

Article

Culture-Specific and Cosmopolitan Aspects of Christian Coexistence. A Postcolonial Perspective on Ecumenical Relations

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Abstract: This article wants to shed light on some of the cultural complexities of the ecumenical movement by putting it in conversation with postcolonial theory. It argues that the academic discourse of postcolonial theory and the ecclesial movement of ecumenism are siblings of sorts in as much as they both deal with the lingering consequences of past violence and with the tensions between particularity and universality. A growing awareness of the problem of postcolonial conditions in the ecumenical movement is briefly documented with reference to the journal VOICES/VOCES and Simón Pedro Arnold's suggestion of an 'inter theology' sensitive to the power dynamics and cultural intermingling in global Christianity. In a similar vein, Claudia Jahnel is arguing for an intercultural theology that takes processes of hybridization seriously and therefore needs to develop forms of 'vernacular ecumenism'. It is an ecumenism that materializes in countless Christian migrant communities around the globe. To understand and recognize the complexities in these postcolonial Christian identity formations, some kind of 'cosmopolitan ecumenism', as André Munzinger calls it, needs to be developed. This way, hybrid cultural and theological formations can be recognized, and hegemonic universalisms resisted.

Keywords: intercultural theology; World Council of Churches; migration; hybridity; postcolonial theory; cosmopolitan ecumenism; receptive ecumenism; vernacular ecumenism



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1. The Ecumenical Movement and Postcolonial Theory—A Brief Historical Outline¹

The ecumenical movement, with its diverse theological branches, had a lasting impact on Christianity throughout the entire 20th century.² Milestones in the development of this movement include the first major missionary conference in Edinburgh in 1910, the World Conference on Practical Christianity in Stockholm in 1925, the World Conference on Faith and Order in Lausanne in 1927, the founding conference of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948, and the Second Vatican Council in Rome from 1962 to 1965. Last but not least, there were also many international ecumenical conferences in the Global South, which took into account the fact that Christianity had become a truly worldwide religion over the course of the 20th century, accompanied by—and this is significant for this article—an unmistakable shift in focus from Europe and North America to the Global South.³

The academic tradition of postcolonial theory is younger than the ecumenical movement. It began to take shape in connection with the struggle for liberation of the colonies of the Global South in the middle of the last century. The Caribbean psychiatrist and political philosopher Frantz Fanon can be understood as a decisive initiator of postcolonial thought. As early as 1952, in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (Fanon 1967), he identified the destructive psychological effects of colonial ideology on the self-image of oppressed ethnic groups.

However, postcolonial theory as an academic discipline began to establish itself only after the publication in 1978 of the book *Orientalism* by the Palestinian literary scholar Edward W. Said (Said 1979). Said's analysis of the image of the 'Orient' cultivated in the British West demonstrated that the liberation of (most of) the colonies did not eliminate colonial thinking, but that Western notions of superiority and related 'epistemic violence' in the form of ascribed identities continued to shape global relationships. At around the same time, a tradition of decolonial thinking developed in Spanish-speaking Latin America, which was in tension with the postcolonial thought developed in the French- and English-speaking regions of the globe.⁴ A prominent thinker of the decolonial tradition is Walter D. Mignolo, whose overriding interest lies in the critical examination of the (exclusionary) underbelly of Western modernity. His recurring question is: at whose expense did Western modernity establish itself? (Mignolo 2021) Common to postcolonial and decolonial theories is the problematization of binary thinking, particularly in encounters between cultures.

Ecumenism and postcolonial thought are two currents that do not communicate with each other as a matter of course. If they are placed side by side, they represent an unequal pair of siblings. According to this metaphor, the ecumenical movement is the older sibling of postcolonial theory. What could this relatively new academic tradition of cultural theory have to say to an inner-Christian movement that is well over a hundred years old?

2. The Aftereffects of a Violent Past and the Global Context

Even this very brief juxtaposition of the 'two siblings' hints at both their crucial differences as well as certain points of contact. Ecumenical theology is a discipline that developed out of the ecumenical movement and examines Christian beliefs from different denominational perspectives. One of its main concerns is, and remains, the struggle for an understanding of Christian unity and its realization. That this struggle was closely linked to colonial expansion well into the 20th century is a fact that makes the dialogue between ecumenical theology and postcolonial theory particularly important. Postcolonial theory is a deliberately interdisciplinary endeavor that emerged from the *cultural turn* in the late 20th century and critically questions and exposes the smug universalism of Western thought. In it, the unveiling of (unconscious) hegemonic and colonial thought and power structures, as well as the revelation of various forms of resistance against these structures, play an important role. Its aim is not unity, but rather a description of specific (cultural) relationships that is as nuanced as possible and avoids binary attributions.

Despite all the differences between the ecumenical movement and the discipline of postcolonial theory, both have an explicitly ethical profile, and two common concerns can be identified. Firstly, they deal with the consequences of discord in the past that can lead to violence (confessional divisions or colonial oppression), whose aftermath can be felt and continues to make itself known even today. Secondly, they are animated by an awareness of the importance of the global connection between religious and cultural relationships, and thus—to various extents—by the tension between local contexts and global connections, between particularity and universality.

3. Ecumenism and the Colonial Consciousness

If one examines the aftereffects of violent discord in the past, a gradual broadening of perspective toward a critical stance on colonial relations can be observed in the ecumenical movement. I would like to document this widening with a few brief highlights. When an overwhelming majority of Christendom from the northern hemisphere was gathered in Edinburgh in 1910 and, in an apparently colonial spirit, set themselves the ambitious goal of winning over the whole world to Christ within one generation, the problem they had in mind was primarily that of *denominational* divisions.

The tone of the negotiations at the world mission conferences in Whitby in 1947 and in Willingen in 1952 was different. Here the focus was on *political* divisions: two world wars had caused irreparable damage to the 'Christian' world, and the Chinese Cultural Revolution had made mission in an important 'missionary territory' impossible. Against

this background, missions were reflected on anew as *missio Dei*, that is, not primarily as an institutional undertaking but as participation in God's work in the world.

The assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala in 1968, however, focused on the discord caused by global *economic* and *ethnic* injustice. Martin Luther King Jr. was invited to be the keynote speaker but was assassinated before the assembly. In the discussions in Uppsala, the incompatibility between catholicity and racism was considered in an impressive way (Nausner 2018, p. 343). However, in Uppsala as well, colonialism as such was hardly discussed.

The fact that colonial imbalances had also caused discord in the ecumenical movement was finally thoroughly reflected in 1976 at the founding of EATWOT (Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians). With its establishment, male theologians⁵ of the Global South expressed their will to liberate themselves from the dominance of Western thinking and promote theology from the perspective of the 'Third World'. The magazine *Voices from the Third World*,⁶ founded at the time, is still an important platform for the publication of theological voices from the Global South. In 2014 an issue appeared on the topic of liberation theology and postcolonial thinking,⁷ reflecting an acknowledgment of the importance of postcolonial thinking for ecumenism in the Global South.

Together Towards Life—a document published by the World Council of Churches in 2013—recognized the historical interweaving of Christian mission activity with colonial exploitation and regretted 'that mission activity linked with colonization has often denigrated cultures and failed to recognize the wisdom of local people'.⁸ It criticized the continuing Western hegemony in missionary initiatives and highlighted the connection between evangelization and colonial rule. This often leads to the assumption that '[w]estern forms of Christianity are the standards by which others' adherence to the gospel should be judged. Evangelism by those who enjoy economic power or cultural hegemony risks distorting the gospel'.⁹ In this document, which was officially adopted by the World Council of Churches, there is a flash of awareness of the enduring impact of colonial thought and power structures. This persistence of colonial relations in altered and often very subtle forms is a major concern of postcolonial theory, which understands the 'post' in 'postcolonial' not in the sense of a chronologically delimited 'after', but in the sense of the *aftereffects* of the colonial.

In the magazine *Voices* mentioned earlier, these aftereffects are a continuous theme and are brought to the fore in a much more radical way than in *Together Towards Life*. This can be seen, for example, in an article by Simón Pedro Arnold, a Belgian Benedictine living in Peru, in which he advocates an ongoing process of decolonization since colonial patterns continue to exist in Peru in *neocolonial* forms. To this day, Arnold argues, colonial satellites are kept in a relationship of dependency on the empire's urban centers, which amounts to a form of neocolonialism and is often reflected in everyday life in the form of systemic racism (Arnold 2014, p. 16). According to Arnold, Christianity also plays a part in this, and even the discourse on universal human rights is sometimes interpreted as colonial paternalism, in view of the Western world's continuing position of power (Arnold 2014, p. 18). A thorough decolonization of Christianity in its complete suppression of indigenous spirituality is necessary today, not least in order to learn from the ecologically mindful way of thinking and living of indigenous peoples, a wisdom and spirituality that Arnold calls 'eco-ecumenism' (Spanish: *eco-ecumenismo*) (Arnold 2014, p. 21). From his specifically Peruvian perspective, Arnold applies ecological, cultural, and interreligious dimensions for the benefit of ecumenical discourse and advocates an 'inter theology' that is open to the polyphony of forms which the Spirit brings to life through the creativity of cultures (Arnold 2014, p. 26).

Both *Together Towards Life* and Arnold's call for the decolonization of theology unequivocally draw attention to the problematic aftereffects of colonial relations and insist on the importance of allowing a variety of (cultural) voices to express themselves. However, both texts still reflect a rather binary understanding of center and periphery, of Western and indigenous culture, etc.¹⁰ Postcolonial theory and the resulting postcolonial theology attempt to break down such binary configurations in order to draw attention to the count-

less hybrid cultural and religious forms that are increasingly shaping cultural and religious coexistence in a globalized world. To get a finer feel for the complexity of cultural and religious coexistence, it is worth taking a careful and patient look at the borders, at the dynamics in the spaces between cultural and religious groups and communities.

Arnold also seems to encourage such a view when he speaks of ‘inter theology’ (Arnold 2014, p. 26).¹¹ This is a concept that emphasizes the significance of spaces in between and can be easily linked to the concept of intercultural theology, which has been discussed intensively in missiology in the German speaking area for several decades. The fact that missiology is being increasingly understood as *intercultural theology* demonstrates that the awareness of the cultural embeddedness of any expression of Christian identity is gradually gaining ground. It also reflects how the complex negotiation processes between these identities, i.e., the ‘inter’, are receiving new attention. The increased blending of denominational identities due to global migration also makes it clear that ecumenical theology can no longer ignore the challenges of intercultural theology.¹²

4. Local Ecumenism Faced with the Challenge of Postcolonial Hybridity

In a groundbreaking article that appeared already in 2008, Claudia Jahnelt addressed the relationship between ecumenical theology and the *cultural turn*—for which postcolonial theory is also a well-known expression (Jahnelt 2008, p. 11). Here, she is concerned with applying to ecumenical coexistence the insight—acquired in cultural studies after the cultural turn—that cultures do not encounter one another as monolithic phenomena, but that in such encounters—in the ‘third spaces’ in between—something new arises (Jahnelt 2008, p. 12). The application of insights from newer cultural theories such as postcolonial theory makes it possible to avoid premature condemnation of so-called syncretistic forms of Christianity. A case in point is the generalizing Western attitude toward new hybrid church forms such as African Independent Churches (AICs). They are examples of mixing that occur in various forms in all processes of cultural development. In the context of the *cultural turn*, such processes of mutual permeation are referred to as *hybridization*, *bricolage*, or *melange*. From the perspective of cultural theory, the ecumenical movement itself, as well as ecumenical dialogue and theology, can thus be understood as ‘contact zones’, ‘zones for negotiating differences, of transcultural traffic in different directions’ (Jahnelt 2008, p. 14). This means that the construct of a stable denominational identity appears in a new light. Jahnelt suggests making productive use, for ecumenical coexistence, of cultural theory’s insights into the impossibility of a ‘pure’ cultural identity, not least because it has long been obvious that even in the ecumenical movement, identity ‘is not limited to a denominational-theological position’. Instead, ‘theological issues mix with issues of cultural and national identity’ (Jahnelt 2008, p. 19).

Thus, identity-creating symbols of the Christian faith, such as the biblical canon,¹³ cannot be understood as something unconditional and unambiguous from the perspective of the cultural turn, but always as being mixed with their respective cultural contexts and their practices. For example, the postcolonial theorist Kwame Anthony Appiah argues that professing one’s faith is as much a practical performance as a substantive statement, and that it is a misconception to think that a limited number of holy scriptures—such as a canon—could convey the immutable essence of religion to believers (Appiah 2018, pp. 37, 44). Such a dynamic view has lasting significance for Christian and denominational identity since it arises, as Jahnelt puts it, ‘in the interactionist-syncretic process of the permanent recreation of meaning’ (Jahnelt 2008, p. 23). Jahnelt then points to several intercultural phenomena that further problematize an overly static understanding of ecumenical exchange. This includes the translation of the Christian message in the Global South by ‘vernacular speakers’, the formation of resistance groups within denominations (which could be described as inner pluralization), and above all, the phenomenon of the double or multiple denominational and religious affiliation of believers (Jahnelt 2008, pp. 24–25).

Jahnelt sees possible points of contact between the ecumenical movement and the insights of the cultural turn in the ‘pneumatological turn’ within the ecumenical movement,

that is, in the turn toward pneumatology. This turn, which started to emerge at the latest at the 1991 Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Canberra, led to new possibilities of interpreting the uncontrollable processes of the mixing and differentiation of Christian and denominational identities (Jahnel 2008, p. 28). Jahnel sees the attempts to move away from notions of a homogeneous global unity and to emphasize ‘living, concrete and decentered unity’ (Jahnel 2008, p. 29) as initiatives which take the necessary transculturality of living unity seriously, and which can therefore withstand criticism from the cultural turn. Unity should be understood here as a concrete practice of culturally different identities that share and negotiate with each another in ‘ecumenical spaces’. Unity as the overarching goal of gradual perfection should be abandoned (Jahnel 2008, p. 31). Global unity should not be determined monoculturally or one-sidedly but remain an object of negotiation. Instead, unity can be understood as practiced ‘vernacular ecumenism’, that is, as an exchange that—analogue to Homi K. Bhabha’s ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’—questions the ‘construction of a binary opposition between vernacular, concrete Christian communities [...] and the global-cosmopolitan ecumenical community’ (Jahnel 2008, p. 32). A sustainable understanding of unity should not lose sight of the concrete conditions on the fringes and borders (Jahnel 2008, p. 33).

5. Migrant Communities as a *Locus theologicus* of Postcolonial Theology (Polak 2014)

In the texts on postcolonial theology that appeared in the German-speaking countries after Claudia Jahnel opened the ecumenical discourse to approaches based on cultural theory,¹⁴ migrant communities have been repeatedly identified as a *locus theologicus* where the need for a new look at inner-Christian dynamics has become particularly obvious (Nehring 2018; Jahnel 2019; Nausner 2020b). At the heart of the ‘Western Christian world’, new community and theological configurations are constantly and increasingly emerging, which have been misunderstood by a traditional Western understanding of denominational and theological differences. For example, Irena Zeltner Pavlović shows how Orthodox Christian churches in the West must struggle with attributions of identity that act as forms of power. No matter how much they might be a part of Western society, they must deal with how others perceive them as belonging to the *Balkans*. The *Balkanism* that results from this attribution can certainly be associated with the *Orientalism* diagnosed by Edward W. Said (Zeltner Pavlović 2018, p. 228). It should be remembered that the Balkans were subjected to the colonization efforts of the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg monarchy for centuries (Zeltner Pavlović 2018, p. 229). According to Pavlović, Orientalism and Balkanism are linked by a traditional ‘hierarchical evaluation from East to West’ (Zeltner Pavlović 2018, p. 230). The fact that Orthodox Christian churches have to struggle with this hierarchy is the result of a binary essentialist juxtaposition of the *homo balcanicus* and *homo europaeus*. The hybrid character of each denomination is ignored here (Zeltner Pavlović 2018, p. 241). As long as denominationally, culturally, and theologically mixed forms of community are only perceived as an exceptional phenomenon, the ecumenical movement is doing itself a disservice.¹⁵ This is because migration is not an exceptional phenomenon but an anthropological constant that can be used to observe basic models of the formation of cultural and religious identity particularly well. Thus, migrant communities are spaces where the convergence between the local and global context is revealed paradigmatically. This is because they reveal in a special way how Christian identity develops in a complex relationship between vernacular and cosmopolitan processes.

6. Global Ecumenism and Hybrid Identities from below

Cosmopolitanism is a concept with ancient roots that was famously revisited by Immanuel Kant with his dream of global citizenship (*Weltbürgertum*). Despite its legitimate emphasis on a universal right of every human being to have a place in this world, the concept has consistently triggered criticism, not least for its liberal presupposition that a universally ‘original position’ (Rawls) can be determined for all human beings regardless of their social and cultural context (Gahir 2016, pp. 46–48). A solemn emphasis on a

cosmopolitan identity is consciously or unconsciously easily accompanied by an attitude of superiority over 'putative provincialism' (Appiah 2006, p. xiii). While such critical observations need to be kept in mind, the world-relatedness of Christian and ecumenical identity—i.e., a relatedness to the whole world, the *cosmos*—must not be forgotten. This is also Henrik Simojoki's point of departure when, in his attempt to intertwine ecumenical learning and postcolonialism, he presumes, together with Ernst Lange, that the entire world must be the point of reference for Christian existence. The method of ecumenical learning is learning about the world as one's horizon (Simojoki 2018, p. 256).

In his essay 'Cosmopolitan Ecumenism?', André Munzinger shows that learning about such a global outlook does not have to come at the expense of concrete contextual or vernacular identities (Munzinger 2020). He believes 'that the cosmopolitan perspective is crucial for ecumenism since it recognizes people as equal citizens of the world'. However, following Jürgen Habermas, he emphasizes that particular and universal dimensions of validity must remain intertwined (Munzinger 2020, p. 188) and that ecumenism needs to hold together universal and particular principles (Munzinger 2020, p. 193). A certain dilemma is recurring: the ecumenical movement has impressively articulated resistance against ruling powers (Munzinger 2020, p. 194). This is manifested in the comprehensive efforts of the World Council of Churches for social, religious, and ecological justice worldwide. At the same time, this movement also bears joint responsibility for the formation of colonial and ecologically destructive structures (Munzinger 2020, p. 195). Thus, when looking toward the future, cultivating an awareness of inner plurality is of great importance since there is profound dissent *within* individual religious communities that blurs clear-cut boundaries (between these communities). The phenomenon of multiple affiliation, which can be observed first and foremost in migrant communities, is an example of this blurring: 'At the macro level', according to Munzinger, 'cultures are thus not homogeneous due to far-reaching internal differentiation processes; at the micro level, people hailing from different cultures form new cultural syntheses' (Munzinger 2020, p. 197). Munzinger refuses to understand multiple affiliations as a 'sign of pathological identity formation'. Instead, it belongs 'to the logic of migration and the globalization of narratives' (Munzinger 2020, p. 198). However, precisely the recognition of such a logic of multiple affiliations is a major and lasting challenge for an ecumenical discourse that remains attached to clear denominational categories or ignores power dynamics while excluding hybrid identities.

This challenge also applies to the movement of *receptive ecumenism*, which has established itself over the past fifteen years or so. It has developed a new method of ecumenical exchange characterized by a great respect for the richness of denominational and spiritual differences. Its focus is not so much on the active formulation of one's own identity, but rather on 'transformative receptivity'. This means that the conceptual clarification of what is one's own is placed aside in favor of a 'receptive learning' from others (Murray 2007, p. 289). The emphasis is not on asserting one's own identity but, following Emmanuel Lévinas, on paying attention to one's own responsibility in the face of Others (Murray 2007, p. 290). According to Paul D. Murray, one of the theorists of receptive ecumenism, one can only change oneself, and this is best done in the face of Others and through Others (Murray 2007, p. 292).

This ecumenical method of attentively perceiving the gifts of Others that transform the Self is something that can also be of great importance in the context of postcolonial plurality. However, Murray is clearly concerned with preserving one's respective identity and integrity. Receptive ecumenism, Murray argues, overall is 'about having evoked in us the desire to become more fully, more freely and more richly what we already are' (Murray 2007, p. 291). He does not seem to have in mind instances where true mixing takes place, or denominationally or culturally ambiguous identities and their associated power dynamics. It is the negligence of power asymmetries which Sara Gehlin criticizes in the project of receptive ecumenism. While she acknowledges the approach for its understanding of unilateral learning and receiving in the spirit of self-criticism, she also criticizes from a feminist perspective the associated and often unnoticed problem of the asymmetry of

power relations. (Gehlin 2020, pp. 198–99). Indeed, the awareness of the subject position of the conversation partners is crucial: Who is doing the listening? What about the question of equality and mutuality? Not least, what does an approach of vulnerable listening mean in a situation of power asymmetry? What are the risks of directing the focus exclusively ‘toward unilateral learning and receiving in a spirit of self-criticism?’ What does such self-criticism lead to in ‘the absence of mutual exchange in receptive ecumenism.’ (Gehlin 2020, p. 198) She thereby draws our attention to the fact that denominational, cultural, and creaturely boundaries never simply are innocent zones of transformation, but always also fields of contestation and power struggle. Questions of justice and equality need to be asked as well as questions of asymmetry and mutuality at the boundaries of encounters (Gehlin 2020, p. 210). Boundaries are never only what one partner in the encounter perceives them to be. They are always also zones in which power inequalities come to the fore. Therefore, a certain kind of border thinking needs to be practiced (Mignolo 2021) that has equality and mutual accountability as a goal (Gehlin 2020, p. 204f).

Henrik Simojoki has power dynamics in mind when he points out that hybridization is a necessary occurrence, but that people—and I would add especially people in power—do not wish to perceive hybridization processes in either the cultural or the religious spheres. They are perceived as disturbing. Indeed, such processes should not be presented as being too harmonious. Instead, the emergence of hybridity, as described, for example, by Homi K. Bhabha (Bhabha 1994), is always also an expression of a political and cultural struggle that should be taken seriously. This is reflected above all in the context of migration, and thus also in the context of migrant Christian/ecumenical communities (Simojoki 2018, p. 267). It is therefore of importance for ecumenical learning to give individual (hybrid) voices ‘from below’ the right to narrate. This is in line with a ‘right to narrate’ of migrants which Bhabha calls for (quoted in Simojoki 2018, p. 269). The vernacular and the cosmopolitan are held together by this postcolonial strategy, which also could be fruitfully applied to ecumenical learning. After all, hybrid voices belong together in real life, as Simojoki argues: ‘Because in a world that is becoming increasingly globalized also at the local level, instances of exclusion (author’s note: of hybrid voices) accompanied by the suppression of others will immediately become noticeable’ (Simojoki 2018, p. 270).

On the one hand, a cosmopolitan ecumenism that is conscious of the unequal power relations of inner hybridization can maintain loyalty to the formation of particular and hybrid identities without losing sight of the global character of World Christianity. On the other hand, it can demonstrate that ‘loyalty to one’s own identity does not have to come at the expense of loyalty to people of other beliefs and traditions’ (Munzinger 2020, p. 199). Here, we see the emergence of a comprehensive understanding of ecumenical and thus Christian identity, which constructively opposes a polarizing understanding of identity and instead sees identity as an expression of non-exclusive participation in different communities (Nausner 2020c, pp. 270–72). A postcolonial view of ecumenical relations can help, firstly, to acknowledge the growing hybrid cultural and theological forms of Christian identity as legitimate, and secondly, to recognize the dangers of hegemonic understandings of universality.

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Notes

¹ This is a translated, enlarged and revised version of an article in *Ökumenische Rundschau* 70 (Nausner 2021).

² I focus here on some milestones in the ecumenism of *mainstream churches*. I am aware that inner-Christian ‘ecumenism’ understood more broadly encompasses a much wider variety such as the *World Evangelical Alliance*, as well as the many Pentecostal and indigenous movements whose global importance Henning Wrogemann points out repeatedly. (cf. Wrogemann 2016, p. 17).

³ See *Together Towards Life. Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, para. 5. Available online: https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/Together_towards_Life.pdf (accessed on 24 June 2022).

- 4 Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, a prominent representative of *decolonial* thinking in Europe, points out that despite all the emphasis placed on the new *postcolonial* discourse, it should not be forgotten that decolonial thinking, with its roots in the Latin American anti-imperialist movement of the 19th century, had already reflected extensively on many of the concerns of postcolonial thinkers. (Fornet-Betancourt 2018).
- 5 In the beginning it was only men. In 1981 the first female theologians were admitted to the association. In 1997 Mercy Amba Oduyoye, a tireless promoter of women in theological discourse—especially in the Global South, became the first female president of EATWOT. An example of her commitment is the anthology *Women in Religion and Culture* (Oduyoye 2007).
- 6 See <http://eatwot.net/VOICES/> (accessed on 24 June 2022).
- 7 See the 2014 issue Theologies of Liberation and Postcolonial Thought. *Voices From the Third World* 37. Available online: <http://eatwot.net/VOICES/VOICES-2014-1.pdf> (accessed on 24 June 2022).
- 8 *Together Towards Life*, para. 27.
- 9 *Ibid.*, para. 98.
- 10 For a critical appraisal of *Together Towards Life* from the perspective of postcolonial theology see Nausner (2015).
- 11 For the importance of the experience of cultural borders for ecclesiology in general and Methodist ecclesiology in particular see Nausner (2010).
- 12 Hendrik Pieterse reflects on what this challenge could mean for Methodist theology and proposes a new appreciation of the intercultural potential of the two classic Methodist ecclesiological structural elements of ‘connection’ and ‘conference’. According to Pieterse, cultural-religious plurality should not be seen as an obstacle or failure, but rather as a gift from God that challenges people to see the spaces between cultures as sites of theological creativity. See Pieterse (2021).
- 13 Judith Gruber deconstructs the notion of the Christian canon as monolithic and instead describes the canon as an ‘act of intercultural theology’ (Gruber 2018, p. 133).
- 14 For an overview of texts on postcolonial theology in German-speaking countries in recent years see Nausner (2020a).
- 15 Similar things can be said of the still hesitant communication between the ecumenical community of the traditional churches and the worldwide Pentecostal movement. Henning Wrogemann tirelessly points this out and, in his three-volume work on intercultural theology, consistently integrates voices of Pentecostal theology into the ecumenical dialogue, which he wishes to have understood more broadly than is the case in the practice of the World Council of Churches. Unfortunately, his work lacks a more thorough examination of postcolonial approaches, and he repeatedly engages unfair polemics against what he believes to be elitist approaches such as those of contextual theologies or the theology of religions.—See Wrogemann (2016, pp. 348–60).

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