

WESTERN TRANSNATIONAL TEACHING: THEOLOGICAL FREEDOM OR IMPERIALISM?

Prof. Dwayne BALDWIN, PhD(c)

Academic Dean and Professor of Church History and Bibliology,

Baptist Theological School, Novi Sad, Serbia;

PhD(c) “Aurel Vlaicu” University of Arad, Romania, Interdisciplinary Doctoral School, Domain: Theology. Doctoral program: Evangelical Theology.

Baldwin.DwayneA@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: Western Transnational Teaching: Theological Freedom or Imperialism?

Cross-cultural theological education is practiced in many parts of the non-western world. Often teachers are recruited from the west to travel to seminaries, conferences, and Bible schools in the non-western world due to the abundance of theological teachers and resources in the west. This has led some to question the appropriateness of the custom, citing the possible confusion and possible harm resulting from the differences in culture between the educator and host country. The accusation is that there are many problems with transnational teaching, the primary one being the idea of imperialism which is described as any form of west to non-west hegemony. Complaining that the west cannot understand the problems of the non-west, those opposed to cross-cultural teaching complain that problems that are not western should not be addressed by non-western teachers. Typically, there is no disagreement with the reverse practice of non-western teachers teaching in the west, as it is seen as not constituting an imperialistic atmosphere. Truly, imperialistic behaviors and/or imperialistic attitudes can be found in all forms of cross-cultural ministry, including missions, social work, and church planting. Imperialism is also not strictly a western problem. This essay describes the elements of imperialism with a particular focus on theological education and seeks to offer a balance of true imperialism with cautions about over-generalization leading to a net harmful effect in education.

Keywords: *Imperialism, theological, education, transnational, cultural, western.*

Introduction

Cross-cultural or transnational theological education is a practice which has gained popularity in recent years, as it enables educators to teach at multitudes of locations where resources may be scarce. It allows educators to utilize their skills, and gives the host schools a wealth of potential adjunct professors, increasing the quality of education at the school. The practice has also been considered very helpful by those receiving it because it is a biblical demonstration of the community of faith participating in the edification of other believers. In this way, it can be considered a benevolent act of sharing amongst global believers. Due to the abundance of resources in the English-speaking west, much of this practice has been in the direction of western culture to non-western cultures. Because of this, distinct from all other forms of Christian benevolence, the practice of transnational or cross-cultural education has been charged with actually doing harm and detractors advocate that the system should be mitigated or even abandoned. The limitations advocated against west to non-west cross-cultural education range from restructuring non-western schools which have western faculty or material, to a complete ban on any form of westerners teaching non-westerners. In western seminaries, missiology courses are frequently led by professors who are opposed to even the sending of missionaries to foreign countries, as most missionaries take part in at least some degree of theological education.¹ The reason for opposition of cross-cultural theological education is usually attributed to a fear of what is called cultural imperialism, specifically western imperialism. Those in favor of the practice of transnational teaching advocate on the grounds of making theological education open and accessible to everyone. To be clear, it must be noted that there are differences between missiological imperialism that is more generalized, and imperialism which is found in theological education.²

1 Paul Matheny, *Contextual Theology* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co, 2012), 3.

2 For a discussion of the aspects of missiological imperialism, see Bell, Bradley. 2022. "Missionary, Choose the Posture of a Learner". Blog. *The Upstream Collective*. <https://www.theupstreamcollective.org/post/missionary-choose-the-posture-of-a-learner?fbclid=IwAR2145z-jiuzP9VVV8fEjHiPg0z9-Ef5lbqSFsFUoRjpa5-U6a4WDT7Kp39U>.

Theological Imperialism Delineated

Imperialism is a broad and often nebulous term. While there is much discussion about it, few know how the concept has come to be used in education.³ It is relevant to understand this, for the idea is often thought of in such a nefarious manner in theological education that it has been deemed apostasy.⁴ Therefore, it is important to have clarity about the notion so as to avoid any potential danger. An indictment of imperialism in theological education can be somewhat subjective and is often applied liberally to a wide range of teaching practices and methodologies. This is primarily because the origin of the term is not in teaching but in politics, where it historically relates to a “practice, theory, or attitude of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory.”⁵ The word “ruling” is key in the consideration of imperialism, as imperialists have classically been those who owned local lands, who managed the people of these lands, and who had the right to determine the future of the lands.⁶ Sometimes equated with colonialism, imperialism differs in that there is usually no geographically occupying controlling group as in colonialism. However, both imperialism and colonialism relate to power and weakness between cultures.

A more contemporary manifestation of the idea, especially as it relates to the west, arose from the 1960’s political action in the liberation of Africa when western interests expanded beyond simply liberating into actually controlling.⁷ The controlling nature of imperialism in western globalization and extension carried forward as an element within western missions into non-western areas. Even as colonialization waned and Christian missions advanced during the mid-1900’s, political imperialism likewise shifted to reflect a theological imperialism that evinced its control not only in leadership of newly planted non-western churches, but even the appearance and expression of those churches. Confusion among nationals often resulted, as they could not distinguish between the Christianity being

3 Patrick Wolfe, “History and Imperialism: A Century of Theory, from Marx to Postcolonialism,” *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 2 (1997): 388.

4 Percy T. Magan, *Imperialism Versus the Bible: The Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence; Or, the Peril of the Republic of the United States* (United States: National Co-operative Lib. Association, 1899), 107.

5 Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 2012), 9.

6 Said, xiii.

7 BBC Radio, “Cultural Imperialism,” Broadcast programme, 4: 2021, Timestamp 1:02.

advocated by western countries and the technological, social, and economic accoutrements associated with those countries.⁸ At that time this did not cause great concern for missions, for an ancient ideology still existed which asserted that certain peoples required domination, and this included forms of knowledge affiliated with that domination.⁹ The church's version of this was that westerners had the Word of God whereas the mission field did not, therefore *all* the aspects and adornments of a western religious society which had been soaked in Christianity would naturally be better for the receiving peoples. As a result of this, to this day gospel-receiving cultures commingle the *trappings* of western culture with the *theology* necessary to be a part of the Christian church.

To many non-western or even non-Christian minds, Christianity equals western-like flashy services, massive buildings, and rich televangelists. This could be viewed more properly as cultural imperialism. It involves errors in relating cross-culturally in such ways as cultural morays, rules of society, and interpersonal relationships. Misunderstandings and perceived incongruities in manners of speech, hierarchical structures in society, or patterns in male/female relationships can lead to frustrations with both missionary and national.¹⁰ Even attitudes which may be perceived as those of superiority or authoritarianism may be imperialistic in missions but can have a different connotation when encountered in theological education.

Theological imperialism shares an epistemology with cultural imperialism. Historically, they both seem to lend themselves to the perception that all cultures are on a development continuum, with some cultures being more advanced than others. The west, with its resources and technological developments, is often perceived by a few to be toward the more advanced end of that continuum. Geopolitical colonialism, primarily from England, seemed to establish the theory that success on the world power front meant that power and technology equals a better culture. For Christianity and missions, the equivalent to political colonialization was a dis-

8 Matheny, 13.

9 Said, 9.

10 Thomas Oduro, Hennie Pretorius, Stan Nussbaum & Bryan Born, *Mission in an African Way: A Practical Introduction to African Instituted Churches and their Sense of Mission* (Wellington: Christian Literature Fund / Bible Media, 2008). 37, 39. See also David Harley, *Preparing to Serve: Training for Cross-cultural Mission* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1995), 7.

missal not only of paganism but also of the attached paganistic culture itself. "There was no need," the thought was, "to study old cultures or take them seriously. They were on the way out."¹¹ It was simply easier to label other cultures as being on the primitive and uncivilized end of the cultural continuum, and the west as doing them a favor by changing the culture to a more "advanced" western one.¹² The thinking was that the more civilized a culture was, the godlier it was.

Behavioral dynamics of culture were fused with the religion of that culture, and both were to be dispensed. Due to this reasoning, much of what has been designated to be imperialism has been an intentional desire from westerners to expunge non-western cultures and behaviors. The word imperialism itself connotes power, and the power of imperialism can be executed directly and authoritatively enforced or done indirectly.¹³ When directly authoritative, classic imperialism has a strong element of coercion and exploitation, that is, a group of people being controlled.

In theological education, the idea of imperialism came to fruition among liberation theologians.¹⁴ The liberation theology of Gutiérrez and other Latin American theologians argued that theology is only a by-product of local culture, and therefore anyone speaking into the needs of the culture as an outsider would be speaking ignorantly and insensitively, from a privileged position of not having to live in the problems of the culture.¹⁵ Within these parameters, anyone teaching theology cross-culturally could

11 Paul Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11, no. 3 (July 1987): 104.

12 Hiebert, Contextualization, 105.

13 Kimberly Amadeo, "What Is Imperialism?" *The Balance*, accessed January 10, 2022, <https://www.thebalance.com/imperialism-definition-and-impacts-on-us-history-4773797>.

14 Liberation theology bases its name on the belief that salvation consists of liberation from the domination exercised by capitalist countries such as the U.S., as well as those who control the national power structure in country. Imperialism, through the writings of liberation theologians, was described as the attempt of "rich" countries to speak into the lives of "poor" countries because they consider themselves "central to the history of mankind." Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1973), 27, 88. It is not difficult to see the connection between this idea of liberation and imperialism and the idea that any sense of power of west over non-west being imperialistic, even if that power is simply knowledge.

15 Gutiérrez, 12-13, 27.

automatically be deemed imperialistic.¹⁶ This correction has been noted in the literature, and non-western imperialism within missions as well as education has been acknowledged.¹⁷ With strong ties to contextualization, current notions of imperialism in theological education are founded upon the premise that no theological expression or hermeneutic can exist that is a best expression for all people, therefore the truths of Christianity must be in accordance with the cultural inheritance of the receiver, or it is otherwise oppressive and even tyrannical.¹⁸ To break free from the allegation of imperialism, the combined literature suggests that any form of authority of a more resourced culture over a less resourced one, even in the situation of a teacher over a student, must be seen as potentially subjugating and irradiated. The difficulty for transnational theological education is that wherever there is a teacher and student there will *always* be a dominant / subordinate role assumed, at least in the sense that one is teaching, and one is being taught. The apprehension about imperialism is so deep that some western professors decline invitations to teach at cross-cultural schools entirely, preferring to recommend teachers from countries closer to the requesting country.¹⁹ The background for this action is frequently contextual. The reasoning is that local theologies must be left alone to develop, even if the resultant theologies are considered unbiblical by western theologians, as theology is always founded first on culture.²⁰

16 Bruce Ware, "Cultural Contextualization; Theological Systems" (lecture, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 2020), <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/cultural-contextualization-theological-systems/systematic-theology-i>.

17 Thorsten Prill, "Cross-Cultural Stumbling Blocks on the Mission Field – Yesterday and Today," *Haddington House Journal* 20 (2018): 171.

18 Darrell Cosden and Donald Fairbairn, "Contextual Theological Education Among Post-Soviet Protestants," *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 18, no. 2 (April 2001): 127.

19 This observation is based not only on the general conclusion on proponents of anti-imperialism but has been experienced at the school in which this author serves. Professors have been invited to teach on a particular subject in which they are expert but have responded with a request to use a teacher of their choice in a country with somewhat similar cultural background in the mind of the teacher. The problem is that this, too, is cross cultural teaching.

20 Cosden, 127.

Imperialism as a Threat in Theological Education

Imperialism in cross-cultural ministry is a necessary consideration in the theological education, as many majority world countries depend on the theological west for its finances and curriculum in maintaining their schools and ministries.²¹ If transnational education has nefarious or detrimental elements, they should be legitimately prohibited. When imperialistic actions manifest themselves in Christianity, particularly in transnational education, there can be two consequences. First, it can further the idea that Christianity is a western religion if there is pressure for nationals to adapt western behavior as integral parts of theological education. Second, when imperialism is concerned with surface behavior instead of personal soul change, unbiblical teaching and doctrine may continue hidden and result in syncretism of western Christian with local erroneous spirituality. In such a situation, private unbiblical weddings, superstitious amulets, and witch doctors may never cease but instead become incorporated tacitly into the imported western theology.²² The existence of so many syncretistic religions in Africa and South America are representative of this.²³ There are some principal habits in which imperialistic behavior is manifested in theological education, including abusive power which makes unbiblical demands, disregard for the local culture, and nominal Christianity embodied only in outward western forms.

The Abuse of Power

The key to imperialism in any setting is the element of power. In theological education this power often comes through the vehicle of finances from western sponsors. A church or mission organization donating funds for foreign missions or schools naturally expects that there will be some level of accountability that truth is being taught and the funds are being used in the most God-honoring way. This desire for accountability is not without

21 Melchizedek Ponniah, "The Concept of Contextualization and Its Implications for the Seventh-Day Adventist Theological Education in India" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1986), 33.

22 Hiebert, *Contextualization*, 106.

23 Elizabeth Ezenweke and Ikechukwu Kanu, "Perspectives of Syncretism and Its Modern Trend: A Case of Christian and African Traditions," *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities* 13, no. 2 (2013): 78, doi:10.4314/ujah.v13i2.4.

merit. Too often funds are given for ministries and missions that are absconded, misused, or deceptive in some way. An individual or organization should be reticent to give money to any endeavor without considering the possibility that those funds could be used to support unsound or even heretical teaching. Well-intentioned, non-western nationals welcome this type of accountability when they receive western funds. They do not want to offend the giver or God in abusing the blessing of the financial gifts. However, some givers from the west take advantage of the power that can go along with a donation to become dictatorial in the lives of the non-western theological schools. This presents itself in the giver demanding undue influence over the strategies and operations of the school, or in determining who to include and exclude as faculty. These are decisions that should be made by the nationals operating the school. However, these nationals often become too dependent on the giver to push back and may simply cooperate by exhibiting the expected behavior, even if that behavior goes against conscience. In one situation in Europe, a western mission director demanded a “return on investment” of his donations to the ministry, measured in terms of number of salvations competitively compared with other nations the director had invested in.²⁴ This type of abusive giving is not the norm but has caused enough damage to paint other missionary endeavors, including theological education, with a broad brush. When this happens, the integrity of missions is tarnished and the quality of Christian testimony to the world is corrupted.²⁵ Before a transnational education facility can develop in directions that serve its local community, the relationship between financial givers and receivers must be worked out in a way that is genuine for the national culture as well as accountable for both parties.²⁶

The Poison of an Imperialistic Attitude

Aside from behaviors, imperialism can manifest itself in a theological school in the attitude of those coming to teach. This is perhaps the most subtly nefarious way in which imperialism is demonstrated, and therefore is likely the most common. Theological education imperialism is asserted to occur when a local culture is disregarded in the process of teaching theology by a cross-cultural teacher. Although this may be committed naively by unin-

24 This anecdote took place in the context where the author labors.

25 Matheny, 25.

26 Ponniah, 33.

entionally forgetting one is teaching in a foreign culture, an imperialistic mindset results when the local culture is viewed as inconsequential, or worse, farther down the continuum of what is considered a civilized society.²⁷

Theological education is particularly susceptible to this in that there is a tacit operating mindset that third-world countries are readily satisfied with any theological instruction that they can get, since they are considered lacking in developed theological understanding compared to the west. This is the equivalent of the famous “used tea bag” narrative in missionary giving, but on an educational level.²⁸ The attitude separates what westerners are accustomed to, and demand, from what is good enough for everyone else. This author has been told, in preparation for short-term teaching missions, that an American Sunday School class has more theological training than many pastors in non-western countries. While this can be true in some instances, it is not ubiquitous around the world and is certainly not limited to west vs. non-west. Not only is this a disrespectful imperialistic attitude in transnational education, but it also disregards how others’ interaction with Scripture should be applied to our lives by assuming that all global lives are equal in experience. What is communicated to other cultures by a westerner with this attitude is a posture of superiority, that is, the host culture is “less” or has nothing to offer.²⁹ While it may be done subconsciously, it is nonetheless palpable to nationals to whom it is directed.

There is a helpful prophylactic for the teacher in a transnational environment in the attempt to avoid this type of attitude. It is important for a cross-culture teacher to have a mental demeanor that knowledge may be transmitted, but only nationals know how to truly apply it in their context. This idea finds its roots in anthropologist Paul Hiebert’s concept of self-theologizing which he advocated to be added to the “three selves” of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson. In this, Hiebert finds recognition and

27 Hiebert, *Contextualization*, 106.

28 Simone Lazaroo, *Lost River: Four Albums* (Perth, Australia: UWA Publishing, 2014), 88. This is in reference to the story of westerners sending their used tea bags in packages to missionaries, with the thought that the missionary should be grateful for anything they receive since they agreed to a lifestyle of self-deprivation. The example is likely fiction but has been repeated enough to be legend. However, it illustrates a true mindset that a poor person, missionary, or non-western theological student is desperate to the point of not being able to be offended by such condescension whether it is with material or spiritual resources. The receiving party is not unaware of the bounty of resources from which they have been deemed unfit to receive.

29 Prill, 162.

respect for the local culture's ability to apply theological truths in their context within the larger global community.³⁰ In practice this can be done readily. One teacher in a transnational school makes it a habit to regularly teach the material and immediately ask the students how they would apply it in the local context. This has proven not only immensely practical but also shows humility, for the teacher does not convey a condescending attitude toward the students or their culture.

The Insistence on Christian Externals

Closely related to this is an imperialistic voice which claims that the physical trappings of western churches and attire of western Christians should be normative for everyone.³¹ This was more common in centuries past but can be seen when "theological triage", that is, differentiating essential doctrines from non-essential ones, is not practiced in transnational ecclesiology and is not taught at schools.³² Ironically, many of the non-western churches which have followed an older template of surface western church customs are often rejected as outdated by western standards.³³ Churches in many Eastern European countries especially are quite reminiscent of 1950's American churches with western music, dress, and atmosphere. However, these are the modes of Christianity, vestiges from culture that are distinct from theology itself. They should not be confused with authentic and essential Christianity which is able to take on diverse customs without sacrificing fundamental doctrines.

Cautions Regarding Theological Imperialism

While imperialism is a threat to national host students in theological education and should be the subject of alert, there is potential for overreaction

30 Paul G Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 102-103. See also Netland, Harold A., "Globalization and Theology Today," In *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 29.

31 Sherwood G Lingenfelter, *Transforming Culture*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1998), 90.

32 Gavin Ortland, *Finding the Right Hills to Die On* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 177.

33 Ponniah, 34.

that may actually result in equal harm to transnational education in general. The western church is generally seen as a generous church that is heavily involved in physical and financial support of non-western Christian endeavors. This includes gospel propagation, church planting, medical help, construction, humanitarian aid, and theological education. The Christian west, with a comparatively large percentage of globally available finances, has a Christian responsibility to share resources with the needy Christian world at large in terms of money, personnel, time, and books [1 John 3:16-18]. Like all biblical investments, however, Christians are entitled to consider how resources are invested as a method of good stewardship [1 Corinthians 4:2]. This is especially pertinent in the case of ongoing support for ministries or theological education. Even without this biblical mandate it is not unreasonable for those giving resources to expect some level of acknowledgment about how those resources are dispensed and used, especially if that is the agreed upon part of the transaction. The degree to which a benefactor should ask about the use of donated funds is a separate issue from whether or not such an activity is imperialistic.

Additionally, conservative views of contextualization do not invariably constitute imperialism. Missionary practices throughout the 19th and into the 20th century took the view that pagan cultures need to be recreated to Christian ones. Unfortunately, they often did not differentiate between the cultural climate and the theological climate, but instead saw the culture as a “tabula rosa” upon which to recreate a work of Christian life.³⁴ There must not be the same mistake done in the opposite direction, that is, the cultural climate must not be so preserved as to lose the distinctiveness of the Christian culture itself. Overcontextualization will inevitably lead to accommodation and syncretism in beliefs.³⁵ If contextualization demands allowing all forms of religious ideas to continue in a culture unchallenged in order to be free from the charge of imperialism, this is biblically and ethically poor contextualization. Simply adhering to biblical truths is not imperialism, as it is not the subjugation of one culture by a different culture through means of unfettered power. A mantra which missionaries are frequently told to remember is “beliefs are not right or wrong, just different.”³⁶ While there are certainly times this adage holds true, this worldview

34 Hiebert, *Contextualization*, 104.

35 Prill, 164-165.

36 Prill, 170-171.

cannot be pressed at all times in theological education as there are times in which a doctrine that is held by a student is unbiblical, i.e., “wrong.” Indeed, the adage reduces all communication to relativistic meaninglessness if applied without censure.

Finally, western individuals do not automatically qualify as imperialists by nature of their simply being western. While subjugation of one people by another is imperialism, it has become popular to charge all North American teachers as having the motivation to subjugate others to some idea of western “male theology.”³⁷ Painting western theological education as being the creation of the white western male is racist and misanthropist. It has been demonstrated that imperialism is not the domain of the west but can occur between any two cultures.³⁸ The tone that is often used in the literature in reference to western teachers is such that would not be tolerated if done against other global demographics. While it is true that some methodologies are more oriented to western style classrooms, it cannot be said unconditionally that “non-Western emerging leaders are trained in the West to answer questions that nobody in their context is asking.”³⁹ Further, theological educational theory is developed by many intelligent non-white scholars, both men and women, who would not say they are simply deceived into following white male patterns of learning.

The implications of exaggerating imperialism for cross-cultural teaching are significant, in that good resources and available teachers may be disregarded en masse and transnational schools robbed of the benefit of a community of inter-educational edification for the body of Christ. Mitigating the abundance and availability of the teaching of God’s Word by excluding a large percentage of Christians or their teaching based on a fear of imperialism is a serious matter, and should never be done casually, emotionally, or because of a bad experience. While there are abuses around the world in theological education which need to be brought to light, these abuses are not limited to the west nor are they consistent among a geo-

37 Justo Gonzalez, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990), 52.

38 Prill, 171.

39 Perry Shaw, “New Treasures with the Old’: Addressing Culture and Gender Imperialism in High Lever Theological Education,” in *Tending the Seedbeds: Educational Perspectives on Theological Education in Asia.*, ed. Allan Harkness (Quezon City, Philippines: Asia Theological Association, 2020), 57.

graphic people. While cautioning against abusive behavior is a felt duty of all Christian leaders, this can still be very subjective. Censoring a group of Christians based on nationality is so fraught with complications as to be avoided entirely. Unfortunately, the moniker of imperialism is often not issued carefully but used haphazardly and inaccurately. Several types of damage can result from the error

Conclusion

Western imperialism is a reality that has not been eradicated in theological education. When practices, it abuses the power that western financing and resources carries. Imperialism does not take local culture into consideration but instead dismisses it as subordinate or deficient. It produces a nominal Christianity that is more reflective of western likeness than Christ likeness. At its core, imperialism is an attitude that includes judging a culture without seeking to understand why it is the way it is. In theological education, imperialism is not theology, but it can impact a culture's interaction with that theology. A true attitude of imperialism is unbiblical and ultimately damaging to the propagation of the truths of God's word and the community of Christian believers. In the context of a transnational school, it is a threat that can often be subtle and should be addressed when discovered.

That said, there must be care taken to not overgeneralize imperialism or inflate it into a vast, overarching reflection of all cross-cultural theological education. There is still a solid portion of academics who seek to be contextual yet true to God's revelation, and desire for cultures to maintain as many cultural distinctives as is biblically possible. To avoid imperialism, theological educators should be spending a great deal of time asking questions of the receiving community of witness.⁴⁰ Rejecting the misplaced call for westerners to only "facilitate discussions" without imparting opinion when teaching, educators could be culturally valuable by raising theological knowledge and awareness of everyone, including themselves. Being culturally contextual means allowing students to apply learning to their context. One transnational teacher of Systematic Theology in Eastern Europe has

40 Tito Paredes et al., "Institutional Development for Theological Education in the Two-Thirds World: Summary of Findings of the 1995 Consultation at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies," *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 12, no. 4 (October 1995): 19.

a habit of teaching foundational material briefly, and then asking the students in class, “How would you apply this in this culture?” This is especially applicable in the context of suffering which western transnational teachers may know less about and which is so prevalent in the world.

While being on guard for true imperialism, the path forward should be to join together, unafraid of imparting knowledge and opinions for the mutual benefit of the body of Christ. Mistakes will inevitably be made, but despite a teacher’s ethnocentrism, language, and the disastrous effects of sin, the student of Scripture will be able to gain a more or less accurate understanding of the author’s intended meaning by the leading of the Holy Spirit common among believers.⁴¹ In both genuine imperialism and exaggerated imperialism, the issue of western imperialism has profound effects on transnational theological education. If a transnational teacher goes on his or her mission with the attitude not only of a teacher, but also a learner, much common ground can be traveled in the journey of crossing cultures.⁴² Believers in Christ are part of a global community, not simply a geographic one. This community needs transnational educators in every direction. Not only does this foster freedom of religion, but also the freedom to study religion and share that knowledge with others who desire to grow.

Bibliography:

- ♦ Amadeo, Kimberly. “What Is Imperialism?” The Balance. Accessed January 10, 2022. <https://www.thebalance.com/imperialism-definition-and-impacts-on-us-history-4773797>.
- ♦ BBC Radio. “Cultural Imperialism.” TV programme, 4: 2021.
- ♦ Bell, Bradley. 2022. “Missionary, Choose the Posture of a Learner”. Blog. *The Upstream Collective*. <https://www.theupstreamcollective.org/post/missionary-choose-the-posture-of-a-learner?fbclid=IwAR2145z-jizuzP9VV8fEjHiPg0z9-Ef5lbqSFsFUoRjpa5-U6a4WDT7Kp39U>.
- ♦ Bohn, David. “The Perspectives on Theological Education Evident Among Evangelical Church Leaders in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Russia.” PhD diss., Trinity International University, 1997. 188-198.

41 Hesselgrave, David. (1995). Contextualization that is Authentic and Relevant. *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 12(3). Pg 116.

42 Bell.

- ♦ Brown, Cheryl, and Wes Brown. "Progress and Challenge in Theological Education in Central and Eastern Europe." *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 20, no. 1 (January 2003): 1-12.
- ♦ Cosden, Darrell, and Donald Fairbairn. "Contextual Theological Education Among Post-Soviet Protestants." *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 18, no. 2 (April 2001): 125-36.
- ♦ Elliott, Mark. "Theological Education After Communism: The Mixed Blessing of Western Assistance." *Asbury Theological Journal* 50, no. 1 (1995): 67-73.
- ♦ Elliott, Mark, and Walter Sawatsky. *The Arduous Path of Post-Soviet Theological Education*. Wilmore, KY: First Fruits Press, 2020.
- ♦ Ellis, Carl. "It's Time to Emancipate Our Theology from Western Culture." Missio Alliance. November 21, 2017. <https://www.missioalliance.org/time-emancipate-theology-western-culture-alwaysreforming/>.
- ♦ Ezenweke, Elizabeth, and Ikechukwu Kanu. "Perspectives of Syncretism and Its Modern Trend: A Case of Christian and African Traditions." *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities* 13, no. 2 (2013): 71-84. doi:10.4314/ujah.v13i2.4.
- ♦ Gonzalez, Justo. *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990.
- ♦ Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation*. New York: Orbis Books, 1973.
- ♦ Harley, David. *Preparing to Serve: Training for Cross-cultural Mission*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995.
- ♦ Hesselgrave, David. "Contextualization that is Authentic and Relevant." *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 12, no. 3 (1995): 115-119.
- ♦ Hiebert, Paul. "Cultural Relativism and Theological Absolutes." *Direction* 2, no. 1 (January 1973): 2-6.
- ♦ _____. "Critical Contextualization." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11, no. 3 (July 1987): 104-12.
- ♦ _____. *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994.
- ♦ Kuzmić, Peter. "Vision for Theological Education for Difficult Times." *Religion, State and Society* 20, no. 2 (1994): 237-43.
- ♦ Lazaroo, Simone. *Lost River: Four Albums*. Perth, Australia: UWA Publishing, 2014.

- Lingenfelter, Sherwood G. *Transforming Culture*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1998.
- Magan, Percy T. *Imperialism Versus the Bible: The Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence; Or, the Peril of the Republic of the United States*. United States: National Co-operative Lib. Association, 1899.
- Matheny, Paul. *Contextual Theology*. Cambridge: James Clarke and Co, 2012.
- McGrath, Alister. *Iustitia Dei*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Netland, Harold A. "Globalization and Theology Today." In *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, 14-36. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.
- Nichols, Gregory. *Development of Russian Evangelical Spirituality*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011.
- Oduro, Thomas, Hennie Pretorius, Stan Nussbaum and Bryan Born. *Mission in an African Way: A Practical Introduction to African Instituted Churches and their Sense of Mission*. Wellington: Christian Literature Fund / Bible Media, 2008.
- Ortlund, Gavin. *Finding the Right Hills to Die On*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020.
- Ott, Bernhard. "Mission Oriented Theological Education: Moving Beyond Traditional Models of Theological Education." *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 18, no. 2 (April 2001): 74-86.
- Paredes, Tito, Vinay Samuel, Colleen Samuel, et al. "Institutional Development for Theological Education in the Two-Thirds World: Summary of Findings of the 1995 Consultation at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies." *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 12, no. 4 (October 1995): 18-32.
- Ponniah, Melchizedek. "The Concept of Contextualization and Its Implications for the Seventh-Day Adventist Theological Education in India." PhD diss., Andrews University, 1986.
- Prill, Thorsten. "Cross-Cultural Stumbling Blocks on the Mission Field – Yesterday and Today." *Haddington House Journal* 20 (2018): 161-177.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf, 2012.
- Shaw, Perry. "New Treasures with the Old': Addressing Culture and Gender Imperialism in High Lever Theological Education." In *Tending the*

Seedbeds: Educational Perspectives on Theological Education in Asia., edited by Allan Harkness, 47-74. Quezon City, Philippines: Asia Theological Association, 2020.

- ♦ Todorović, Dragan. "From Missionaring to Proselytism." In *Evangelization, Conversion, Proselytism*, 5-27. Niš, Serbia: Yugoslav Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 2004.
- ♦ Ware, Bruce. "Cultural Contextualization; Theological Systems." Lecture, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 2020. <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/cultural-contextualization-theological-systems/systematic-theology-i>.
- ♦ Wolfe, Patrick. "History and Imperialism: A Century of Theory, from Marx to Postcolonialism." *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 2 (1997): 388-420.