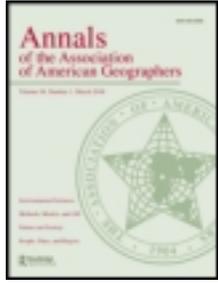


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### Beyond the "Sigh of the Oppressed Creature": A Critical Geographical Enquiry into Christianity's Contributions to the Making of a Peaceable West

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# Beyond the “Sigh of the Oppressed Creature”: A Critical Geographical Enquiry into Christianity’s Contributions to the Making of a Peaceable West

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At a time when sectarian tension is being viewed as a threat to global peace and religions are being called on to promote ecumenical dialogue and condemn militant fundamentalism, this article offers a critical geographical enquiry into the role of Christianity in the making of a peaceable West. Christianity’s historical alignment with the Western project and imbrication in histories of colonialism and imperialism raises questions about its capacity to serve as a progressive force in global affairs today. Placing Christianity under postcolonial scrutiny, this article argues that Christianity offers a variety of complex, contradictory, and competing approaches to peace building that variously defend the hegemonic ambitions of the West on the one hand and support critical practices that usurp and decenter the sovereign supremacy assumed by the West on the other. Critical geographical enquiry can offer Christianity a heightened self-understanding of the role of location, space, and place, in the framing, enactment, and impacts of its different colonial and postcolonial visions. Using the case of the Roman Catholic Church for illustration, the concepts of “milieux of translation,” referring to the social, economic, political, and cultural prisms through which theology becomes refracted into praxes, and “formations of the secular,” referring to the conditions in secular democracies that permit religions prescribed access to the public realm, are advanced as key to any understanding of the situated production and mobilization of Christianity’s strategies for peace. Future dialogue between Christianity and (institutional) geography might usefully begin with an exchange of ideas on how the wider project of historicizing, relativizing, and provincializing the West might best contribute to improved interfaith, intercultural, and intercivilizational dialogue. *Key Words: Christianity, postcolonialism, religion, Roman Catholicism, secular politics.*

当宗派之间的紧张关系被视为全球和平的威胁，当宗教被要求促进普世对话并被谴责为原教旨主义武装分子的根源，在这样一个世代，针对基督教在建立和平西方过程中的角色问题，本文提供了一个批判性的地理质询。基督教与西方世界在历史上的结盟，以及在殖民主义历史和帝国主义历史上的污点，使得人们怀疑其作为解决当今世界全球事务中的进步力量的能力。将基督教置于后殖民背景加以详查，本文认为，基督教提供了多种复杂的、矛盾的和竞争的办法来促进和平，一方面为西方的霸权野心辩护，另一方面支持了一些重要的实践行动，篡夺并修改了西方所假设的统治中心。批判性的地理质询可以为基督教提供一个增高的自我理解，即在其不同的殖民和后殖民视野的框架、背景和影响下，对地点、空间和位置角色的理解。以罗马天主教教会的情况为例，“翻译的朝向”这一概念指的是社会、经济、政治和文化的棱镜，神学通过这些被折射成为具体实践；“世俗形式”这一概念指的是世俗民主国家允许宗教规定进入公共领域的条件，这些是理解基督教所产生和推动的和平策略的关键。基督教与（机构）地理之间的未来对话不妨首先从交流想法开始，例如怎样将西方世界历史化、相对化、和当地化才能更好地有助于改善不同信仰，不同文化和不同文明之间的对话。*关键词：基督教，后殖民主义，宗教，罗马天主教，世俗政治。*

En un momento en el que la tensión sectaria se columbra como una amenaza para la paz global y cuando a las religiones se las convoca para promover el diálogo ecuménico y condenar el fundamentalismo militante, este artículo presenta una indagación alrededor del papel de la Cristiandad en la construcción de un Occidente pacífico. El alineamiento histórico de la Cristiandad con el proyecto occidental y las imbricaciones con historias de colonialismo e imperialismo, generan interrogantes sobre su capacidad para servir como una fuerza progresista en los problemas globales de la actualidad. Al colocar a la Cristiandad bajo el escrutinio poscolonial, en este artículo se arguye que la Cristiandad ofrece una variedad de enfoques complejos, contradictorios y antagónicos sobre cómo hacer la paz, que al tiempo que defiende las ambiciones hegemónicas de Occidente por un lado, apoya prácticas críticas que usurpan y cuestionan la supremacía soberana asumida por Occidente, por el otro. El estudio geográfico crítico puede ofrecer a la Cristiandad una destacada autocomprensión del papel de la localización, espacio y lugar, en la enmarcación, aplicación e impactos

de sus diferentes visiones coloniales y poscoloniales. Usando el caso de la Iglesia Católica Romana como ilustración, los conceptos de “*milieu* de traducción,” referido como los prismas sociales, económicos, políticos y culturales a través de los cuales la teología se refracta en prácticas, y de “las formaciones de lo laico,” en referencia a condiciones de democracias laicas que permiten a las religiones acceso prescrito al reino público, son mostradas como la clave para cualquier entendimiento de la producción situada y movilización de las estrategias de la Cristiandad para la paz. El diálogo futuro entre Cristiandad y geografía (institucional) podría comenzar provechosamente con un intercambio de ideas sobre cómo el más ambicioso proyecto de historiar, relativizar y provincializar el Occidente podría contribuir mucho a mejorar el diálogo interconfesional, intercultural e intercivilizacional. *Palabras clave:* Cristiandad, poscolonialismo, religión. *Catolicismo Romano, política laica.*

A certain wisdom holds that we are now living in a postsecular age when religion is reasserting itself in the public realm. One hallmark of this age is the significance attributed to religion in international relations. The principal global regions, it is purported, sit perilously on the brink of a “clash of civilizations,” at the heart of which is conflict caused, aggravated, or symbolized by tensions within and between the prophetic religions of Middle Eastern origin, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; the wisdom religions of Chinese origin, Confucianism and Daoism; the mystical religions of Indian origin, Hinduism and Buddhism; and the older ethnic or indigenous religions, which still resonate particularly in Australia and Africa. Simultaneously dubbed a source of conflict and war and a vehicle for peace and security, it is assumed that religion is enjoying a new sense of agency in geopolitics.

The focus of this article is the role of Christianity as a peace breaker and peace maker in the contemporary geopolitical theater. Placing the spotlight on Christianity serves as a necessary antidote to tendencies within the West to ascribe sole culpability for any emerging “clash of civilizations” to Islam and in particular Islamic fundamentalism. There can be no doubt that Islamic extremism has emerged as a potent threat to global peace and stability in the past decade, but to focus only on militant Islam is to occlude necessary examination of the roles and responsibilities of other religions, not least Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism. It is crucial to hold to account the leadership of all the principal religions and to scrutinize their respective contributions to the making of war and peace.

Christianity's embroilment in international relations takes many direct and indirect forms and includes prayer, lobbying, advocacy, and action around the provision of emergency relief in war zones and divided societies; ethical consumption and fair trade; corporate social responsibility within transnational

companies; humanitarian aid in areas suffering natural or human disasters; nuclear disarmament; pollution and climate change; forced migration including the movement of refugees and sex trafficking; human rights abuses; HIV and reemerging infectious disease; biotechnology and stem cell research; new technologies of fertility control and engineering; creationism and the school curriculum; faith-based schooling; the legal status of same-sex marriages; fertility control; adoption practices; dress codes in public spaces; freedom of speech and worship; and media responsibility.

Any elevation of Christianity within the public sphere requires a parallel moment of introspection, confession, and contrition. There can be no doubt that throughout its past, Christianity has made important contributions to cross-cultural and ecumenical dialogue, the deescalation of intractable and violent conflict, and directly to peace building itself. Although there is a tendency to view much of this work as essentially humanitarian and precognitive, motivated by immediate, practical, applied, and pragmatic concerns, it is Christocentric, Eurocentric, and Westerncentric to regard it as innately virtuous. It is necessary to excavate the theological, philosophical, and political bases of Christian initiatives for peace. Christianity has enjoyed a unique proximity to political power and has been implicated in a variety of inglorious histories of colonialism and imperialism. Against the backdrop of a new phase of Western colonialism, imperialism, and neocolonialism, it has a special obligation to reflect on the ways in which it might be serving both as a progressive and regressive institution in world affairs today.

On the other hand, although recognizing the potential of religion to serve as the “opium of the people,” mystifying, obfuscating, and veiling the roots of inequality, oppression, exploitation, and colonialism, Marxism has a much richer tradition of engagement with religion and recognizes its dual potential. Recently,

Marxist philosopher Slavoj Žižek and Christian theologian John Milbank (Žižek and Milbank 2009) have both mooted the possibility of bringing Hegel and Christ into a new dialogue but for different reasons and on different terms. Written in exile in the United States and published in three volumes between 1954 and 1959, in fact Bloch's (1986) *The Principle of Hope* makes an earlier and equally compelling case for reframing religion as at once a tool for the powerful and a resource for revolution. For Bloch, religion was indeed the "sigh of the oppressed creature," as Marx (1843) so famously proposed in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, but it was also a rich source of utopian hope and revolutionary consciousness. Marxism needed to be alert to regressive uses of religion to legitimate exploitation, human misery, and conflict but could also be more open to building solidarity with religious currents that promote social justice; a fairer deal for the marginal, excluded, and poor; and planetary peace.

If the sigh of the oppressed creature is to give way to the principle of hope, it is imperative that Christianity's progressive social and political currents assert themselves over regressive, conservative, and obfuscatory constituencies. The critical question then is the extent to which Christianity is formulating and evangelizing progressive social and political agendas, building and fortifying purposeful social movements in support of the world's poor and exploited, widening and enriching public debate and democratic politics, and nurturing a stronger sense of global responsibility and care. Or, to put the counterfactual, to what degree is Christianity formulating and evangelizing conservative and regressive social and political agendas, building and fortifying entrenched and elitist interests, narrowing and diminishing public debate and democratic politics, and inflaming a sense of otherness and superiority?

The case of the Roman Catholic Church is used to open a discussion on Christianity's varied, complex, contradictory, and competing ecumenical agendas. The approach taken places the Roman Catholic Church under postcolonial scrutiny. The Catholic Church is variably confronting its entanglements in colonial histories and reflecting on the possibilities of, strategies for, and merits of postcolonializing. A critical geographical enquiry into Catholicism's contributions to war and peace might productively interrogate the importance of the spaces and places from which Catholicism is postcolonializing its embroilments with other societies, cultures, and religions. The purpose of such enquiry would be to shed light on the locations from which Catholicism is acting to reassert a resurgent Christian West and the lo-

cations from which it is variously "provincializing" the West, so as to produce more or less effective strategies for peace building.

Firmly rooted as it is within contemporary social, cultural, and political geography, Kong's manifesto for "new geographies of religion" provides an opportunity to think both critically and geographically about Christianity's multiple approaches to building global peace and security (Kong 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007; see also special editions of *Social and Cultural Geography* [Holloway and Vallins 2002], *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* [Proctor 2006], and *Geopolitics* [Agnew 2006]). This article extends Kong's call for new geographies of religion and offers the concepts of "milieux of translation," referring to the social, economic, political, and cultural prisms through which theology becomes refracted into praxes, and "formations of the secular," referring to the conditions in secular democracies that permit religions prescribed access to the public realm, as key to the development of geographies of Christianity's postcolonialization.

In their search for an appropriate vista through which to apprehend the varied and complex processes of domination, control, resistance, and violence that have resulted from past and present colonial and imperial projects, geographers, too, have drawn on and contributed to the emerging field of postcolonial studies (Sidaway 2000; Blunt and McEwan 2002; Nash 2004; McEwan 2008). Motivated by a sense of contrition about the historical complicity of the discipline of geography in the colonization by European powers of territories in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, sustained attention is now being given to the locations from which postcolonial theory and postcolonial geography itself is being imagined, framed, and enacted (Minca 2003; Pollard et al. 2009). This article concludes that future dialogue between Christianity and geography might productively focus on the risks and rewards that flow from the pursuit of postcolonial envisioning of global peace and security.

### **Christianity and Colonization : Evangelical Christianity in the United States—Paradigmatic or Exceptional?**

Christianity comprises a crowded landscape with a confusion of beliefs. Originating as a Jewish sect in the first century, Christianity's growth to prominence has been fractured by at least two great schisms, the separation of Roman Catholicism from Eastern Orthodoxy in

the eleventh century, and the further splitting of Protestantism from Roman Catholicism during the sixteenth-century Reformation. Protestantism, too, exists as a complex composite of confessions, including the Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Calvinist, Baptist, Pentecostalist, Methodist, and Evangelical churches. With an estimated baptized population of 1.1 billion (Christianity has an estimated 2.2 billion adherents), Roman Catholicism stands as the single largest and most globally expansive denomination.

Given its complex historical formation it would seem inappropriate to make generalizations about Christianity's proximity to political power. Nevertheless, for some critics, beginning with the fourth-century Constantinian conversion of the Roman Empire, embodied in the Crusades of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, and most clearly demonstrated in European colonization of Africa, Asia, and Latin America from the sixteenth century, Christianity's principal churches have been embroiled, albeit in varied and complex ways, in past colonial and imperial projects.

It is certainly true that at least three sets of relationships between Christianity and empire can be identified (Weber 1930; Tawney 1938; Said 1978; Livingston 1992; Driver 2001):

- *Christianity as a precondition for the emergence of Europe*: Christianity provided the prepolitical cultural and moral foundations, conditions, and arguments and energy, efficacy, and organization for the emergence of European states, the rise of modern European capitalism, and the annexation by European states of overseas territories and resources.
- *Christianity as a source of geopolitical imaginaries that fuel colonial projects*: Through the production of geopolitical imaginaries that emphasize hierarchies of reason, virtue, and truth, Christian discourses about the "Orient" formed a critical component of "Orientalism" more generally, defined as a Western projection onto and will to govern over the Orient.
- *Strategic alliances between Christianity and colonial projects*: Early Christian missions provided knowledge, often in maps, which aided military conquests and colonial planning while Christian missionaries exploited the new opportunities opened up by colonization to evangelize.

In the combustible geopolitical climate of the moment, pivoting around a new phase of Western imperialism and a purported clashing of world civilizations, it is perhaps unsurprising that critics have claimed

that Christianity is buttressing the geopolitical strategies of Western advanced capitalist nations and that these interventions stand as the latest incarnation in Christianity's historical intermeshing with empire. Although such claims have been directed at many Christian churches, they have been focused principally on the role of evangelical Christianity on American foreign policy. Amid rhetoric pronouncing a return to the Crusades and ruminations of Christianity as an "imperial religion and religion of the imperialist," it is important to be alert to the limits of historical comparison. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile considering critical voices, as they help to establish what is at stake in any consideration of Christianity's complicity in Western geopolitics.

Developments within global capitalism from the mid-1970s have pitted the West, and in particular the United States, into a new relationship with the rest of the world. Encapsulated by the debate between Niall Ferguson and Robert Kagan at the American Enterprise Institute in 2003, and reflected in disputes surrounding the Project for a New American Century, there is disagreement within the American right as to whether the United States should be described as an empire (Durham 2006). According to Agnew (2005), at the very least emerging international relations announce a new phase in U.S. economic and political hegemony. Harvey (2003), Gregory (2004), and Smith (2005) went further to assert that these relations are predicated on new modes of colonial and imperial annexation. The trafficking, reembedding, and policing of Western neoliberal ideology in non-Western societies has played a key role in appropriating economies around the world and underwriting a new period of transnational "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2005).

Meanwhile, as early as 1980, Daniel Patrick Moynihan prophesized the rebirth of ethnicity as a force in world affairs. A spectator of the fragmentation of the Soviet Union into a mosaic of virulent ethnic nationalisms, Moynihan (1993) later likened future world disorder to "Pandaemonium," the capital of hell in Milton's seventeenth-century poem *Paradise Lost*. This focus on ethnicity was to mutate into a concern with civilizations, a derivative but distinctive concept. It was Huntington (1996) who was to globalize the specter of Pandaemonium and bring the geopolitics of civilizations into everyday public discourse, asserting that world peace and security, and in particular the Christian West, is increasingly being threatened by the clashing of civilizations. Inspired by Flaubert's

unfinished *Bouvard et Peécuchet*, written in 1880 at the height of the European colonial adventure, Said (1978, 113) noted the significance of the maxim that “Europe needed Asia to regenerate itself.” Reading Huntington, it would almost seem that the West now “needs” a clash of civilizations, and in particular an other in militant Islam, to regenerate itself today (Said 2006).

Schama (2008) provided a timely reminder that Christianity has always been central to American political life but noted that evangelical Christianity has been presented with a new historical opening. The neo-conservative lobby in the United States has played a pivotal role in shaping U.S. foreign policy and promoting fears over an impending clash of civilizations, and it is through this lobby that evangelical Christianity has exerted influence. Although often traced to a clique of “Straussians” who worked their way into high office or who were able to influence senior figures within the administration of President George W. Bush, neoconservatism in fact encompasses a wider constituency including “Evangelical Christians, Jewish Straussians, avowedly secular cold warriors who have made a fetish of the West, conservative feminists, and other family moralists” (Brown 2006, 698). Its pioneers include Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, Nathan Glazer, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and, more recently, Robert Kagan, William Kristol, Richard Perle, and Paul Wolfowitz.

Neoconservatism expresses abhorrence toward the alleged moral decadence wrought by liberalism, counterculture, and postmodernism since the 1960s. For neo-conservatives, a strong theologically informed state will be required if the United States is to arrest declining standards, dwindling respect for tradition and authority, moral liberalism, the folly of political correctness, misplaced multiculturalism, and the paralyses of relativism. The West, however, is threatened by outside “deviant” and “rogue” states, too, not least from the “axes of evil” emanating from the Muslim world. The United States has a divine mandate to “civilize” “laggards,” “tyrants,” and “dictators” by imposing liberal democracy, order, freedom, and the market, by force if necessary. Nationalism and patriotism are fanned by a rekindled interest in natural law and moral order and Christianity is foregrounded as unashamedly at the heart of public life and public policymaking.

The operation of power and authority within the U.S. polity ensures that this is a postsecular society only for religious constituencies that support the interests of U.S. nationalism and patriotism, U.S. capitalist globalization, and an offensive U.S. foreign policy. Culturally

and morally conservative, evangelical Christianity fits this profile and has therefore enjoyed unequal and privileged access to political power. Moreover, it is difficult to assert that Christian neoconservatives have worked to fortify and enrich the functioning of democracy in the United States. Evangelical Christianity has not only benefited from a secular politics open to its message, but through its absolute claims to truth and authority has helped to constitute a foreclosure of genuine agonistic debate and impaired the proper functioning of democratic politics. Brown (2006) referred to neoliberalism and neoconservatism’s combined dedemocratic tendencies as constituting an “American nightmare.”

Undoubtedly the role played by evangelical Christianity in public life in the United States in general and U.S. geopolitical strategy more specifically provides a crucial insight into the ways in which some Western polities remain radically and unequally open only to regressive Christian geopolitical agendas that are consonant with powerful colonial, imperial, and neocolonial interests. Even within its own terms of reference, however, such a mode of argumentation requires clarification, qualification, refinement, and perhaps even correction. It is inappropriate to infer that purported relationships that exist in the United States betray Christianity’s more generic and innate complicity in the West’s struggle to maintain global hegemony. It is imperative to return again to Christianity’s complex historical emergence and splintering. Two critical flaws merit particular mention.

First, many constituencies within evangelical Christianity rightly object to the simplicity of recent accounts and their lack of representativeness of the wider faith community. Within geography, Dittmer (2007a, 2007b, 2008), Gerhardt (2008a, 2008b), and Sturm (2006, 2008) have all offered more nuanced insights into the popular geopolitical imaginaries and more varied political leanings of evangelical Christians in the United States, with specific reference to the different eschatologies proffered by premillennial dispensationalism and postmillennialism. Meanwhile, Yorgason and Chen (2008) have added the geopolitical imaginaries of Mormonism to the story. The more complex relationships between evangelicalism, Protestantism, the religious right, neoliberalism, neoconservatism, the presidency of George W. Bush, and U.S. foreign policy have also provided a focus for more careful debate in religious studies (Chernus 2008), international relations (Bacevich and Prodromou 2004), American studies (Newman 2007), and political science (Brown 2006).

Second, serious theoretical and political weaknesses derive from enshrining the case of the United States as paradigmatic and drawing overly strong inferences. Understanding of the contributions of Christianity to war and peace is being skewed as a result of an excessively narrow focus on a single case. It is necessary to explore with a broader gaze the variety of ecumenical vistas that are being secreted and mobilized as Christianity's rich diversity of denominations and churches interlace with other secular societies in other parts of the world. The remainder of this article strives to heighten awareness of the more varied stories that might be told if Christianity's complex historical emergence and rich diversity of institutional formations are given wider recognition. Given its numerical dominance and global expansiveness, the Roman Catholic Church offers a valuable alternative case through which to probe Christianity's more messy social and political agendas.

### **In Search of the Principle of Hope : A Critical Geographical Enquiry into the Ecumenical Agendas Promoted by the Roman Catholic Church**

This article contends that the varieties of peace-building strategies Roman Catholicism promotes reflect the myriad ways in which Catholic theologians are seeking to "provincialize" the West so as to alter the terms of reference of ecumenical dialogue. Following Chakrabarty (2000), the concept of provincialization is used here to refer to critical practices that usurp and de-center the sovereign supremacy enjoyed by Europe and the West in the framing of world history and global politics. It is possible to discern strategies that seek to historicize and relativize (1) the European Enlightenment, (2) Christocentric ecumenicism, and (3) globalized neoliberal capitalism, respectively. The peace initiatives offered by three of the most influential Roman Catholic theologians of the moment, Joseph Ratzinger (Pope and leader of the Roman Catholic Church), Hans Küng (leading Northern Hemispheric critic of the Roman Curia and reformer within the Catholic Church), and Leonardo Boff (a leading figure within Latin American liberation theology), capture exactly the different implications that flow from each of these forms of provincialization.

Joseph Ratzinger was born in Germany in 1927, Hans Küng in Switzerland in 1928, and Leonardo Boff in

Brazil in 1938. All three were ordained priests in the Roman Catholic Church and progressed to doctorate studies: Ratzinger graduating from the University of Munich in 1953 with a thesis on Saint Augustine's doctrine of the church; Küng from the Sorbonne in Paris in 1957 with a thesis on Christian unification and the concept of justification in the Protestant theology of Karl Barth; and Boff from the University of Munich in 1970 with a thesis on the church and the liberation of the oppressed as a sign of the divine in the secular world. Throughout the 1960s all three were to secure renown as leading progressive and liberal thinkers within the Catholic Church, and each was to contribute to and to be deeply influenced by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965).

Their pathways were soon to part. Ratzinger took up a series of academic chairs at the Universities of Bonn, Munster, Tübingen, and Regensburg, before serving as Archbishop of Munich from 1977, Prefect to the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith from 1981, and finally Pope Benedict XVI from 2005 onward. Küng, meanwhile, served as Chair in Theology and Director of the Institute for Ecumenical Research at the University of Tübingen until he retired in 1996, after which he established and served as President of the Global Ethic Foundation in Tübingen. Boff returned to his native Brazil where he took up a series of chairs in theology, philosophy, and ethics and most recently served as Professor Emeritus of Ethics, Philosophy of Religion, and Ecology at the Rio de Janeiro State University.

At the heart of any critical geographical enquiry into the extent, nature, and consequences of Roman Catholicism's engagements with postcolonialism must be a concern with the locations in which different postcolonial strategies germinate and take shape and the capacity of these strategies to then access and mold the geopolitical agendas pursued by different nations. To this end, in this section I argue that the concepts of milieux of translation and formations of the secular are of value when subjecting Catholicism to postcolonial scrutiny. The idea of milieux of translation is deployed to help account for the ways in which Catholic theology produces different faith-based social and political praxes as it becomes refracted through different social, cultural, economic, and political worlds. The notion of formations of the secular is introduced to help account for the variable manifestations and impacts of Catholic peace strategies on public realms in different democratic polities.

### Milieux of Translation: Locating Catholic Provincializations of the West

Catholic theology is capable of generating such different social and political prescriptions in part because theologians inhabit different geographical worlds, the prisms through which they refract universal tenets and concretize what needs to be done on this earth. Ratzinger comes to ecumenical dialogue following a long struggle with European secularism. Küng, meanwhile, has approached ecumenical activity from a conciliatory, European, post-Reformation Catholic tradition that found its zeitgeist in the liberal, ecumenical, and cosmopolitan atmosphere sown by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Finally, Boff has crafted his ecumenical vista out of the ashes of Latin America's own history of colonization and neocolonization by European powers and later North American economic interests.

Joseph Ratzinger's ecumenical vista stems most fundamentally from his long struggle with European secularism. Ratzinger regards Europe as a critical bulwark against U.S. global imperialism and a potential "third way" between the West and other civilizations. In principle, then, he is a supporter of European integration and the deepening and widening of the European Union. Europe, however, is a continent in crisis. For Ratzinger, the roots of Europe's crises can be traced to the European age of reason itself and to the still reverberating cultural legacy of the European Enlightenment. The rise to prominence of radical or aggressive secularism has led to a godless Europe and as a consequence to the collapse of natural law and triumph of postmodernism and relativism (Boeve 2007).

For Ratzinger, Christianity's encounter with Greek culture in the fourth and fifth centuries was nothing short of divine providence. The Hellenistic Enlightenment allowed the fragments of Christian thought to be subjected to ruthless exegesis, critique, and reformulation. In turn, Christianity nourished Greek society by providing fundamental answers to questions of public significance. The European Enlightenment ushered in a period of de-Hellenization and resulted in a severing of theology from philosophy. It succeeded only in producing forms of both reason and religion that were inherently and unnecessarily self-limiting. Although claiming to be universal, this enlightenment was Eurocentric and culturally specific and needed to be historicized. A new rapprochement between faith and reason was required. "Pathologies of reason" required a "hint" from the great religions if they were

to avoid becoming destructive, whereas "pathologies of religion" could be purified through rational debate and the application of human reason (Ratzinger 2006).

Ratzinger's principal contribution to ecumenical dialogue has come from his assertion that Christianity and more specifically Roman Catholicism will be most fit for purposes for interfaith, intercivilizational, and intercultural dialogue when it bears the stamp of its Greek heritage. Harnessing the fruits of the Greek enlightenment, Christianity could first engage in rational and reasoned debate on the competing claims to truth that inhere in different religions with a view to effecting some sort of a consensus. Second, it could provide a moral foundation through which European states might broker a more progressive set of relations with other regions of the world. Christianity could not hope to produce the kingdom of Heaven on earth and contained no prescription for a perfect society, but it could furnish the prepolitical moral and ethical precepts for a just world.

In 2000, in his capacity as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Ratzinger had attracted international hostility by publishing *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church* (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith 2000). This document affirmed the absolute claim of Catholicism to be the one true religion and reasserted the belief that salvation was only possible through discipleship of Jesus Christ. It was condemned as arrogant, supremacist, and a blow for ecumenical relations. Ratzinger's response came in the form of *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions* (Ratzinger 2003). The question of the relative merits of different religions could not be divorced from their competing claims to truth. A product of the Hellenistic Enlightenment, Christianity could defend the authority of its claims in a more rational and logical way than could other religions (Salvatore 2006).

This argument was publicized in his infamous Regensburg Lecture (Ratzinger 2006) and in the furor that followed Ratzinger was accused of implying that Islam's claims to truth were weaker because it devalued human reason, was inherently irrational and drawn to violence, and demanded only blind faith. The purpose of this lecture was to assert that theology properly belonged in the university and that progress in ecumenical dialogue between Christianity and Islam required that both revalorize reason and rigorous intellectual scholarship. However, in a brief but provocative passage, Ratzinger meditated on a dialogue between the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II and an unnamed educated Persian reputed to have taken place near Ankara in 1391.

Conditioned by his Greek education, the Emperor rejects the Islamic concept that God's logic transcends human logic and therefore that God is unknowable. Lamenting Islamic belief in the idea of a holy war—conversion by compulsion—the Emperor is quoted as saying, “Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached” (Ratzinger 2006, 3).

In a public debate with Jurgen Habermas in 2004, Ratzinger argued that Christianity had a critical role in rediscovering the power of conscience and providing prepolitical moral foundations for the liberal democratic state (Habermas and Ratzinger 2006). Christianity had a duty to arrest the degeneration of morality wrought by the ascendancy of secular society and to provide an ethical bedrock for contemporary societies, but its principal task was never to search for the kingdom of Heaven on earth. Original sin had condemned “sinful” and “boastful” humans to continual lapses of error and humans could never hope to invent a perfect societal form. Ratzinger has in fact developed a forensic and extensive critique of Marxism and socialism on the one hand, and Western democracy, capitalism, and imperialism on the other (Ratzinger 2003). He has been at the forefront of deliberations on the moral and ethical problems presented by biotechnology, medicine, and science. Nevertheless he has consistently stopped short of a significant commitment to any particular social, political, or economic ideology other than an improved status quo.

In June 2009, he published his long-awaited social encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth), which will define the remit for Roman Catholic social doctrine for the foreseeable future (Benedict XVI 2009). This encyclical sought to root Christian social doctrine in natural law rather than political ideology. It addresses directly the current economic recession and crises in the global financial system and reflects on forms of economic life conducive to supporting human development in its widest and holistic sense. Although it is too rich to attempt to summarize here, the encyclical reveals the limits to which Ratzinger is prepared to move beyond the specification of a better status quo. Although warning that the instrument of the market can produce negative consequences, the thrust of the encyclical holds that markets are neither intrinsically good nor bad but are shaped by the “cultural configurations which define them and give them direction” (Benedict XVI 2009, 36). It is “man’s [sic] darkened reason” (36) that allows markets to degenerate and falter.

The injection of Christian values back into every level of capitalist society holds the key to the correction of markets so that they are directed toward the common good.

Hans Küng came to prominence as a leading advocate of reform of the Roman Curia during the Second Vatican Council. A product of post-Reformation liberal Catholicism, and greatly influenced by the liberal, ecumenical, and cosmopolitan zeitgeist sown by the “freedom generation” of the 1960s, Küng’s reputation has been built on his fierce criticism of self-admiration within the Roman Catholic Church, in particular in relation to its “medieval façade.” In *The Church*, Küng (1967) argued that the New Testament provides no doctrine of the Church’s essence that preceded its initial form. The essence of the Church, therefore, always expresses itself in historical form. Christianity was free to invent for itself a future based on (1) its origins and oriented to the present rather than its medieval past; (2) partnership and community and not patriarchal and hierarchical expressions of power; (3) ecumenism and inclusivity and not fundamentalism and exclusivity, and (4) multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism and not Eurocentric imperialism.

From this starting point, Küng has gone further than any other Christian leader in laying the foundations for ecumenical dialogue. To date, he has participated in three phases of such dialogue. His early focus was on Christian reunification and the development of “theological bases for a rapprochement between the Church of Rome and Canterbury” (Küng 1964, xxxiii; 1967). This was followed with a series of works examining the status of contemporary Christianity (Küng 1976), the existence of God (Küng 1980), and Christianity and Darwinism (Küng 2007), all of which spoke directly to a secular audience. Since 1991, however, his primary focus has been on the building of bridges between Christianity and other world religions (Küng 1991, 1997, 2002; Küng and Schmidt 1998). He has sought to provincialize Christian ecumenism with a view to entering genuinely democratic ecumenical dialogue.

Küng’s ongoing efforts to foster “a de-escalation of the clashing together of civilizations” is structured around four maxims:

- There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions.
- There will be no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions.
- There will be no dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundations of the religions.

- There will be no survival of our globe in peace and justice without a new paradigm of international relations based on global ethical standards.

For Küng, the pivotal idea of the global ethic must be approached with modesty and humility and should not be taken to refer to “a new global ideology, a new single world culture, or even an attempt at a uniform unitary religion” (Küng 1997, 64). It is not intended to “replace the Torah, the Sermon on the Mount, the Qur’an, the Bhagavadgita, the Discourses of the Buddha, or the Analects of Confucius” (Küng 1997, 64). Instead it is inspired by the idea that for all their differences, religions share a number of “fundamental precepts” and reveal a “fundamental consensus on binding values, irrevocable standards, and personal attitudes” (Küng 1991, 8).

From this promising start, arguably Küng fails to capture the full potential of his approach. Küng’s project remains the work of a Western theologian and scholar, thinking, writing, and acting for a Western audience. A reading across the fundamental ethical precepts shared by all religions inevitably gives rise to a series of abstract schemas ultimately too removed from the world to be of practical utility. For example, the *Declaration of the Parliament of the World’s Religions* pioneered by Küng reached consensus on the importance of a “Golden Rule,” “Do unto others what you would have done unto yourself,” and four common truths: “a commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life; . . . a culture of solidarity and a just economic order; . . . a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness; . . . equal rights and partnership between men and women” (Küng 1998, 18). Representatives from every religion felt able to sign the Declaration only because it steered clear of any concrete proposals.

Küng’s own efforts to ground the global ethic have been largely pragmatic and conservative. Like Ratzinger, he has failed to move beyond the specification of prepolitical moral foundations for a just society and economy, although in his search for such foundations he has cast his net far wider among a plurality of cultures and religions. Following a somewhat meandering engagement with the politics and economics of Kissinger, Roosevelt, Wilson, Bismarck, Morgenthau, Friedman, Keynes, and Polanyi, Küng’s program for social change is based on improvements within the existing system (Küng 1997). A basic and fundamental reorientation toward ethical behavior, without an accompanying transformation of the basic structures of world order or global capitalism, will alone bring the West into an improved relation with non-Western so-

cieties. Peace between nations requires a new responsible politics, avoiding both “Realpolitik without morals” and a “moralizing Idealpolitik.” Accompanying a responsible politics would be a responsible economics, which tracks a “Third Way” between “welfarism which is not affordable” and “neoliberalism which lacks social justice.”

Leonardo Boff, alongside other important theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, José Miguez Bonino, Enrique Dussel, Segunda Galilea, Ronaldo Muñoz, and Juan Luis Segundo, has been at the forefront of the development of Southern Hemispheric liberation theology. Instituted following the second Latin American Bishops Conference in 1968, and germinating first in Brazil and Peru in the early 1970s, liberation theology has grown to become something of an interdenominational global social movement, generating radical theological traditions in other parts of Latin America, India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Taiwan, and in parts of Africa and influencing Black Christian social movements in the southern states of the United States. Although there is a sense today that the failure of the Nicaraguan and Salvadorian revolutions and more generally the failure of Marxism and the ascendancy of capitalism have rendered liberation theology obsolete, this tradition nevertheless continues to bristle with debate as to how to effect meaningful social change.

Boff has published more than one hundred books laying out the foundations for liberation theology and articulating its central concerns (most pertinent for this article are Boff 1978, 1982, 1985, 1986, 1997, 2005b, 2006, 2008). For Boff, the Christianity that came to Latin America was already inculturated by the European Greco-Roman tradition and took the form of a Western, hierarchical, clergy-dominated institution. This tradition was further mediated by the process of transplantation itself, with Christian missions, settlements, and evangelizing bound up with the Iberian colonial project, military conquest, violence and genocide, and economic exploitation. Stripped of the clothing of its origins and the wounds it inflicted as part of its passage, however, the Christian message still held the key to redemption. The challenge for liberation theology was to decolonize Christianity and to effect a new synthesis between the Bible and the social and political realities of present-day Latin America.

Liberation theology conceives of structures of polity and economy that serve to produce and reproduce global inequality, oppress the poor and the marginalized, and threaten the earth’s resources and natural environments, as nothing less than the presence of evil

in the world. Capitalism in its “fundamentalist” neoliberal form, and democracy in its “compromised” Western form, are the work of the devil and inherently sinful. Jesus Christ was the world’s foremost revolutionary. If Christianity was to take the message of Christ seriously it had no option other than to challenge these structures and work for fundamental social and political transformation. The prognosis then was to rescue Christianity from the European colonial project and to recast the Christian message by bringing it into confrontation with the categories of politico-social liberation and praxes and in particular with Marxism and political ecology. Importantly, though, all social theory was useful only in so far as it helped Christianity better understand and fulfill its mission. In liberation theology, Marxism is always subordinate to and parasitical on Christianity and there is no innate or intrinsic devotion to Marx.

According to Boff, global peace and security cannot be achieved within the contemporary world order, structured as it is to serve Western capitalism and the globalization of the neoliberal agenda. Western foreign policy toward Afghanistan, Palestine, and Iraq shares clear parallels with Iberian colonization of Latin America. Addressing unequal power asymmetries between colonizer and colonized is the only secure way to avoid a clash of civilizations. In an interview in *Comunità Italiana* in November 2001 in the immediate aftermath of the 11 September attacks on the World Trade Center, Boff controversially asserted:

For me, the terrorist attack of September 11 represents the shift towards a new humanitarian and world model. The targeted buildings send a message: a new world civilization couldn't be built with the kind of dominating economy (symbolized by the World Trade Center), with the kind of death machine set up (the Pentagon), and with the kind of arrogant politics and producer of many exclusions (White House spared, because the plane fell before). For me the system and culture of capital began to collapse. They are too destructive. (Boff 2001, 15)

Advocating a provincialization of Enlightenment Europe and a progressive redeployment of the global market for the common good, Ratzinger’s ecumenical agenda remains essentially conservative and defensive of Western economic and political structures and therefore stands as a limited act of contrition. Küng’s point of departure is a confident West, virtuous in its basic economic and political structures but willing to look out to the world with humility, to confess and face up to past and present arrogance and misdeeds, to open up to gen-

uine cross-cultural dialogue and ecumenical solidarity, and to be enriched by other cultures and value systems. Arguably his approach offers more than he eventually realizes. Boff demands that the West face up to the role of capitalist economic interests and Western theories of development in the production of global inequality, friction, tension, and war and advocates a radical and alternative politics and economy. Although it is crude to sort all three into a continuum, it would seem appropriate to conclude that Boff’s postcolonial agenda is the most radical, Ratzinger’s is the most conservative, and Küng’s sits uneasily between conservatism and liberalism.

### Formations of the Secular: Securing Access to and Impact on Public Realms and Democratic Politics

To have any material significance, approaches to peace building need to concretize into praxes that access and impact public realms in different societies. Critical geographical enquiry needs to pay attention to the situated mobilization of peace strategies as well as the situated production of the colonial and postcolonial visions that undergird these strategies. It is here that geographies of secularism and geographies of the workings of democratic systems emerge as key. An important debate between Casanova (1994) and Asad (2003) helps frame reflection on the impact of the Roman Catholic Church in secular politics.

According to Casanova (1994), the much vaunted reentry of religion into the public realm does not represent a threat to secularism but instead reveals its maturation. Secularism resulted in a differentiation of fields of human endeavor with an effective separation of religion from politics, economy, science, and so on; the relegation of religion to the private and personal spheres; and the declining significance of religious beliefs, practices, and institutions. This removal of religion from the public sphere was to the detriment of agonic debate and resulted in an inferior species of secularism. For Casanova, religions inject ethical values into secular societies, which they themselves rarely prioritize, such as solidarity, peace, and human dignity. The dawning of the postsecular age announces a new moment when religion, now disciplined and contained by the rules of democratic debate, reenters public life productively, as one voice among many, making a reasoned case, like all other interest groups, for particular public policy choices.

Asad (2003), in contrast, refused to regard the reassertion of religion in the public sphere as, at least

in any simple way, an enrichment, advancement, and reinvigoration of the secular project, offering instead an anthropology of secularism that reveals its differential capacities to absorb different religions and denominations into the public realm. The categories secular and religion were invented at a pivotal moment in Europe's history. Secularism itself then emerged as a historically distinctive and sociopolitical process that sought to roll back religious and traditional authority only to replace it with new sources of power, politics, ethics, and modes of governance. Asad advanced the concept of "formations of the secular" to historicize secularism (see also Withers 2007 "placing" of the European Enlightenment), to reveal the significance of its European heritage, and to capture the manner in which its prevailing political, economic, social, and cultural institutions act to sanction only particular and preferred incursions of religion into public life.

Echoing Asad's concerns, Swyngedouw (2008) has recently sought to draw the attention of geographers to the works of Jacques Rancière, Slavoj Žižek, and Chantal Mouffe, concerning the status of our "postpolitical" moment. A postpolitical democratic formation arises when the manufacturing of consent comes to take precedence over genuine agonistic debate, concepts of democratic participation become diluted to the point of ineptitude, entry to the public sphere is effectively foreclosed, and the public realm comes to serve as a source of propaganda for capital's trajectories. Whereas the postsecular thesis posits a widening of the public sphere, concomitant with the elevated role played by religious leaders in public debate, the postpolitical thesis heightens awareness of the potentially illusionary character of such widening and draws attention to the heavily policed public sphere in which religions are currently struggling to articulate particular agendas.

Ratzinger, Küng, and Boff have accessed and impacted the public realm in different ways. First and foremost these differences reflect their differential access to authority within the Catholic Church itself. The Roman Curia (apparatus of governance) and Roman Magisterium (teaching office) provide a centralized, hierarchical, and absolute system of governance for the entire Church, vetting ecumenical agendas emerging from any sectional interest or particular national, regional, or local church to ensure alignment with official Roman doctrine. There is no doubt that by holding the Petrine office, Ratzinger has been able to employ the resources of the Vatican to ensure a high profile for his vision of how to secure global peace and security. His approach to ecumenism has become *de facto* the

official position of the Roman Catholic Church. Even before his ascension to the papacy, in his prior role as Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Ratzinger was to censor, silence, and impose sanctions on both Küng and Boff. Although ostracization within the Church has undoubtedly opened up new audiences for Küng and Boff by default, their marginalization has inhibited their influence.

At the root of Küng's ecumenical agenda is a belief that freedom within the Church is a prerequisite for the pursuit of freedom from social oppression. Only by looking inward can Catholicism look outward with confidence. It needs first to transcend its self-congratulatory pretension toward superiority and absolutist primacy before it can become an effective partner in dialogue. On this basis he has challenged the Catholic Church to rethink its approach to interfaith marriage, the role of women in the church, contraception, clerical celibacy, church governance, papal infallibility, and Marian piety. Throughout, however, he has chosen to remain a Catholic:

Despite my years of immense difficulty with Rome I remained true to the conviction that the Petrine office, oriented on the constitution of the New Testament, and the great Catholic tradition of the first millennium, with a moral and pastoral rather than formal and juristic authority, can still be an opportunity for Christianity as a whole. In this respect I am certainly perhaps the most radical Catholic critic of medieval juristic primacy of the rule by the pope, but paradoxically at the same time possibly one of the most effective Catholic advocates for a pastoral primacy in the service of Christian ecumenism. (Küng 2008, 428)

Following a protracted conflict with Rome over the speed with which the Roman Curia and Roman Magisterium were "modernizing," Küng's interrogation of the doctrine of papal infallibility in 1970 finally provoked Vatican reprisal, leading eventually in 1980 to the withdrawal of his right to instruct in the Catholic faith. Küng was charged with no longer believing in the central doctrines of the Catholic faith and therefore was assumed to be unable and unfit to communicate these doctrines effectively. This marginalization was profoundly debilitating for Küng and arguably he has yet to recover from it on a personal and political level. As a consequence, Küng's contribution has been channeled outside of the Church in his role as a public intellectual and president of an influential research institute.

In 1996 Count K. K. von der Groeben provided an endowment to establish the Global Ethic Foundation

in Tübingen, Germany, and installed Küng as president. The foundation has since expanded offices into Hungary, Colombia, Ireland, Switzerland, and France. In search of a global ethic, the Foundation has been active on three particular fronts. First, Küng has sought to deepen public understanding of world religions through the production of a seven-part television series, publication of major manuscripts on each of the main religions, and the organization of an exhibition of world religions that has toured the major cities of the world. Second, Küng has engaged world leaders in his project by hosting an annual invited lecture, given to date by Tony Blair, Mary Robinson, Kofi Annan, Horst Köhler, Shirin Ebadi, Jacques Rogge, Helmut Schmidt, and Desmond Tutu. Finally, Küng has played a central role in drafting two significant cross-faith declarations: the *Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions* in Chicago in 1993 and the *Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities* in 1997 (Küng 1998).

Following his elevation to the papacy, Ratzinger met Küng at Castel Gandolfo in Lazio in September 2005. There was to be no reconciliation (Küng 2008). Ratzinger himself has praised the global ethic project as well spirited but has argued that it can only work at a level of abstraction that means little to those experiencing actual conflict, war, and genocide (Habermas and Ratzinger 2006). Küng, meanwhile, is vehement that any conversation with Islam or Judaism predicated on Hellenistic reasoning holds out little promise for a genuine ecumenical dialogue:

Only one enlightenment is really acceptable to him, the classical Greek enlightenment. He regards the clothing in Greek dress of a message which comes from the semitic sphere as a divine dispensation of such a kind that no other dress is either necessary or legitimate. The secular enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is unacceptable to him; Hellenism is the maxim of all that is authentically Christian. . . . Anyone who wants to carry on a conversation with Jews or Muslims on the bases of the traditional Hellenistic doctrine of Trinity and incarnation will begin a pseudo dialogue that will very soon come to an end. (Küng 2008, 133, 305)

Four years into Ratzinger's papacy, Küng remained pessimistic about his vision for the Catholic Church and the contributions it might make to world peace. In January 2009 in the German newspaper *Süddeutsche*, and based on a line of reasoning whose credibility time alone will determine, Küng pondered over the prospects for the Catholic Church were Barack Obama to become Pope:

In the Catholic Church the mood is oppressive, the pile-up of reforms paralysing. Ratzinger has confirmed all the fears which arose when he was elected pope. The pope favours people who still reject the freedom of religion affirmed by Vatican II, dialogue with other churches, reconciliation with Judaism, a high esteem for Islam and the other world religions and the reform of the liturgy. Whereas President Obama, with the support of the whole world, is looking forwards and is open to people and to the future, this Pope is orientating himself above all backwards, inspired by the ideal of the medieval church, sceptical about the Reformation, ambiguous about modern rights of freedom. Whereas President Obama is concerned for new cooperation with partners and allies Pope Benedict XVI is trapped in thinking in terms of friend and foe. He snubs fellow Christians in the Protestant churches by refusing to recognize these communities as churches. The dialogue with Muslims has not got beyond a lip confession of "dialogue." Relations with Judaism must be said to have been deeply damaged. (Küng 2009, 4)

In his role as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Ratzinger (1984) published an *Instruction on Liberation Theology* warning Roman Catholics about the "errors" in liberation theology. Shaped by Catholic warring with Marxist ideology, in particular its privileging of materialism over spiritualism in the unfolding of history, the central importance of the Solidarity movement in Poland to the papacy of his predecessor John Paul II, and his own experiences of Soviet Communism in East Germany, Ratzinger ascribed to liberation theology the status of heresy:

The very radicality of Liberation Theology means that its seriousness is often underestimated. Since it cannot fit into any of the accepted categories of heresy its fundamental concerns cannot be detected by the existing range of standard questions. The Sermon on the Mount is indeed God taking sides with the poor. But to interpret the "poor" in the sense of the Marxist dialectic of history and "taking sides" with them in the sense of class struggle is a wanton attempt to portray as identical things which are contrary. (Ratzinger 1984, 4)

He was to use this *Instruction* to censor a number of Latin American bishops and theologians. Leonardo Boff was censored for nine months in 1985 following publication of his Marxist-inspired *Church, Charism, and Power* and when the Roman Magisterium attempted to do so again in 1992 to prevent his participation in the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, he opted to leave the priesthood. Ostracized by Rome, Boff's political theology found an audience among grassroots activists

in marginal communities in Brazil and his work in defense of the poor has earned international recognition.

Synchronizing global political and economic politics with local and community activism, for Boff, “Comunidades de Base” or “Base Christian Communities” have offered a fruitful way forward for Christian social praxes. There are more than one hundred thousand of these grassroots organizations in Brazil alone. The Comunidades de Base have served not only as sites for the production of new forms of liturgy, worship, prayer, and lay involvement in ministry but also as breeding grounds for community leaders, activists, and agitators; trade union members and organizers; and representatives of socialist political parties. From within these sites a contextual theology capable of challenging capitalist exploitation and the hegemony of transnational capital and restoring human dignity has been produced, circulated, and popularized.

For Boff the Roman Catholic Church will not serve as a partner for peace in any meaningful sense for as long as Ratzinger remains Pope:

If the attitude of confrontation with modernity and post-modernity prevails, I foresee disastrous consequences for the future of the Church. Traditionalist as he is, Benedict XVI must know that this strategy profoundly wears down the Church. In the past, he deprived the liberation movements of the oppressed the cooperation of Christians who could have offered Christian values to the emerging social relations, leaving them instead alienated and immature. A Church that returns to models of the past becomes immobile, like a fossil. Ratzinger says that only the Catholic Church is the Church of Christ and that the others are not Churches, but only have ecclesial elements. It is also to say to other religions that they have valid elements, but that their followers run a grave risk of perdition because they are outside the Catholic Church, the only true religion. This is not to dialogue but to insult. Cordiality is used to facilitate conversion. That is deceitful and undignified. (Boff 2005a, 1)

The profile, resources, and politics of the Petrine Office have ensured that Ratzinger’s approach to peace building has reached a global audience and infiltrated public debate in many societies with some effect. Although no longer the church of the establishment in many European states where it formerly dominated, the Catholic Church exerts both formal and informal influence, especially in polities where there remains a significant Catholic electoral block. Nevertheless, as evidenced in the extraordinary breadth of public commentary that surrounded his overseas visits to Germany

in 2006; Brazil in 2007; France, the United States, and Australia in 2008; and Cameroon, Angola, and the Middle East in 2009, Ratzinger has been unable to access the secular stage without exciting controversy and resistance. This is in spite of the fact that the Church has used its tightly regulated and centralized command and control structure to silence dissenting voices and to promote socially conservative political agendas.

Defense of the Church’s “citizenship” rights has been a major theme of Ratzinger’s papacy. The Roman Curia repeatedly laments that Ratzinger has been the victim of negative media coverage and has been unduly and unfairly caricatured and ridiculed. For Ratzinger media hostility is evidence of the persistence of aggressive secularism and the difficulties some secular constituencies have with granting Christianity the right to participate in democratic debate. It is not surprising then that at the heart of *Caritas in veritate* is a plea for a fairer hearing for Christianity:

The Christian religion and other religions can offer their contribution to development only if God has a place in the public realm, specifically in regard to its cultural, social, economic, and particularly its political dimensions. The Church’s social doctrine came into being in order to claim “citizenship status” for the Christian religion. Denying the right to profess one’s religion in public and the right to bring the truths of faith to bear on public life has negative consequences for true development. The exclusion of religion from the public square—hinders an encounter between persons and their collaboration for the progress of humanity. Public life is sapped of its motivation and politics takes on a domineering and aggressive character. (Benedict XVI 2009, 30)

Catholicism’s struggles to be taken seriously in the public square in spite of its ruthless “management” of dissenting liberal and socialist wings raises important questions about the wider contributions of Christianity to democratic formations beyond the United States. Two interpretations present themselves. First, it might be that secularism has become so entrenched even in those Western democracies that aspire to a postpolitical foreclosure of agonistic debate in favor of deepening and extending neoliberal ideologies that political systems do not see value in courting Catholicism even when it might be politically useful to their cause. The marginalization and silencing of the Catholic Church by aggressive secularism raises the possibility that beyond the United States, conservative Christianity might be of limited interest to capitalist elites with vested interests in globalizing neoliberalism and consolidating

Western power. In our postpolitical moment, rationalities that originate in the secular field might be capable of manufacturing consent alone, without the need for religion to serve as an additional source of support.

An alternative reading posits that secularism is working effectively to facilitate an appropriate and healthy incorporation of Catholicism back into the public sphere. Asad (2003) is correct to foreground the varying access to the public realm different religions and branches of religion actually secure in different places and at different times. In contexts when Roman Catholicism struggles to justify and promote even its more conservative social and political agendas, however, Casanova's (1994) assertion that religion has the potential to make valuable contributions to the enhancement of agonistic debate in the public democratic sphere becomes more convincing. At its best, secularism permits Roman Catholicism only an equal opportunity to state its case. Critical geographical enquiry into Christianity's contributions to war and peace needs to map both the unequal and privileged access to secular politics some Christian churches enjoy in some societies and the progressive and regressive outcomes that derive from the struggles other Christian churches encounter when trying to secure access to the public realm in other secular democracies.

## Conclusion

As growing intolerance between religions has come to be viewed as a significant threat to world peace and security, Christianity has been called on to exercise its influence responsibly and to promote greater tolerance, understanding, and mutual respect. The embroilment of certain branches of evangelical Christianity in the rise of a new phase of U.S. imperialism has been interpreted as confirmation that Christianity is structurally imbricated in the Western project and its struggle to maintain global hegemony and as such is incapable of brokering peace between Western and non-Western societies. This article has challenged the paradigmatic status ascribed to this case study and has called for a heightened awareness of Christianity's complex historical emergence and conflictual brew of churches and faith communities.

With specific reference to Christianity's single largest denomination, the Roman Catholic Church, this article advances the more careful claim that although

Christianity can indeed perform as a mystifying apparatus, serving the interests of colonial and imperial projects, it can also work as a galvanizing force for progressive social, cultural, economic, and political agendas. On this basis it has placed Roman Catholicism under postcolonial scrutiny and set out an agenda for a critical geographical enquiry into Catholicism's role in war and peace. The concepts of *milieux* of translation and formations of the secular have been used to denote the significance of both the situated production of Christianity's colonial and postcolonial visions and the situated capacities of these visions to be brought to the public square and to impact meaningfully on democratic polities. Figure 1 provides a summary of the most important conclusions.

Concerned with the future of critical human geography and the search for a foundational ethics for a meaningful politics, some geographers have offered Christianity itself as a credible source of nourishment and encouragement. Pacione (1999, 118), for example, asserted that Christianity is capable of providing a "moral framework for a more relevant human geography," and Cloke (2002, 587) offered Christianity as a resource for "living ethically and acting politically in human geography." This article demonstrates that there is indeed considerable merit in reconsidering (institutional) geography's relationship with Christianity and affirms the potential value of Christian geographies. But it would seem unfortunate if the discipline of geography, itself in the throes of reflection on its colonial origins, were to allow its moral and ethical compass to be uncritically defined by a Christianity that is arguably only now awakening to its historical emergence in and through empire.

Future dialogue between Christianity and geography might usefully begin with an exchange of ideas on how best to progress Chakrabarty's (2000) wider project of historicizing, relativizing, and provincializing Europe and the West. Critical human geography, and in particular postcolonial geography, must simultaneously instruct as well as be instructed by Christianity. Christianity can furnish geography with a range of possible strategies for provincializing the West and insights into the challenges of pursuing these strategies materially in the *realpolitik* of contemporary international relations. Geography, meanwhile, offers Christianity a heightened self-understanding of the role of location, space, and place, in the framing, enactment, and success of different postcolonial visions. Only when it is put in its proper place will it be possible to deliberate

CHRISTIAN DENOMINATION/BRANCH	MILIEUX OF TRANSLATION	REIFICATION/PROVINCIALIZATION OF THE WEST	APPROACHES TO PEACE BUILDING	FORMATIONS OF THE SECULAR: IMPACTING THE PUBLIC REALM
<b>U.S. FUNDAMENTALIST EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY</b>	<i>Alleged moral degeneration of American society and cities wrought by the "blight" of liberalism, multiculturalism, moral and ethical relativism, and the rise of an American underclass.</i>	<i>Reassertion of the virtues of the West and concern to foster a resurgent West.</i>	<i>Peace through territorial sequestration: U.S. patriotism and nationalism foregrounds a belief that the U.S. has a God given duty to protect and spread its own (Christian) ways of life by policing and imposing order on the world stage and "civilizing" rogue states.</i>	<i>Accesses the public realm in partnership with the Neoconservative movement, and fundamentally shapes U.S. foreign policy under the Presidency of George Bush.</i>
<b>ROMAN CATHOLICISM</b>				
<b>Joseph Ratzinger</b>	<i>The cultural consequences of the European Enlightenment and in particular the broadening and deepening of secularism within western societies, especially the "aggressive secularism" promoted by some European states.</i>	<i>Provincialization of the European Enlightenment.</i>	<i>Peace through a Hellenisation of the European Enlightenment: Fortifying the pre political moral and ethical foundations of the liberal and democratic state by bringing reason and religion into a new relationship.</i>	<i>De facto the official social and political agenda promoted by the Roman Catholic Church. But a vociferous and at times hostile reaction among some secular and religious constituencies have limited its impact and weakened its status.</i>
<b>Hans Küng</b>	<i>European Post-Reformation conciliatory Catholicism, moulded by the liberal zeitgeist originating in the 1960s and maturing into civil and equal rights, feminist, postcolonial, and multicultural social movements today.</i>	<i>Provincialization of Catholic-centric and Christo-centric ecumenism.</i>	<i>Peace through the search for a global ethic: Cross cultural and ecumenical dialogue on the bases of genuine equality in search of a minimum and binding consensus on basic values and ethics which then might inform global politics and capitalism.</i>	<i>Welcomed cautiously by the Roman Curia but earlier censoring and marginalization of Küng mitigates against official support and widespread dissemination within the Church. Accesses the public realm as an influential commentator of a leading think tank and by dint of Küng's status as a leading critic of Catholicism. Increasingly appears in public debate because of growing public interest in cross cultural and ecumenical dialogue with the Muslim world.</i>
<b>Leonardo Boff</b>	<i>Postcolonial and neocolonial ruminations on the injustices wrought by global capitalism, especially "Fundamentalist" neoliberalism on the continent of Latin America today.</i>	<i>Provincialization of claims of the universality of globalised neoliberal capitalism.</i>	<i>Peace through radical social and political transformations of capitalism: Christianity to inform a new global economy, politics, and society.</i>	<i>Rejected by the Roman Curia because of its alignment with Marxism and ostracized as a heresy. The censoring and marginalization of Boff mitigates against dissemination of his views within the Church. Accesses the public realm as an agenda for action for grass roots organizations in marginalized communities, trade union movements, and people's political parties, especially in Latin America. Secures a wider reputation for its progressive humanitarianism.</i>

Figure 1. The situated production of Christianity's colonial and postcolonial agendas.

on the times and spaces in which it may be productive to harness Christianity in the service of critical geographical enquiry.

Finally, although Christianity has provided the focus for this article, it is clear that other religions, in particular Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism, require similar critical scrutiny. It is here, however, that more complex theoretical challenges might present themselves. Given the relationship both have with the West, it could be argued that the dialogue (institutional) geography is capable of having with Christianity is not open to easy replication. Of course, it is ethnocentric to assume that the majority of Anglo-American geographers are Western or Christian, even in the loos-

est senses of these signifiers, but it remains pertinent to ask with what authority and on what bases Anglo-American critical human geography might feel entitled to bring Islam, Judaism, Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and so on to account. If critical geographical enquiry is to advance interfaith, intercultural, and intercivilizational dialogue, it will need to think seriously about the colonizing tendencies of postcolonial geography itself. It is imperative that Anglo-American geographers are afforded the right to speak critically about other religions but the terms of reference of such critical enquiry and the analytical frameworks that might be best suited to the task require prior reflection.

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