its own context as it pursues a constructive dialogue with the contextual other. This goes for all of us, not just the majority world. This project of mutual interrogation undergirds all that we will discuss in the chapters that follow.
Let me develop the framework of this project a bit further. In making theology in globalized contexts, non-Western and Western theological efforts should undergo a dual methodological process that I am calling “transoccidentality.” My advocacy of transoccidentality draws on aspects of Enrique Dussel’s transmodern cultural theory to emphasize the deepening and broadening process in theological elaboration. The deepening aspect seeks self-interpretation and self-representation by effecting an epistemic delinking from totalizing Western typologies. The broadening aspect seeks to build intercultural and interlocal dialogue. As we articulate these movements in our transoccidental approach to theology in global contexts, I will address the issue of how inescapable Western culture and heritage may be for both Western and non-Western churches and theologians. Bill will make his response in the chapter that follows.

How Inescapable Is the West?

To what extent is Western heritage and culture inescapable for the majority global church and indigenous theologies of today? Perhaps the question should be extended to ask, for whom is it inescapable and why? To answer these questions I will examine two cases, one from Africa and another from Latin America.

David B. Barrett, a missionary and renowned British scholar of African Christianity, argues in his pioneering work *Schism and Renewal in Africa* that the eruption of the African-Initiated Churches (AICs) movement during the early twentieth century showed a “striking number of parallels” with the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century and with other renewals in the history of the West. \(^{17}\) Acknowledging the fact that AICs constitute an indigenous effort to delink the African church from “over-Europeanized Christianity” as embodied by mainline churches in African contexts, Barrett supports the fact that such efforts constitute a “radical mission of renewal and reformation” but holds that these initiatives are, as Allan Anderson notes, “not restricted to AICs alone.”\(^ {18}\) Anderson, reviewing Barrett, follows a similar pathway when assessing the Pentecostal character of the AICs and linking the movement with the North American Pentecostal movement ignited on Azusa Street in 1906. In this way Barrett (and Anderson) attempts to set African religious phenomena in line with a more “universal” account of church history, namely, a Western account.

\(^{17}\) See Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa*, 161–86.

\(^{18}\) See Anderson, “Types and Butterflies,” 107.
Let me open a different hermeneutical window on the same African phenomenon. Allan Effa, a Brazilian-raised son of a missionary, and professor of intercultural studies at Taylor Seminary, explores the contours of African contributions to global Christianity (particularly to the Muslim world, Europe, and North America) in his article “Releasing the Trigger: The Nigerian Factor in Global Christianity.” Instead of viewing African Christianity under Western categories, Effa remarks on Africa’s racial, cultural, and religious contribution to Europe and the Americas since early colonial times. In order to understand the significance of Effa’s approach to the AICs, we need to acknowledge the fact that it would be impossible for us to recognize the American continent of today if it were not for the multiple African contributions to this continent through the centuries. The two great slave empires of the nineteenth century—the United States and Brazil—would not exist as we know them today were it not for Africa. Latin America is irrefutably a mestizo continent that has been deeply influenced by African race, cuisine, music, spiritualities, and so forth. In the United States, the civil rights movement, which changed the landscape of human rights in the world, was propelled and led by African Americans in clear acknowledgment of their African (and Christian) roots. “West Africa’s global influence continues today,” adds Effa in the same breath, “but with a marked difference. West African diaspora is accompanied by a missionary vision that challenges and reshapes expressions of Christianity around the world.”

Effa’s article, remarkably, compares Nigeria’s shape in the world map with that of a revolver. Effa borrows this illustration from the Nigerian pastor Brown Oyitso from Nigeria’s Redeemed Christian Church of God. Pastor Oyitso is known, explains Effa, for showing the similar shape of Nigeria and a revolver, pointing out that “Nigeria occupies the position of a trigger” in the map of world reevangelization of the West and the Middle East.

Comparing these two hermeneutical windows sheds light on the question of how inescapable Western typologies are for Western and non-Western theological modes. It seems to me that Barrett finds Western culture and heritage to be inescapable when attempting to make sense of the AICs phenomena. The need for a universal archetype—a necessary rational category for analytical theology—to communicate this valued Christian happening to the Western world moves him to find in the archives of Western heritage the historical artifact that he needs to represent what is going on in Africa today in a way that resonates with the West’s course of history, particularly

20. Ibid.
the Protestant Reformation. As noble as his attempt may be in the interest of situating African Protestantism within a more universal history, Barrett links the indigenous effort of the AICs to an imported history, thus depriving the indigenous movement of the very reason for its emergence as a movement, namely, to disengage from an “over-Europeanized Christianity in Africa.”

This is what Western theologians might consider “inescapable.” In contrast, Pastor Oyitso from Nigeria offers a remarkable hermeneutical window for understanding the African phenomena, that of a revolver. As grotesque as the metaphor may be for a classical Western typologist, a revolver has much more grounding in Africa’s violent history than the Protestant Reformation does. So while the British Dr. Barrett speaks to the West in Western categories by going back to the West’s historical archive and fabricating a metaphor that situates Africa for the West, Pastor Oyitso from Nigeria speaks in compelling ways to the majority world. Being a Latin American, I find Oyitso’s metaphor quite familiar; a revolver is the symbol of violence and the slave trade. It is not the past, however, that informs this metaphor but the future (the hope), which triggers the desire of evangelizing with words and wonders those whose ancestors met Africans in the past with chains and weapons. This is the African factor affecting global Christianity today. Consequently, it seems to me that Western culture and heritage is much more inescapable for Dr. Barrett than it may be for Pastor Oyitso.

A second case regarding how inescapable the West is for the majority world comes from Latin America. Let me preface it by noting that even those Western theologians who see themselves as progressive and sympathetic to self-representational theologies seem to take issue when “subaltern theologies” dare to challenge their most revered intellectual projects (i.e., Western history and epistemology). A case in point is Manuel Fraijó, a distinguished Spanish scholar of theology and philosophy who studied in Innsbruck, Münster, and Tübingen. Fraijó provides an outstanding review and critical assessment of Latin American Liberation theologies.

Originally, Liberation theology came from European theology. Many of their most notable representatives were formed in European universities. The political theology of Metz and the theology of hope of Moltmann were their main sources of inspiration. . . . But too soon they [Liberation theologians] began to accuse their spiritual fathers of being excessively abstract and too tied to their capitalistic world-system when doing theology. In this way a distancing process, that I have never understood, began to take place between them. . . . Lastly, I think, there are two giants of European theology . . . without whose


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influence there would be no Liberation theology and any other progressive theology [K. Rahner and R. Bultmann].

This critique, whatever its merits, fails to acknowledge several facts about the process of origination and self-representation in non-Western discourses. It also manifests the great uneasiness that Western theologians experience when confronted with the possibility of a subaltern insurrection. Fraijó, and many others with him, seems to ignore several possibilities. It is entirely possible for non-Western theologians to produce a full-blown theological discourse without having to subscribe to Anglo-European epistemologies, methodologies, and conceptualizations. To suggest that Liberation theology had its primary origin in Europe is a sign of arrogance. The so-called distancing process could easily be counterargued as an occidental misrepresentation based on the mythical presupposition of the superiority of “being formed in Europe,” which makes one’s own non-European communal grounding, situated theorization, and committed actions irrelevant when compared with Western culture and intellectuality. I believe Fraijó’s assessment misunderstands what is truly happening here, because it is much more radical than “anti-European chauvinism,” as Fraijó describes it. The instinct of Liberation theologians moved toward a process of epistemic resistance to, if not disengagement from, dominant categorizations, a move that constitutes—according to Aníbal Quijáno and Walter Mignolo—the initial step for the decolonizing of knowledge and the very genesis of a liberating discourse.

In addition, let us remember Bhabha’s account of Rahul Singh’s realization: it is now quite possible to forge local theologies without reference to Europe. One can be diligently engaged in one’s local histories and narratives, which, as Mr. Singh realized, need not be “pale shadows” of the European ones.

It also seems to me that Fraijó, just like his British colleague Barrett, finds it very difficult to escape Western culture and legacy when explaining Latin American Liberation theology. Conversely, the opposite seems to be the case for the Latin American Liberationists, who refuse to acknowledge any such influence. Still, the less prominent claim—pragmatic in nature—could be made that non-Western/ethnic theologies in Western institutions have not been able to disengage sufficiently from Western paradigms to show that they hold an autonomous status and equal academic stature when compared to Western disciplines. Indeed, non-Western/ethnic discourses have been interspersed with Western categories to the point of marginality. So the lack of autonomy in

22. Fraijó, Fragmentos de esperanza, 331, 332, 336, my translation.
23. Ibid., 334.

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representation could translate into a subaltern neglect of Western resources that never reaches a level of academic rigor and methodological style comparable to its Western counterpart.

Nevertheless, the subaltern theologian has found in that very unevenness a space for self-representation, one that has proved fertile for theological thinking and has provided an opportunity for epistemic delinking. Thus, it flourishes like a rhizome of non-Western theological categories, such as marginality, mestizaje, violence, otherness, exclusion, poverty, displacement, hybridity, and so on. For the non-Western theologian, a situated-theorization in these destabilizing and uneven spaces opens up a liberating path in the midst of an oppressive universal system. Theological elaboration from the margins happens even when it means doing theology outside the gate of recognition and affirmation. This in the end turns out to be a great asset that non-Western theologies bring to the project of doing theology in globalized contexts, for globalized contexts are nests of unevenness and all kinds of human disparities as well as unforeseen opportunities. The contexts of dislocation and socioeconomic disparities are familiar to subaltern theologians.

In conclusion, when representing the majority world, Western theologies and typologies have proved to be not only inadequate but also, in many instances, epistemically colonizing. Doing global theology, then, will require us to use different hermeneutical windows from those we have considered normative in the West. When we are faced with a particular Christian phenomena such as the AICs in the non-West, our relocation in the global hermeneutical horizon might require us to carefully challenge, modify, or even dismantle our Western presuppositions. For instance, we might argue that neither the American continents nor non-Western ethnicities (African, Amerindian, Middle Eastern) should be understood mainly on the basis of European history. Furthermore, after rethinking Europe in light of the colonial projects of modernity in the Americas and Africa, we might dare to say that Europe would not be the influential seat of Western culture that it is today if it were not for the contributions of marginalized colonies: silver and gold at the service of new discoveries, forced labor by Indians and Africans, new comestibles like

25. Mignolo uses the concept of “delinking” (French déconnexion), first introduced by the Egyptian sociologist Samir Amin, along with the concept of “disengagement” (Spanish desprendimiento), developed by Quijano, to advance this concept of delinking in lieu of disengaging knowledge from different systems of colonial power that intersect and produce multiple levels of oppression; hence a multilayer matrix of colonial control is presented (economy, natural resources, authority, gender and sexuality, knowledge and subjectivity); see ibid., 12–16.


27. See Horne, Deepest South.
Mexican *chocolatl* and the Incan potato. Finally, the pragmatic questions seem more urgent to me than the question of how inescapable the West is for the rest: How realistic is it to expect Western theologians and institutions to humbly and attentively participate in the coconstruction of theological elaboration with non-Western/ethnic thinkers on the basis of fairness and mutual respect? Will they expect a significant contribution from the pen of a former “subaltern” theologian and allow it to be made in a non-Western fashion?

The Transoccidental Imagination

*Theorizing beyond the West*

Having argued that the West is much more inescapable for the Western theologian than for the rest in the world, we now move forward to elaborate a theory that might help us escape Western-centrism. I will attempt to articulate a theological conversation with disciplines I never encountered in my Western theological formation. Latin American literature, cultural studies, urbanology, critical theory, postcolonial studies, transatlantic studies, and decolonial theories were all nonexistent in my Western theological formation. That said, it would be a mistake to think that theologians in the West have never used such unorthodox disciplines when elaborating theological discourse. An outdated list suffices. J. B. Metz and Jürgen Moltmann in Germany have experimented with political theories; R. Marlé and J. Audinet in France and Canada have made use of cultural studies when dealing with epistemological assumptions; Casiano Floristán and J. J. Tamayo have used critical theory and literary criticism when discussing theological methodologies; David Tracy, Don Browning, Kathryn Tanner, Sallie McFague, and others have been multidisciplinary and open to post-Western tendencies in their theological discourses. Thus we can surely expect our own studies to welcome nonclassical disciplines as we imagine newer paradigms.

28. This has been well argued in the world-system hypothesis. See Dussel, “World-System and ‘Trans-Modernity.’”

29. Since the 1970s (if not before) there have been theological efforts attempting to cross the historical-contextual ditch separating the South from the North. See, for instance, Branson et al., *Conflict and Context*; Torres and Fabella, *Emergent Gospel*. Lately, a promising approach that seeks to build dialogue among theologians and missiologists of the global South (South-to-South) is reemerging. See “Transgressive Theological Voices”; Keener and Carroll, *Global Voices*. In addition, we can find theologians from the margins in North America doing constructive work by discussing theologians that have been separated by context but are nevertheless close in theological agendas. This is the case with Goizueta’s fine treatment of Bernard Lonergan’s and Enrique Dussel’s methodological projects; see Goizueta, *Liberation, Method, and Dialogue*.

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As I described in my biography above, since childhood I have been reminded that I am a man of the Occident. But I hesitate when I attempt to define my occidentality apart from my non-occidentality. This sort of hesitation can move us to explore more carefully the contours of hybrid identities. **Mestizaje** is one among a handful of concepts that I have used to name this existential and cultural ambiguity. However, **mestizaje** denotes a random movement in the self that recapitulates an ambiguous identity. Instead, in this chapter I desire to trace a trajectory that points to the process of self-representation, a process that moves us beyond the script of the West as the locus of personal meaning and Christian mission. For this reason the concept of “transoccidentality,” which implies an otherness from but not negation to our Western heritage, seems appropriate to me.

**What Is “Transoccidentality”?**

The term “transoccidental” emerges as I reflect on two theoretical concepts: “postoccidentality” and “transmodernity.” The Cuban poet and literary critic Roberto Fernández Retamar coined the former in 1976 in reference to the Cuban revolution hero José Martí in his notable essay “Nuestra América y Occidente.” Fernández Retamar uses the term “postoccidental” for an autonomous Latin American discourse that has transcended its occidental limitations and reached maturity. I think that transcending occidentality, however, does not necessarily translate into negating the occidental imprint that most of us Latin Americans carry within. Perhaps the fact that I describe myself as a hybrid-**mestizo**-borderline person helps me reconcile these ambiguities. José Martí acknowledges that such a project of total negation of our Western legacies is impossible when he writes, “All of our works, of our robust America, will inevitably carry within the imprint of a conquering civilization.” At the same time, every conscientious Latin American in the history of ideological, political, and religious freedom has attempted to transcend coloniality. So Martí continues, “But it will better [itself], it will transcend.” This suggests to me that Martí, like me, conceives of the possibility of a life at the edge of our occidentality, a life that reaches beyond our colonialized self, a life that struggles to disengage from the totalizing colonial center tying our existence to somebody else’s story and will. Ultimately, it is a life that dares to imagine both another horizon of existence and another center beyond the shell of oppression and asymmetry of the West’s misrepresentation of its colonial subjects in its

universal history. This is precisely what Enrique Dussel has in mind when he speaks of “the exteriority of Modernity,” the space “outside of the universal modern culture” that neglects the value and history of the colonized subject (i.e., indigeneity, mestizaje, Nepantla, Aztlan, etc.).  

In the case of Latin America, such hybridity was experienced at the cultural, ideological, religious, and biological levels in the form of mestizajes, or “blendings,” that continued to happen in the histories of the territories and peoples of the Americas.

A Decolonial Theory for Theologies in Global Contexts

Enrique Dussel’s transmodern theory of culture captures many aspects of our view on transoccidentalism and provides a tempting programmatic proposal. His seminal thought can be summarized as follows:

The strict concept of the “trans-modern” attempts to indicate the radical novelty of the irruption—as if from nothing—from the transformative exteriority of that which is always distinct, those universal cultures in the process of development which assume the challenges of Modernity, and even European/North American Post-modernity, but which respond from another place, another location. They respond from the perspective of their own cultural experiences, which are distinct from those of Europeans/North Americans, and therefore have the capacity to respond with solutions which would be absolutely impossible for an exclusively modern culture. A future trans-modern culture—which assumes the positive moments of Modernity (as evaluated through criteria distinct from the perspective of the other ancient cultures)—will have a rich pluriversity and would be the fruit of an authentic intercultural dialogue, that would need to bear clearly in mind existing asymmetries (to be an “imperial-core” or part of the semi-peripheral “central chorus”—like Europe today, and even more so since the 2003 Iraq War—is not the same as to be part of the postcolonial and peripheral world). . . . “Trans-modernity” points toward all of those aspects that are situated “beyond” (and also “prior to”) the structures valorized by modern European/North American culture, and which are present in the great non-European universal cultures and have begun to move toward a pluriversal utopia.

In this chapter I am not able to develop all the implications embedded in Dussel’s transmodern theory with regard to the production of what I call transoccidental and glocal spaces (though we will return to these ideas in the chapters that follow). Dussel’s transmodern theory embodies part of what I see

33. Ibid., 18–19.
represented in Martí’s seminal thought. Martí and Dussel would agree that a life beyond the “imperial-core” of colonality/modernity could not represent a cultural existence entirely free from the “imprints” left and reenacted by imperial dominations past and present. Nor can it be a life absolutely beyond that edge that defines our historic-existential self. But by adding another horizon of existence, a new imaginary, and by transposing our colonized self to another plane, a new point of self-origination emerges. A new life for the “emancipated subaltern” can be imagined under a different set of coordinates on the occidental shell. This life on the exterior of Western modernity/coloniality, which is free to accept its complex cultural existence and seek dialogue under a new set of conditions, is what I imagine transoccidentalism to be.

As a theologian and student of cultural theories, I am left with an intriguing question: What might hold together the reimagined communal self and physical community in a way that makes mutual coexistence with other decolonial communities and theologies possible? What takes the place of the colonial core that previously infringed on and informed our colonized identities in a way that now allows for polycentricity, polyphony, and locality and provides the ground for interlocal and intercultural dialogue under the logic of love, respect, equality, and justice? Leonardo Boff’s analogical-theopolitical model of the Trinity resonates with me.

There is a fundamental human yearning for sharing, equality, respect for differences, and communion of all and with God. The communion of the divine Three offers a source of inspiration for achieving these age-old yearnings of all peoples and all societies. Each divine Person shares fully in the other two: in life, love, and communion. Each is equal in eternity, majesty, and dignity; none is superior or inferior to the others. Although equal in sharing in life and love, each Person is distinct from the others. The Father is distinct from the Son and from the Spirit, and so is each Person. But this distinction allows for communion and mutual self-giving. The Persons are distinct so as to be able to give out of their wealth to the others and to form eternal communion and divine community. The Blessed Trinity is the most wonderful community. How to realize this ideal in our dominant social systems today, capitalism and socialism? . . . [In capitalism, d]ifference is valued at the expense of communion. In socialism it is the sharing of all that is valued . . . but personal differences are little valued. . . . The trinitarian mystery beckons us toward social forms in which all relations between persons and institutions are valued, in an egalitarian way, one of kinship and respect for differences. Only thus will oppression be overcome and life and freedom triumph. 34

34. Boff, Holy Trinity, Perfect Community, 64.
We might critique Boff’s view as a trinitarian anthropomorphism that seems to deny God’s transcendental otherness. But Boff is taking an Eastern theological approach from a Liberationist perspective (an interesting combination) to advance his trinitarian understanding, which entails the coexistence of analogy and equivocity. Someone who uses a strictly analogical framework (classical Thomism) or a univocal logic (Western Protestantism) would have difficulty with this view. As a theologian I do not accept the (postcolonial and postoccidental) assumption that Christianity as a whole has been irreversibly constituted by Western colonial modernity. Nor do I accept unconditionally Mignolo’s claim that “decolonizing epistemology means, in the long run, liberating thinking from sacralized texts, whether religious or secular.” This would mean denying the complex, polygenetic, and polyphonic nature of Christianity, which indeed predates, postdates, and transverses Western modernity and coloniality. The fact that Western Europe has become secular and the majority world is becoming Christian should prove my case. The issue is not Christianity in general but Christianity in specific cases. From a theological perspective, the trinitarian core, as I have articulated it, can offer a theopolitical alternative to the dominant left-or-right options of Western modernity.

I have proposed that the elaboration of theology in a globalized context should be conceived of as a dynamic process of theological decolonization and glocal dialogue by means of an interlocal and intercultural effort that does not assume the universal Western center but maintains and celebrates its pluriversality and polycentricity. In addition, in an attempt to delink our theology from Western-centrism (occidentalism), I shall follow a decolonial and developmental process as suggested by Dussel. Transoccidentalism used as a theological process of decoloniality and glocal dialogue—that is, a process of delinking from a Western center and a broader engagement with conversation partners—might constitute an important contribution to the making of theology in global contexts.

35. One might also critique his apparently patriarchal references to God, but this would be unfair to his well-known gender sensitivity and his location in the Roman Catholic Church, which insists on use of the name of “Father–Son–Holy Spirit” as the only valid divine designation in the baptismal formula.


37. In the same vein, Colin Gunton claims that a sound trinitarian theology—one that emphasizes a Triune God who enters into a “free relation of creation and redemption with his world”—far from being a stepping stone for non-Christian communities, is the best interreligious contribution that Christianity can offer to the non-Christian world. For this to happen, however, the Trinity has to become the “centre of Christianity,” which has too often not been the case in the West. See Gunton, Promise of Trinitarian Theology, chap. 1.

38. This sketch is based on Dussel’s diagram of transmodernity. See Dussel, “Transmodernity and Interculturality,” 19.
Conclusion

I began this chapter with a biographical and geopolitical description as a way to embark on a decolonial process of forging the basis for a theological “communal future.” The idea is to build theology at the service of the global population rather than use the population at the service of theology.

Most of Africa, Latin America, parts of Asia, and the Middle East have been influenced by Western modernity and coloniality. Walter Mignolo rightly affirms, “In the last few decades no global-political, epistemic, and aesthetic phenomenon can be explained without the concept of coloniality.” We noticed that colonial subalterns around the world are beginning to speak loudly and fearlessly as they begin to think decolonially. “Decolonial thinking,” Mignolo reminds us, “means engaging in knowledge making and transformation at the edge of the disciplines.” I have argued that any attempt to do theology in a global context must begin by taking into account the realization that the Western ways are no longer “unique, superior, or unsurpassed.” In fact, I have acknowledged a long-standing argument in political and subaltern studies that reverses the victim role of the Americas and Africa in relation to Europe: “Without an ego conquiro there is no ego cogito” (Dussel). In other words, the Enlightenment is facilitated by the colonial projects; there would be no Enlightenment without colonialism. The assumption that the West is inescapable for the majority world when doing church ministry and theological reflection is disrupted by non-Western-initiated churches and theologians, such as the AICs, Latin American Liberationists, and popular religionists. Are Western theological institutions and theologians prepared and willing to coconstruct theology with former subaltern theologians in a decolonial way?

In this introductory chapter, transoccidentalism has been proposed to reframe the epistemic codes of human identity (self-understanding, self-representation, and multiculturality) outside of Western modernity/coloniality. This orientation, enriched by border thinking (e.g., diaspora discourses), is ready to embrace complex cultural existences (e.g., hybridity, mestizaje, Nepantla) and seeks intercultural dialogue under a new set of social and theological conditions. The following categorizations and disciplines are key to reframing theological dialogue in global contexts.

40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., 20.
42. Ibid., 42.
43. See Castro-Gómez and Mendieta, introduction to Teorías sin disciplina.
1. Decolonial studies, as articulated by Dussel, Mignolo, Mendieta, and other Latino/a scholars, represent indigenous critical theory from the majority world and offer a critical framework that can significantly benefit theological studies and in turn receive valuable contributions from a sound theological process. Decolonial studies begin with a rereading of history and a revision of its epistemological codes. In transoccidentalism, decolonizing epistemology is a point of departure that seeks to disengage or delink Christian knowledge from the epistemic captivity of Western modernity and coloniality.

2. An indigenous rationality of resistance to Western colonial experiments in Latin American history has been evident at all levels since the colonial birth of our continent. For instance, in literature we find Guamán Poma de Ayala, Garcilaso de la Vega, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Simón Bolívar, José Martí, the writers of the Boom, and so forth. Culturally speaking, popular religion in the Americas constitutes a witness of cultural resistance to colonization and occidentalization, both in the form of popular Catholicism and indigenous Pentecostalism (and Pentecostalismo criollo). Yet when we move to the field of theology, we face great limitations. Apart from the European defenders of the Amerindians, Montecinos, Las Casas, and a handful of others, theologians find themselves in no position to match the literary school of the Americas. Hence, decolonial studies build on this literary tradition and provide a wealth of postoccidental studies in critical dialogue with postcolonial studies. Our critical apparatus situates itself in the larger intracontinental context of Latin American and US Latino thought (Nuestra América).

3. Transnationality as a continental condition and glocality as a strategic organization assert that the Americas cannot continue to be defined solely on the basis of former geopolitics and national narratives. In the new transnational reality of the Americas, most people live in urban settings reconfigured by various types of migrations. Migrants bring with them their local religiosity; thus Christianity in Western settings is becoming increasingly transoccidental. Glocality is strategically conceptualized in transoccidentalism.

4. Social doctrine of the Trinity. Transoccidentalism is used in correspondence with a theory of Christian experience in which the unifying agency of the Triune God is mediated by the Holy Spirit’s intersubjective participation in the formation of Christian identity, Christian community, and transmission.

44. For more information on decolonizing theories, see Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option.”

45. Similarly, transoccidentality as a methodology is to be distinguished from classical Liberation theology (Gutiérrez, Boff, and Sobrino), the decolonial Marxist studies in Latin America, and the poststructuralist (Lacan and Derrida) and postcolonial (Spivak, Said, Bhabha) discourses in the West, though it has learned from all of these.

of the Christian faith in today’s globalized contexts. The transoccidental self discerns God as the incarnate Spirit who participates in fashioning the identity of the person in the Christian experience (imago fidei—the believing self), resocializing the person in community (imago commune—the communal self), and incorporating the person into the globalized city (imago civilis—the political self). The trinitarian alterity (functionally speaking) informs the discipleship and undergirds the theological reflection of God’s people everywhere.

If we are going to continue using the term “global theology,” it must represent a dialogical and culturally developmental discipline. It should be glocal and intercultural. Theologies in a global context should take for granted a displacement from any metacultural core in favor of a pluralistic (functionally trinitarian) one that allows for multiculturality. Multiculturality represents the mature coexistence of communities that maintain their polycentric inner cores while remaining linked transversely and perichoretically to each other and to God as their trinitarian, gravitational center.

The challenge for all of us, however, is to dare to exercise our theological imaginations. The Cuban poet and intellectual José Martí gives us a thoughtful paragraph, partially quoted above, as he was imagining the contours of a new continent, “Our America.” He writes, “All of our works, of our robust America, will inevitably carry within the imprint of a conquering civilization; but it will better [itself], it will transcend [adelantar] and astonish [sorprender] with the energy and the pulling force of a people who is distinct in essence, superior in noble ambitions, and if wounded, not dead. It’s already risen!”

We are at the dawn of a new global conversation. This is a different global theology, a theology between the “global South” and the “global South in the global North.” It is a conversation that needs to happen with the Nigerians from Africa and the Nigerians from Europe and the United States, the Nisei from Peru and the Peruvian-Nisei from Japan. On this basis, we may retell the story of Christianity from the standpoint of “our glocal America” and listen to the story of Christianity from the standpoint of “your glocal Africa”—and “your glocal Asia” and “your glocal Europe” and “your glocal Anglo-America” and so on—until a culturally developed, multicultural, pluriversal, polyphonic, and trinitarian conversation emerges as a witness of the new creation in Jesus Christ. My prayer is that Western Christianity does not end like my British grandmother, who retained only her memory and race.

46. Discussion leading to this understanding can be found in Garcia-Johnson, Mestizo/a Community of the Spirit, 62–69; Garcia-Johnson, “Eucaristía de comunión.” 47. Martí, Nuestra América, 8, my translation.