Transformation, Contestation, and Modern Mission

Elizabeth Koepping

She is a lecture in school of divinty, Edinburgh University, UK. She is teaching Christian History in Asian, Christian Theology in Asia, Indigeneous Religion in Asia. She is interesten in religious discourses in multi-faith/ethnic contexts, post-colonial/missiology studies.

Every translation of a lived written or enacted text is inevitably an act of transformation, given that translator and recipient exercise agency in the understanding and the domesticating of that which comes from beyond the immediately known. While it has been argued that some religious systems, such as Islam, are not translatable while others, such as Christianity, are, such arguments seem heavily influenced by assumptions which place elite 'authenticity' above lived tradition. This essay considers Christian flexibility and tension in the early church and in Malaysia. However, the ability to supervise, regularize and 'reform' domestication in religious traditions through increasingly intrusive communications makes this issue~~with~~ increasingly important.

Translation, contextualization, inculturation, have all been, and still are, involved in the process of expanding and thereby changing what we now call Christianity beyond that first day of Pentecost.[1] That means everything beyond what we know of the life and words of Christ from the New Testament, everything beyond the world-view of mostly Aramaic-speaking fishermen and artisans two thousand years ago. The writing of Paul, so crucial to our faith, also represents change through contextualisation, for he was thoroughly embedded in the dualist Greek thought of that educated elite rather than the non-dualism of peasant Palestine, and of Europe then. At an everyday folk level still in Europe, non-dualism endures as one often submerged way of knowing existence, as it resolutely is for those millions of people in Asia and Africa who have not been drawn into the dualism of Euro-American defined modernity[2].

The issue of inculturation is thus not new, despite it being so often and so arrogantly relegated to the mission field, nor is the fact of theological rethinking and change new, despite ecclesial amnesia or, just as destructive, ecclesial name-calling. Nor, despite the very positive attitude of Christ and of Paul (though not Peter) to ethnic and cultural otherness, are negative attitudes to other ways of seeing the world than our own a modern invention. This human tendency, however, cuts at the heart of a faith in which all are equal before God. Even more troubling, however, is the fact that it emboldens those with mission and ministry power derived not merely from the Holy Spirit but also

[1] I do not wish to imply that only Christianity changes as it translates and travels, or that cultural power and estimation is relevant only in that faith: Islam, while in theory holding to the Five Pillars, is also changed by becoming embedded in different cultural contexts. Maintaining the view that Islam is untranslatable given that the majority of Indonesians, illiterate in Arabic, see themselves as Muslim, is at least as difficult as maintaining Christianity is translatable in the face both of church insistence in the first thousand years of English Christianity that Biblical and liturgical text be incomprehensible to the majority of hearers and the 'universal yardstick' against which all local domestications are to be judged

[2] M Amaladoss 'Contextual Theology and Integration' in *East Asia Pastoral Review.*Vol 40/3 2003

from the bank balance to strike attitudes which are theologically and morally contrary to those statements of Christ which we have.

Human social life is ordinarily and unconsciously based on ethnocentrism, that assumption that one's own way represents the proper norm, all other ways, if known, necessarily being of lesser value even if this 'fact' is not expressed. This is not new: the Greek philosopher and historian Thucydides, well before Christianity, notes: "We differ from our enemies". As a commentator points out, ' "differing"' (*diaffero*) used in the first person means "surpass or excel"'[3]. That a people's name for their own group often means 'human beings' makes clear the boundaries of humanity, all others being of lesser value[4]. Yet while derogatory labels may underscore the value placed on behaviour proper to one's own group as the benchmark of the human, such explicit statements of superiority are not actually necessary, enculturation having done the job before humans are fully sentient beings. For ethnocentrism is perfectly normal, in that all children in any place are taught from babyhood onwards what their parents and care-givers teach by example and in words is the only proper way of being a person, other known ways being seen as different, of less valuable and, within the 'in' group, plain wrong. The aim, put crudely, is to narrow the field of possible choices in every avenue of existence to the rather restricted span locally judged as acceptable. This is done not merely through codes of dress, demeanour, eating styles and the classification of foodstuffs, but in the processes and purposes of formal education[5], in rites of passage, in perceptions of the very purpose and processes of existence.

One logical effect of universal enculturation in its many class, caste, religious and ethnic particularities is that change takes a very long time, change at a collective level as well as a personal: what has efficiently been taught as proper behaviour and the shape of existence go deep. All elements so taught may not be equally accepted, indeed there may be the occasional relatively trivial challenge based on age, gender, class, personality, and even the odd and resolute sceptic but, as Geertz has shown convincingly for 'common–sense', the embedding of culture-bound perceptions goes deep[6].

If all peoples have ethnocentric views but no single view is able to gain preeminence, no one has power over the other to patronize, to write their agenda for living or exclude them from access to goods and services, there may be no particular problem with new and translated ideas or indeed with parallel living[7] in which several ethnic groups share one territory. Inter-ethnic joking in the east Sabah villages where I do one part of my

---

[3] E.C. Marchant. *Thucydedes*, Book 2, Ch 39 London: Macmillan 1909

[4] In war between closely related peoples, it is necessary to eliminate the common humanity by, for example, indicating that the suddenly 'other' attacks babies, has fangs for teeth, and so on.

[5] See J. Henry, *Culture against Man* Boston: Harper Torch for the pattern of resolute values enculturation in spelling and maths lessons in American grade school, a culture-bound pattern repeated in so many ostensibly culture-neutral contexts.

[6] C Geertz, writes; "Commonsense is a cultural system,though not usually a very tightly integrated one, and rests on that any other such system rests: the conviction by those whose possession it of its value and validity. ..As a frame of thought, and a species of it, common-sense is as totalising as any other: no religion is more dogmatic." In *Local Knowledge* New York:Basic Books 1983, p 84

[7] Time can alter this swiftly: see J Macquet, *The Premise of Inequality in Ruanda*, Oxford: OUP, 1964 whose views on the acceptance by Hutu of Tutsi domination and designation of them as sub-human were proved wrong in the initial genocide of 1967.

research, for example, is among rough equals, none being more powerful. Access to the plentiful land there was also equal in theory, being based on residence.
But where one ethnic or cultural script has effective power over others, to include or exclude, as happens with modernity as it did in feudalism, then there is a problem. This also occurs in church-life, with certain class, caste or ethnic groups being represented in the higher echelons of the presbytery, the diocese, the Assembly. It happens too in Sabah villages, and in Sabah churches. And it naturally happened when the Western Christian faith was appropriated, or 'owned,' by one group now centred around the Atlantic ocean. Inequality, in institutions or in villages, makes for problems, the moral aspect of which is especially acute if we consider the Christian faith. Indeed it seems reasonable to suggest that judging the criteria for church membership, indeed defining the purpose of the group, has long been in the hands of those who have exerted power for reasons quite outside the purpose of existence of the organization. And this, for reasons of unconscious ethnocentrism, of ignorance, or arrogant appropriation, easily continues in the modern world. Here we reach the nub of ecclesial strife and of impiety.

A Reality Check

The church did not actually exist to maintain the Roman Empire after Constantine, nor did it exist from the sixteenth century to support the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, nor later the British nor the current empires of covert capitalism. But while actual missionaries often opposed political authorities in those colonial contexts, as in other contexts which while not officially colonial were effectively so, the linkage to such immense wealth and authority did affect both mission and ministry at home and abroad, giving the 'owners' an undue sense of their own importance and influence. Most important, this power reduced the relevance of local thought and local agency. The ethnocentric missionary, and I think here of the writings of early ethnocentric American missionaries to Korea, honourable and committed individuals though they were. But I also think of ethnocentric local priests and ministers in Sabah, Malaysia where I have researched for 40 years, and of current and ethnocentric Korean missionaries to the world, all of whom so often inadvertently convey his or her enculturated view of being a Christian as the only proper way of being Christian, all other ways being of lesser value if not plain wrong.
In other words, while St Paul reckoned it proper and wise to be 'a Jew with Jews, a Greek with Greeks,' to adapt to and follow local patterns of culture, that has not always been the case and nor is it still. In this all missionaries and ministers of whatever origin may be ethnocentric, failing courteously and wisely to open their ears to learn, to being re-enculturated to the extent that is possible for adults by those they serve. This is as crucial an issue today as it was in the so-called heyday of mission in the late 19th century, enculturated ideas of proper behaviour relating to Christ and the 'Christian Life' becoming enmeshed in and confused with the particular performance of socially accepted ways of existence. Indeed at a recent conference, the WCC General Secretary Dr Kobia noted that while the National Christian Council of China were happy to receive advice and support from outside, they rejected that done in the style of

earlier American and European missionaries or "of current Korean missionaries in China, who look down on us"[8].

Let me give a few examples. The Korean missionary in Bolivia who refused to allow local people to use guitar and pipes in church but insisted on a piano was being both ethnocentric and short-sighted[9]. Pipes and guitars are transportable: pianos are expensive, need specialist tuners, and thereby maintain dependence. The Iban missionary-priests fifty years ago in Sabah who demanded their wives wore dresses not sarongs to church, in imitation of former European priests whose wives would never be seen in public and rarely in private in sarong. Closer to home, the early years of the Anglican church in Korea saw the Reverend Turner, that poor man and his wife who lost three babies in Seoul in three years, insisting that every element of late 19th century English high church ritual and rules, strongly influenced by English society of that period, were indispensable to faith[10]. Probably we can all produce a list of examples of ethnocentrism in the mission field, where elements which were or are cultural were insisted upon or rejected as being vital for correct faith.

Yet the cultural rules of 'proper behaviour' for 'real human beings' are not just conveyed between a missionary from one country and a recipient group in another. They are conveyed between an educated upper class to the poor (never the reverse) in the same country, such as the Oxford and Cambridge mission to the East End of London from the late 19th century but also by the Protestant insistence on Bible Study as the obligation of the Christian. While dress codes may sort out the sheep from the goats (how many tramps or bag-ladies attend your church?), expectations of literacy also make clear who counts as a 'proper' Christian. Naturally this is not spelt out in such terms. But I remember well one woman in Sabah saying she felt sick to the stomach if she tried to attend a Bible Study as she could not read and felt both shamed and inadequate. Wherever Bible study is put forward as the mark of a true Christian, it excludes the illiterate unless steps are taken by the organizers to ensure all are enabled to be included. The churches here in Seoul, as well as in Edinburgh, do not appear to include the poor and marginalized as part of the 'normal' congregation, for cultural expectations and assumptions affect local ministry as much as it may mission, though in an even more insidious fashion.

Let me repeat here: the aim of enculturation is to form the child in that sub-set's image for life, resistant to changes in fashion or residence. In these 'instant access' times, it is easy to forget that changing what is known (even if that is perceived as a learnt and in theory voluntary mode) take time, a long time, humans not possessing delete buttons for enculturated knowledge and that it almost inevitably bring up issues for the person of disobedience to if not betrayal of those truths fixed so long ago[11]. Moreover, the vital

---

[8] At the final preparatory conference for the 2010 anniversary of the Edinburgh Mission Conference, held at New College in April, 2007.

[9]

[10] See

[11] Some may say that given the new truth is right, giving up the old is proper: but truth in matters of the mind is not immutable, irrespective of the sheer difficulty of negotiating new ways. Asking older Lutherans in South Australia from 1984 onwards which pastor had most influenced their church life and faith, almost all would answer "the one who taught me what was right in confirmation." That means all other pastors after that one were judged against the yardstick of what was in some cases a theology taught to the confirming pastor in the late 1890s in Germany.

change, the internalizing change, has to be done by the people who may be forced by circumstances to change, or may wish to change and it will be done over time: a long time. In this translating process, the message itself, with all its trappings, will be domesticated, and changed. In matters of faith, new believers, or renovated believers, must be the agents of inculturation of the faith: no outsider can ever be more than a cautious facilitator, a learning teacher, a patient and willing student of another way of being. If this means missionaries *and* ministers have to see themselves as relatively inept servants, children-in-training, so be it. The act of learning changes minds, and so should the act of teaching. Should a teacher refuse to learn from the student, refuse to be open to the risk of changing him or herself through challenge to enculturated knowledge, how can they in all conscience expect others to take that risk? It is inadequate, indeed it is arrogant hubris, to say "what *I* am teaching is right, so *they* must change". This is relevant for home mission, for Japanese Christians with Burakumin or dwellers under the Tokyo bridges, for Koreans among the local urban marginalized of Seoul and those left behind in isolated villagers, for South Indians missionising North India, as well as African mission done by Scots among the Cewa or Koreans among the Kikuyu.

As well as the broader cultural rules which can so impede understanding, there are specific modes of religious thought of the controllers of faith which are embedded in culture. The Pope as Cardinal Ratzinger put this crudely in 1985 as, 'the universal significance of Christian thought as it has evolved in the west'[12]. The west, of course, stands not merely for the land mass edging the Atlantic Pond, but the hegemonic power over the last millennium. Ratzinger seemed to be excluding not only modern Christian thought in the majority Christian world of Africa, Asia and Latin America but, equally offensive, the entirety of Orthodox thought, well established in South India by 100AD and with much to say to the modern world. Moreover, his 'Christian thought' is presented as both unitary and uncontested. Both are untrue, and while the unitary aspect is easily rejected, contestation is almost universally and regularly forgotten in the amnesia of the winners. Protestant readers should not smirk at shortcomings in the Roman Catholic church, but rather look to and find similar 'common-sense' assumptions in their own institutions.

Better Bridge!!!

Where new ways of seeing the world through the Christian lens enter the field of vision, lip-service may be given to new ways, under pressure or because the old is so fractured by the new that it is no longer viable. But lip-service is not faith, though may eventually become that. In the context of Sabah, church pressure on villagers to change on pain of exclusion from the Eucharist is part of Christian villagers' lives, despite the fact that the new faith has only been there for fifty years, and despite the fact that reaching a semblance of contextualization of the faith in Europe took 1500 years, and is still incomplete. To see the slow process of contestation and change in early Christianising Europe, so often presented by mission church as one agreed and original faith, let me touch on some points of early church history, not to imply that current issues are the same, but merely that the past was also contested, with an ancient church which could also be guilty of intellectual violence. That demonstrated, we can then turn to current tensions in Sabah villages.

---

[12] Quoted in C.Corneille, (ed) *A Universal Faith* Louvain: Peeters,

Early Contestation

Post-Constantinian Latin texts give the regal version of the exclusivist Christian ordinances, and say a little of how the dissenting elite managed. Anti-pagan laws in Rome became progressively blunt during the 4th century, restricting private (in 321) and then public sacrifice; closing temples and proscribing the worship of images (in 356), pagan prayer at night (364), the practice of astrology and again pagan prayer at night (370) or the uttering of 'incantations' in a shrine (381). A decree of 396 removed all protection and privilege from pagan priests.[13] Yet the repetition of new laws suggests that despite the tough often draconian punishments they were directly flouted in the first two centuries of their existence. Occasionally opposition was open. The proconsul of Greece, on behalf of the people, protested against the night curfew of 364 on the grounds that it would prevent the proper celebration of 'the most holy [pagan]mysteries known to mankind': the Emperor rescinded his decision. And again, some years later in 408, the Pope was pressured into unwillingly allowing Romans to do pagan rituals in secret ' to do privately whatever they knew to be convenient' in the middle of a long war and famine: they did not, in the event, do the ritual.[14] Whether the anti-Christian Zosimus is accurate is uncertain: yet that the sacrifice was discussed is supported by Sozomen,[15] and (while no proof) the reasoning fits the case, both in the need for the state [religion] to approve and, linked to that, for it to be public to be effective.

A little later, in northern Italy, the Ravenna pre-Christian New Year festivals in 440 were led by the local Catholic Prince, much criticised by the Ravenna Bishop, Petros Chrysologus, as 'outworn sacrilige'. Overall, the historian Peter Brown continues, summing up the period thus: "Late antique pagans were impenitent bricoleurs. Hackers of the supernatural, they cannibalised Christian belief and practice to find spare parts with which to enrich their own religious systems".[16] Early Christians, equally, were bricoleurs too, if at times a little more careful in the face of official opposition.

Anglo-Saxons in England were likewise torn between the old and the new, some seeing Christianity thus: "If Christ was a superior God, he was just a god among other gods"[17]. There were clear tensions cited by Bede in his (710 AD) History of the English. Raedewald, scathingly dealt with in Bede's history, was King of East Anglia in 630. He saw exactly the same problem and followed the same solution as the Romans, serving Christ *and* his local way, double belonging commonly being part of the long process of change[18]. Again, and far more clearly, we get a glimpse of real anger between church and people in Bede's Life of Cuthbert. A group of monks were in trouble on the River Wear. Cuthbert called to those watching on the bank, but he (and the helpless monks) were jeered at with the words "we will not help you, for you have taken away our gods and we do not know what to do"[19]. The Synod of Whitby, in 664, decided on the date for Easter and the method of tonsure in a fight to the death between the Celtic and the

---

[13] B. Croke and J. Harries Religion and Conflict in Fourth Century Rome. Sydney: UP, 1982, p27
[14] D. Bouwer, *History of the Popes*: vol 1, London: printed by author, 1748, 307
[15] Zosimus, *The New History of Count Zosimus.* London: Chapple and Green 1814, p 40
[16] P.Brown *Authority and the Sacred.*Cambridge:CUP p
[17] H.Richards, G.Sayles, *Law and Legislation from Aethelbert to Magna Carta* Edinburgh: UP, 1960, p 46
[18] Bede. History of
[19] Bede. *Life of St Cuthbert* London: Penguin 1964, p 58

Roman churches in Britain. The latter won, the Celtic church of Ireland, Scotland and northern England being demeaned and effectively eliminated, which left much hostility and resentment among the losers. But still the Celtic, and all over Britain and Europe in disguise the local religion, kept going under the surface.

Further east in Anatolia, conversion strategies included the violent shock troops" method of saintly monks such as Hypatius cutting and burning sacred trees, the peasants becoming Christians "in part": not all of them were converted, nor did their daily customs change that radically. St Theodore of Sykeon took over the functions of the shaman by Christianising associated rites, using wooden crosses in place of the earlier boundary-markers *(horoi*) to protect fields within the space: these and other modes of accommodation continued till at least the tenth century though by the eighth, irritation on the part of church authorities at recalcitrants and apostates was mounting Whatever the ethics of pressure and violence, Christianisation processes in Anatolia stretched well over five hundred years.

In medieval Italy, and still today in some areas, four days before the feast of the Chair of Peter on 18th February, people set out food for the dead in celebration of the Festival of Feralia which was explicitly, albeit scathingly, linked to Christianising the dead, A 14th century, poem by Benedict of Mantua begins "That superstition of yours, bringing any person, risen up from the Shades of Hell, into membership of the Christian family" which continues in proper Christian voice with " give banquets to the living, give sacred rites to the dead"[20]. Clearly, all over "Christian" Europe, contestation was long-drawn out and the sub-strata of difference, inevitably 'inadequate' if not plain wrong, part of the religious scene.

Current Contestation

And what of Malaysia, specifically Anglican villagers in Borneo? Here we again see the process of two intellectual systems clashing, Christianity and local religion, the former insisting it has both the authoritative reading for seeing the world and cultural existence in it and beyond and telling the local religionists what their system was. For Christianity is now the overall bench-mark, the arbiter of 'proper' behaviour with power beyond the church walls.

One smaller set of villagers unequivocally accept Christianity as currently taught by the South East Asia Province of the Anglican Church on two key issues: firstly, salvation is through Christ alone and secondly, the local religion was at best *a preparatio evangelia* or, more usually, Devil worship. This group attend bible study, church, and usually pray before meals. There is a strong though far from inevitable tendency for these people to include the rather more educated, the few who despise Kadazan identity, and those who readily accept authority figures. Included too are those who over time made a conscious quiet decision to accept the Christian way as binding for their life. One such is Likah:

> I became Christian at 11 [about 1964], when my mother was baptised by Father P on her death-bed.. No one before Father P had told us of the full Kinoringan [God]: we just had the bit the non-Christians have. I didn't understand much,

[20] quoted in J.Burkhart, *The Civilisation of the Renaissance The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* Vol.II. 1878/ 1958 New York: Harper, p 464.

> though I carried on going to church. Eventually, I understood more, and now we have "*agama tokau*," 'our religion" in church, with a [Kadazan] priest, whose father knew the old way properly: so he starts from the same place we start from. Now I understand, and I believe the whole Kinoringan. I don't go to [local ritual]. If you do that you believe in that and are half-half, not knowing which is true: you must know that.

She views the past from the current lens, acquiescence rather than belief formerly lying behind locally-based ritual performance,[21] though ideally not of Christian, and her intention to follow the Christian way exclusively while remaining embedded in Kadazan village life has been a more demanding commitment than that of younger people who do not actually know the alternative. It took, though, over thirty years of Likah experiencing life and the practice of faith to reach a stage in the process of conversion which those who insist on the human capacity for 'instant deletion' expect can be done in a few months. And she was the agent of that movement.

The other larger set of Christian villagers includes those who argue in private for a more inclusive, pluralist line.[22] They have a local grasp of personhood, including equality between male and female, a local manner of relating in daily life and ritual to all visible and less visible beings, but they identify as Christian. One part keep away from church though ensure their children are Christian. Their identity is based solidly in the old, living safely in fully reciprocal regard with the spiritual forces. The other 'inclusivist' portion call themselves '50:50s', going both ways. These people are vulnerable to the local spiritual world in a way which those who fully respect that, and those who never refere to it, are not.

Juni, a Christian (and a delightful person) who keeps away from church, says

> I know the 'spiritual owners of this place' do not make anything, only God does that, and he makes everything. So why can't I respect God in a Kadazan way by killing a pig which He made, for we as Kadazan must respect the spiritual owners of this area according to the way of our grandmothers and grandfathers *[odu-aki]*. That is nothing to do with Satan: only two bad people here have dealings with him but they are not Christian

The 50:50s category is one to which a large proportion of the village may relate to at critical times, especially after a run of untoward deaths, drought or flood, like those early Romans in times of war and famine. There appear to be more men in the frankly secularised, uninterested in ritual of any description though, eating pork and possibly attending church at Christmas, are Christian: more too in the ' maintaining the old way from the side-lines' group. More women are the 'everyday 50:50' way of thinking about

---

[21] I do not imply here that local-based ritual was a pretence, but rather that 'belief' is an irrelevant concept for it. Talking of it, Likah says 'pecaya do adat pogulu,' I *believed* the old way, (using the Malay word for believe) whereas one still steeped in it would explain rather, "It *is* such and such"

[22] In a village of a hundred households, one person remains totally distant from Christianity and one who 'signed up' effectively so: the former will be buried in the non-Christian graveyard the latter in the Christian. The children of both identify as Christian.

the world and indeed it is women who keep both systems going at a household level. The following case illustrates the point and the problems.

Two Cases

Pia's well-educated only daughter was about to marry in late 2000. During the preceding month, Pia, a self-confessed '50:50' who attends church and loves the parable of the Good Samaritan, found a cobra in the kitchen. She quickly calling some men to bring axes and kill it. Her mother Kima (who attends church occasionally but agrees with Juni's views) was horrified, that snake being special to her dead mother's clan. In her anger and fear, Kima talked and talked about the event, calling to the local spiritual forces to forgive the killing, and not to count it against the household. Pia then became afraid not so much because the snake was dead, clan markers meaning nothing to her, but because the spiritual forces knew her mother, staying in that house, recognised their existence and rights and might then hit back. Given Pia's ambivalence, it could attack her or, worst of all, attack her daughter, especially vulnerable as an engaged person. Despite the fact that the daughter is totally embedded in the Christian way, in matters relating to the spiritual forces the household is the unit. Luckily, Pia's first cousin is an Evangelist. While that hapless woman did not know anything about cobras or clan markers, she knew when she had to follow her older cousin in banishing danger from the house, despite denying the previous way had any power in the new dispensation. Other people, lacking a tame Evangelist cousin, are less fortunate.

Conquest of the past, of the devil, of everything associated, is an increasingly strong – even strident – text in services and sermons, which can have unexpected outcomes. In the effort to force all to dispense with items ever used in 'religious' rituals or shamanic possession, the priest stated in church that even touching them is sin. Fariah, an unstable adolescent, totally involved in prayer life and church and with no ties at all to the other way, heard that sermon and remembered touching her late shaman grandmother's shell spirit-callers in her childhood. She quickly slipped into a downward spiral of paranoia, playing Jesus jingles incessantly and at full volume in her bedroom, blocking up any gaps in her room, decorated with religious pictures and Biblical quotes, seeing black tigers, locally symbolising the forces of evil, not eating and praying loudly for long periods. While the unfortunate girl's fragile state of mind is not unknown in her family tree, and despite the fact that as a total believer she is absolutely safe from locally-originated danger (though she did not know this), her (culturally rather disdainful Sino-Kadazan) strongly Christian mother tried to expel any trace of the long-dead shaman mother-in-law (whom she had loathed) by burning ancient clothing, brass gongs and other precious heirloom artefacts on the advice of the local priest and against the wishes of her husband and brother-in-law, both of whom she despises. The priest came to the house to exorcise the girl. All villagers of the 'on the side-lines' and even the '50:50' groupings were astounded that the priest and other devout people believed danger lived in the cloth or gong, some seeing that as far too simple an answer to the problem of sickness and misfortune and others as the church admitting the reality and amazing power of place-based concretised danger which it had previously denied.

Conclusion

This vignette from Borneo of current processes as discussed over years with those negotiating the two ways of relating to the visible and less visible are no different in principle from those processes Lutherans of German origin in a South Australian town, my other area of research, undergo as they too negotiate their own faith tradition, with its over-emphasis on Lutheran ancestors, its controlling pastors, and modern life. Mission and ministry are not intrinsically different, especially if we note the issue of power, the need for inculturation from within over time, which does not mean making a god of culture, nor does inculturation mean little local additions to liturgy, or local dress. It means the mutually challenging interaction between Gospel and Culture at the deepest levels.

Mission and ministry which does not honour the intellectual capacity of the Other risks violence to the Other and to the Gospel. Mission which sees only the Other as having illegitimate 'multiple belonging', while the capitalist way of wealth which divides religion from profit and labels outsourcing employment at the expense of workers' safety as 'good business' is dishonest. To act in mission as if people newly grasping the Light of the Gospel will be fine as long as inculturation does not go "too far" while forgetting the cultural mote in the still-controlling EuroAmerican and other missionary powers' culture-as-theology eye is to lack integrity. To act in any mission while ignoring the implications of unequal power and wealth is, again, to risk acting without integrity. All Christians are equal before God.

The tension between dualism/non-dualism, 'inborn rank-ordering' and the relation of the person to the polity, (that is, religion and citizenship) are core 'world-view' issues relevant both to the propagation and the practice – mission and ministry- of the Christian faith. Yet even when those issues are considered, there is the practical issue of precisely how, given then the strength of enculturation, people can actually change their way not only of religious practice but of seeing the world. That they will over time is evidenced by 2000 years of history, which includes contestation, intellectual and even physical violence, courage, resentment and hope. And that is the nub of this text: time. Likah decided after more than thirty years where she stood: Juni also knows where he stands as does Pia. Fariah, though totally Christian, does not know where she is and her confused family cannot easily help her, for her disorder throws up issues they would prefer buried. Each place of this quartet is rather different – and that in one small isolated village. Labels and assumptions must be deconstructed from the bottom up if we wish to gain a reasonable understanding of present and perhaps of past processes of religious change.

An aged Dutch missionary[23] I talked to some years ago noted the common missionary wish to chalk up many conversions to their credit, thereby usurping the Holy Spirit's role and being themselves the agent of conversion. "It is,' he said, " a process reflecting their personal glory, rather than one which shows our faith in God's power to act in his time. This must exclude *our* presumption to know and *our* wish to see *our* power" It is surely vital to note that while Missio Dei offers the only possible validity for mission, quick-time Missio Mei offers none.

[23] Willem Roetenberg, Mill Hill missionary in Sabah.