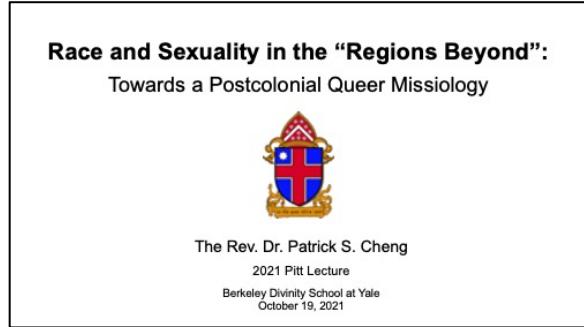


Berkeley Divinity School at Yale  
2021 Pitt Lecture

**Race and Sexuality in the “Regions Beyond”:  
Towards a Postcolonial Queer Missiology**

The Rev. Dr. Patrick S. Cheng<sup>1</sup>  
October 19, 2021

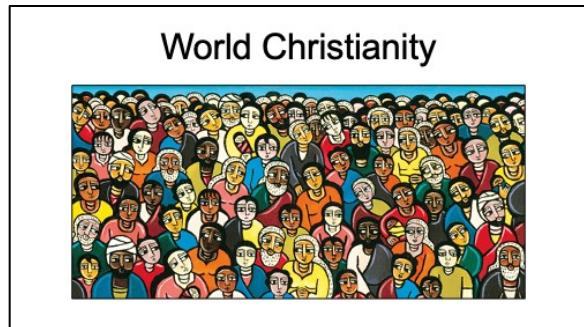
1.



Good afternoon. I'm the Rev. Dr. Patrick Cheng, and I'm honored to deliver the 2021 Pitt Lecture at this year's Berkeley Divinity School convocation. The title of my lecture is "Race and Sexuality in the 'Regions Beyond': Towards a Postcolonial Queer Missiology."

Before I begin, I'd like to thank everyone who is here this afternoon at Christ Church New Haven, as well as everyone who is joining us by Zoom or watching this lecture as a recording. And a big thank you to Dean McGowan for the invitation to deliver this lecture.

2.



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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Cheng is an Episcopal priest, lawyer, and theologian. He is the author of three books, including *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology* (New York: Seabury Books, 2011), which has been translated into Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. He holds degrees from Yale College (B.A.), Harvard Law School (J.D.), and Union Theological Seminary (M.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D.). For more information about Fr. Cheng, please see Fr. Patrick S. Cheng, last modified November 13, 2021, <http://www.patrickcheng.net>.

As you may know, the Louis Wetherbee Pitt Lecture is given every other year by “distinguished preachers and world Christians.” Now I don’t know if I’m a distinguished preacher or not, but I do consider myself to be a “world Christian.”

3.



I was actually born and baptized in the former British colony of Hong Kong. Here’s a photo of my family and me on my first birthday. I’m at the center of the photo, and I’m surrounded by my parents and my material grandparents, *Wai Gung* and *Wai Puo*. Shortly after this photo was taken, my family immigrated to the United States, and so I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area.

4.



I’ve returned to Hong Kong twice during the past decade to preach, teach, and minister to LGBTQ Christians from across Asia. Here’s a photo of me with the participants in the 2014 Queer Theology Academy hosted by the Chung Chi Divinity School at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

5.

### British Empire



This afternoon, I'd like to explore with you how race and sexuality were constructed in the far-flung regions of the British Empire during the 19th century. My thesis is that the construction of the racial and the sexual "other" during the height of British imperialism continues to influence how we interact with each other in the Anglican Communion today.

6.

### Missio Dei



To that end, I'd like to propose the outline of a postcolonial queer missiology that can help us to live out the *Missio Dei*, or mission of God, in a Communion that has been openly and deeply divided over issues of race and sexuality for nearly a quarter of a century.

7.

### Outline



1. Traditional model of mission
2. Race in the "regions beyond"
3. Sexuality in the "regions beyond"
4. An alternative model of mission

My lecture is divided into four parts.

The first part will examine the traditional model of mission.

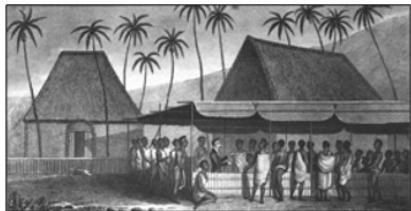
The second part will look at how race was constructed in the “regions beyond” of the British Empire.

The third part will look at how sexuality was constructed in those regions.

And the fourth and final part will propose an alternative model of mission that might speak better to the current divisions over race and sexuality in the Anglican Communion.

8.

### 1. Traditional Model of Mission



So let us begin with the traditional model of mission.

9.

### Berkeley Divinity School Motto



My starting point is the motto of Berkeley Divinity School. Did you know that the BDS motto is actually about mission? The motto, which appears in Latin at the bottom of the school's seal, is “*in illa quae ultra sunt*.” The English translation of the motto, as most of you know, is “into the regions beyond.”

10.

### Berkeley Divinity School Motto

**"in illa quae ultra sunt"**

into those that beyond are

Here's a literal translation of the Latin motto. Interestingly, the word "regions" does not appear in the translation. The translation simply reads: "into those that beyond are." That's because the word "regions" is implicit in the word *illa*.

11.

### 2 Corinthians 10:16



As I mentioned, the BDS motto is about mission. The motto is taken from chapter 10, verse 16, of the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

This is the section of the epistle in which Paul angrily denounces the sarcastically-named "super-apostles" who have infiltrated his beloved church in Corinth and who have turned the members of that church against him. (As you may recall, these unnamed super-apostles considered themselves to be missionaries to the Corinthians. They were not connected with Paul or the original apostles.)

12.

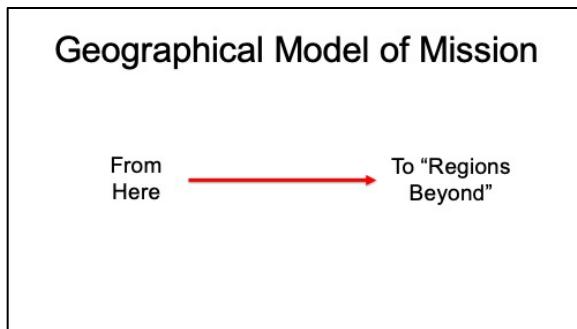
2 Corinthians 10:15-16	
NRSV	Vulgate
We do not boast beyond limits, that is, in the labors of others; but our hope is that, as your faith increases, our sphere of action among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may proclaim the gospel without <b>boasting</b> of work already done in someone else's sphere of action.	Non in immensum gloriantes in alienis laboribus: spem autem habentes crescentis fidei vestrae, in vobis magnificari secundum regulam nostram in abundantia, etiam <b>in illa quae ultra sunt</b> , evangelizare, non in aliena regula in iis que preparata sunt gloriari.

In verses 15 and 16 of this section, Paul distinguishes himself from these “super-apostles.” As you can see in the NRSV text on the left side of the slide, Paul refuses to “boast,” or take credit for, the missionary “labors of others.”<sup>2</sup>

Rather, Paul hopes that he will be the first person to proclaim the gospel “in [the] lands beyond” where the Corinthians are located.<sup>3</sup> This is where the BDS motto – “into the regions beyond” – appears. You can see the Latin text of the motto, “*in illa quae ultra sunt*,” in the Vulgate translation on the right.

In other words, Paul tells his beloved church in Corinth that – unlike the super apostles – he will do his missionary work in places that have not yet been touched by someone else’s “sphere of action.”<sup>4</sup>

13.



This passage from Second Corinthians, and by extension the BDS motto, is a classic example the geographical model of mission. In such a model, mission is understood as an activity that occurs across physical space. Specifically, Paul talks about bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ from “here” to the “regions beyond.”

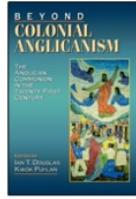
<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 10:15 (NRSV).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, at 10:16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

14.

## Traditional Model of Mission



"[Traditionally,] the primary missionary frontier is geographical. **Such a frontier lies 'out there' beyond the home front,** often overseas. It is a mission primarily shaped by **'the territorial "from-to" idea.'** The goal of mission is seen essentially as the physical extension and the numerical increase of the church."

- Christopher Duraisingh, "Toward a Postcolonial Re-visioning of the Church's Faith, Witness, and Communion"

My former Episcopal Divinity School faculty colleague Prof. Christopher Duraisingh has noted how the traditional model of mission is geographical in nature. In a chapter from the *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism* anthology edited by Bishop Ian Douglas and Prof. Kwok Pui-Lan, Duraisingh writes:

"[Traditionally,] the primary missionary frontier is geographical. **Such a frontier lies 'out there' beyond the home front,** often overseas. It is a mission primarily shaped by **'the territorial "from-to" idea.'** The goal of mission is seen essentially as the physical extension and the numerical increase of the church."<sup>5</sup>

15.

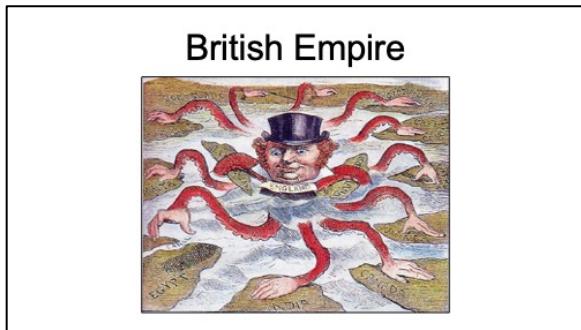
## British Empire



Now missionary work is not the only place in which one sees the geographical movement of going from “here” to the “regions beyond.” This is actually the same movement that underlies the imperial enterprise. Here is a map of the British Empire that was published in 1886. You can see that England is at the center of the map, and the colonies radiate outwards from the metropolis into the “regions beyond.”

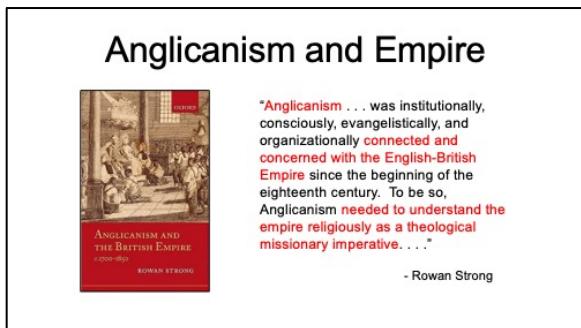
<sup>5</sup> Christopher Duraisingh, “Toward a Postcolonial Re-visioning of the Church’s Faith, Witness, and Communion,” in *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism: The Anglican Communion in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Ian T. Douglas and Kwok Pui-lan (New York: Church Publishing, 2001), 354.

16.



In this 19th century American political cartoon, England is characterized as a greedy octopus-like creature with tentacles that literally reach to the “regions beyond.”

17.



It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Anglicanism was closely aligned with the British Empire. Prof. Rowan Strong of Murdoch University in Australia has commented on the symbiotic relationship between missiology and colonialism. In his book *Anglicanism and the British Empire*, Strong writes:

**"Anglicanism . . . was institutionally, consciously, evangelistically, and organizationally connected and concerned with the English-British Empire** since the beginning of the eighteenth century. To be so, Anglicanism **needed to understand the empire religiously as a theological missionary imperative. . ."**<sup>6</sup>

In other words, Anglicanism could not be separated from empire. In fact, Anglican missiology – and the traditional geographical model of mission – was used to justify the very existence of empire.

<sup>6</sup> Rowan Strong, *Anglicanism and the British Empire, c. 1700-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 294.

18.

## Outline

-  1. Traditional model of mission
-  2. Race in the "regions beyond" ←
-  3. Sexuality in the "regions beyond"
-  4. An alternative model of mission

Let us now turn to the second part of this lecture – that is, how race was constructed in the “regions beyond” in the British Empire.

19.

### 2. Race in the “Regions Beyond”



We begin with a photograph of a British official in India who is seated on a balcony, shirtless, and receiving a pedicure from his Indian servant. At the same time, the official is being fanned by another servant. I invite you to take a moment and reflect upon the power dynamic expressed in this photo and how the servants are portrayed.

20.

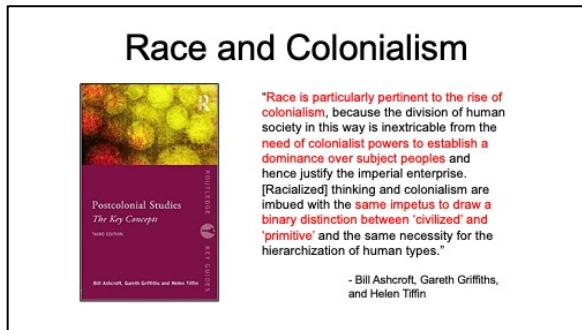
### Race as Marker of Difference



Next, we have a photograph of another British official in India who is being transported by four Indian servants. Again, take a moment to reflect upon the power dynamic expressed in the photo and the portrayal of the servants.

In both photographs, race is the key marker of difference – not only with respect to the power dynamic of dominance and submission, but also with respect to the dichotomy of civilized vs. primitive.

21.



## Race and Colonialism

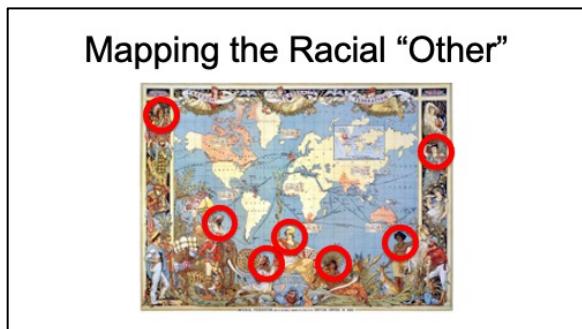
"Race is particularly pertinent to the rise of colonialism, because the division of human society in this way is inextricable from the need of colonialist powers to establish a dominance over subject peoples and hence justify the imperial enterprise. [Racialized] thinking and colonialism are imbued with the same impetus to draw a binary distinction between 'civilized' and 'primitive' and the same necessity for the hierarchization of human types."

- Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin

The close connection between race and colonialism is helpfully summarized by the authors of *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. They write:

**"Race is particularly pertinent to the rise of colonialism,** because the division of human society in this way is inextricable from the **need of colonialist powers to establish a dominance over subject peoples** and hence justify the imperial enterprise. [Racialized] thinking and colonialism are imbued with the **same impetus to draw a binary distinction between 'civilized' and 'primitive'** and the same necessity for the hierarchization of human types."<sup>7</sup>

22.



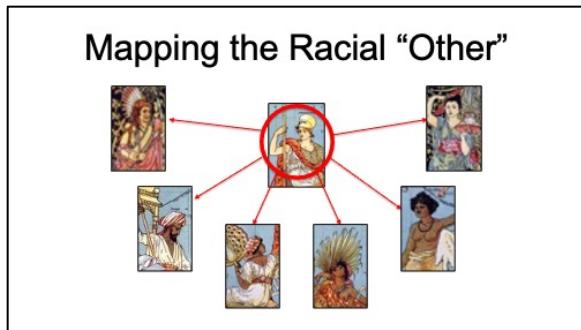
## Mapping the Racial "Other"

Returning to our late-19th century map of the British Empire, I'd like to call your attention to the margins – specifically, to the illustrations that are displayed on the map's borders. These illustrations are more than just decorations, however. They provide a window

<sup>7</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 3rd ed. (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013), s.v. "Race," 218-19.

into the 19th century British psyche about how it perceived the racialized “other” from the “regions beyond.”

23.



In the center of this slide you see the image of Britannia, the personification of England. Britannia has ivory-white skin. She wears a helmet and holds a spear – not unlike a crown and scepter, or perhaps even a mitre and crozier.

Like the photographs that we saw earlier, the inhabitants of the “regions beyond” are depicted as being servile and/or primitive.

Starting from the upper right hand corner and moving clockwise, you first see a woman from Asia carrying tea on a tray as well as a paper fan.

Next you see a bare-chested aboriginal woman from Australia holding a boomerang.

Then you see a half-clothed woman from Africa holding a fan of palms.

Next is a woman from the Caribbean with a scarf-covered head and who is holding a fan of peacock feathers.

You then see a man from India wearing a turban and sitting on an elephant.

Finally, you see an indigenous man from North America wearing a headdress of feathers and holding arrows in his hand.

24.

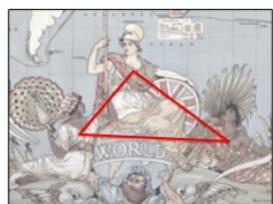
### Colonial Power Dynamics



What is more disturbing – but not surprising – is that Britannia is sitting on a globe (marked “world”) and is flanked on either side by the woman from the Caribbean and the woman from Africa. Like the Indian servant who was fanning the British officer who was getting a pedicure, both of these women are fanning Britannia to keep her comfortable.

25.

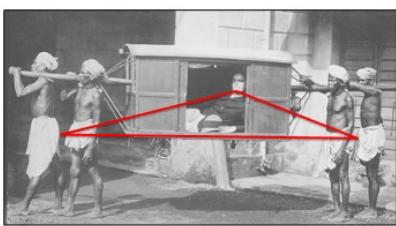
### Colonial Power Dynamics



The power dynamic of dominance and submission between Britannia and the two colonized women from the “regions beyond” is mapped here by the red triangle that is superimposed upon the image.

26.

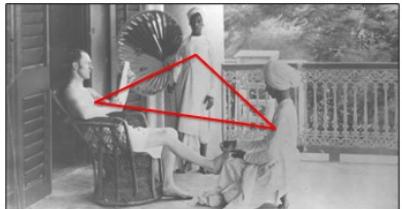
### Colonial Power Dynamics



The same racialized power dynamic appears in the photograph of the British officer and the four servants who are carrying him.

27.

### Colonial Power Dynamics



Again, we see this power dynamic in the photo of the British officer who is getting a pedicure and his two servants.

28.

### Colonial Power Dynamics



And we see this dynamic in the illustration that I showed at the beginning of my lecture of a British officer who is literally being supported and carried to shore by two native individuals.

29.

### A Contemporary Example



Museum of Natural History, New York City

Lest you think that the racialized power dynamic of dominance and submission existed only in earlier times and far-away places, here's the statue that currently stands at the front entrance of the Museum of Natural History on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

The statue portrays President Teddy Roosevelt riding a horse and being flanked by two figures who are his gun carriers. The first figure is a Native American, and the second figure is a person of African descent.

The statue, which was commissioned in 1925 and installed 1940, has stood in front of the Museum of Natural History for some eight decades. Despite decades of controversy and the recent Black Lives Matter movement, it was only this past June when the museum and the New York City Public Design Commission finally agreed to remove the statue.<sup>8</sup> However, the statue is still there, four months later, and no specific date for the removal has been announced.

30.

## Outline

-  1. Traditional model of mission
-  2. Race in the "regions beyond"
-  3. Sexuality in the "regions beyond" ←
-  4. An alternative model of mission

We now turn to the third part of this lecture: the construction of sexuality in the “regions beyond.”

31.

### 3. Sexuality in the “Regions Beyond”



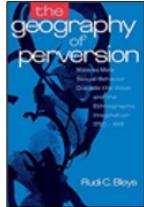
As with race, sexuality was used by the colonizers to depict the inhabitants of the colonized lands as the radical “other.”

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<sup>8</sup> Laura Zornosa, “Unanimous Vote Is Final Step Toward Removing Roosevelt Statue,” New York Times, June 22, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/22/arts/design/theodore-roosevelt-statue-museum-natural-history-removal.html>.

32.

## Geography of Perversion



"[T]he tropes of **homophobia** in post-colonial politics . . . coincided with the epoch of imperialism and both were mutually intertwined' . . . [N]on-western sexualities were read, interpreted and represented as a **limitless repository of deviance, extravagance, [and] eccentricity** . . . aiming simultaneously at the marginalization of cultural and sexual minorities."

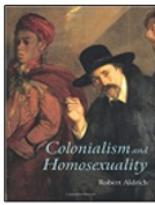
- Rudi C. Bleys

Dr. Rudi Bleys, an independent scholar in the Netherlands, has described this dynamic as the “geography of perversion.” In his book *Geography of Perversion*, Bleys writes:

"[T]he tropes of **homophobia in post-colonial politics** . . . **coincided with the epoch of imperialism and both were mutually intertwined**' . . . [N]on-western sexualities were read, interpreted and represented as a **limitless repository of deviance, extravagance, [and] eccentricity** . . . aiming simultaneously at the marginalization of cultural and sexual minorities."<sup>9</sup>

33.

## Sex Lives of Explorers



"In Europe, life was full of dichotomies – respectable versus immoral behaviour, natural and unnatural sex, homosexual versus heterosexual acts. In the colonies, things were different. Misbehaviour (so long as it was relatively discreet) would be tolerated [since] the global positioning of the Sotadic Zone excused misbehaviour – *infra equinoxialem nihil peccari*, there is no sin below the equator. The age of consent of a bedfellow did not seem a matter of great concern, nor was expectation of compensation for sexual favours a surprise. Beer and rum, drugs and heat lowered inhibitions."

- Robert Aldrich

Ironically, while the colonizers were busy characterizing the colonized as sexual outsiders, the colonizers themselves were engaging in sexual acts that would have been criminalized at home. In his book *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, Prof. Robert Aldrich of the University of Sydney noted that geography was often used as an excuse for sexual “misbehavior.” He writes:

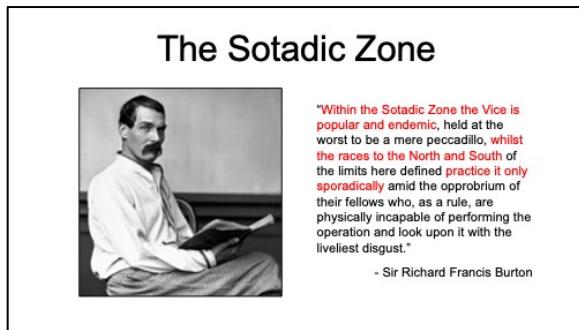
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<sup>9</sup> Rudi C. Bleys, *The Geography of Perversion: Male-to-Male Sexual Behavior Outside the West and the Ethnographic Imagination, 1750-1918* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 267.

bedfellow did not seem a matter of great concern, nor was expectation of compensation for sexual favours a surprise. Beer and rum, drugs and heat lowered inhibitions.”<sup>10</sup>

I love the phrase “*Infra equinoxialem nihil peccari*” – that is, “there is no sin below the equator.” Think of it as a 19th-century version of “What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas”!

34.



Seriously, though, one of the more bizarre elements of the geography of perversion was the “Sotadic Zone” referenced by Aldrich. The concept of the Sotadic Zone was invented by the 19th-century British explorer and translator Sir Richard Francis Burton. Burton believed that the vices of sodomy and other prohibited sexual acts were particularly prevalent in the Sotadic Zone due to the warm climate. Burton wrote:

**“Within the Sotadic Zone the Vice is popular and endemic**, held at the worst to be a mere peccadillo, **whilst the races to the North and South** of the limits here defined **practice it only sporadically** amid the opprobrium of their fellows who, as a rule, are physically incapable of performing the operation and look upon it with the liveliest disgust.”<sup>11</sup>

35.



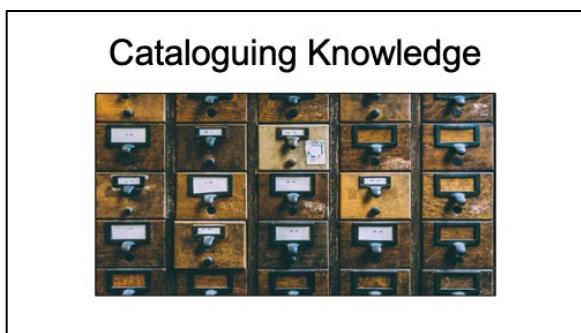
<sup>10</sup> Robert Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality* (London: Routledge, 2003), 410.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Burton, *The Sotadic Zone* (Boston: Longwood Press, 1977), quoted in Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 31.

Now where exactly is the Sotadic Zone, you might ask? On this slide, you can see that the Sotadic Zone encompasses all of the areas marked in red. That is, roughly 43 degrees north of the equator to 30 degrees south of the equator, but also including most of East Asia and Southeast Asia as well as all of North America and South America. I bet you never knew that New Haven was located in the Sotadic Zone, did you?

A brief postscript about Burton. Although he was married to a woman, it is said that he had a particular interest in conducting undercover missions to research male brothels that were frequented by British soldiers in the “regions beyond.” Not surprisingly, his wife burned all of his papers after he died.

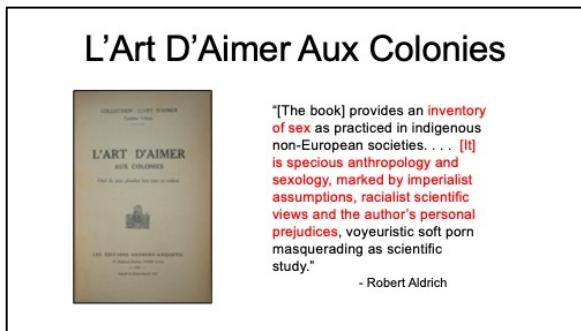
36.



### Cataloguing Knowledge

The Sotadic Zone was not the only element of the geography of perversion. Colonial explorers also took an interest in cataloguing the sexual acts of the local inhabitants in the “regions beyond.”

37.



### L'Art D'Aimer Aux Colonies

"[The book] provides an inventory of sex as practiced in indigenous non-European societies. . . . [It] is specious anthropology and sexology, marked by imperialist assumptions, racialist scientific views and the author's personal prejudices, voyeuristic soft porn masquerading as scientific study."  
- Robert Aldrich

For example, a book called *L'Art d'aimer aux colonies*, or *The Art of Love in the Colonies*, was published anonymously in 1893 by a certain “Dr. Jacobus X.” Prof. Robert Aldrich described the work as follows:

“[The book] provides an inventory of sex as practiced in indigenous non-European societies. . . . [It] is specious anthropology and sexology, marked by imperialist

**assumptions, racialist scientific views and the author's personal prejudices,** voyeuristic soft porn masquerading as scientific study.”<sup>12</sup>

38.

### The Sexual “Other”



“Racialist and racist stereotypes abounded. Romanticisation and idealization of foreign cultures – or, conversely, denigration of them – were common, along with wild fantasies. . . . Homoerotic writing and art lauding the physical attributes of foreign men participated in race-based stereotyping. . . . Relations of power permeated colonial sexual culture.”

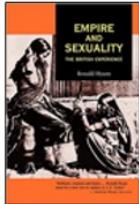
- Robert Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*

In constructing the sexual “other,” authors such as “Dr. Jacobus X” perpetuated race-based stereotypes that remain with us to this day. Aldrich noted:

**“Racialist and racist stereotypes abounded.** Romanticisation and idealization of foreign cultures – or, conversely, denigration of them – were common, **along with wild fantasies.** . . . **Homoerotic writing and art lauding the physical attributes of foreign men participated in race-based stereotyping.**. . . . Relations of power permeated colonial sexual culture.”<sup>13</sup>

39.

### Empire and Sexuality



“[I]t is quite impossible to understand the nature of the British empire, or the dynamics of British expansion overseas, without taking account of the sexual attitudes and expectations of the men who were in charge. The sexual structures they encountered or created or adapted have to be built integrally into the imperial picture if it is to be in any sense a true one.”

- Ronald Hyam

To summarize, a key factor in the development of the British Empire was sexual desire. That is, not just the sexual desire of those who inhabited the “regions beyond,” but also the sexual desire of the British colonizers. In his book *Empire and Sexuality*, Prof. Ronald Hyam of Cambridge University wrote:

**“[I]t is quite impossible to understand the nature of the British empire,** or the dynamics of British expansion overseas, **without taking account of the sexual attitudes and expectations of the men who were in charge.** The sexual structures they

<sup>12</sup> Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, 14-17.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

encountered or created or adapted have to be built integrally into the imperial picture if it is to be in any sense a true one.”<sup>14</sup>

40.

### Outline

-  1. Traditional model of mission
-  2. Race in the “regions beyond”
-  3. Sexuality in the “regions beyond”
-  4. An alternative model of mission ←

We now turn to the fourth and final part of this lecture. In this part, I will propose an alternative model of mission that can help us to carry out *Missio Dei*, or the mission of God, in our own particular time and place.

41.

#### 4. An Alternative Model of Mission



Specifically, I would like to propose an alternative model of mission – that is, a paradigm shift – that would move away from the traditional model of mission in the Anglican Communion.

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<sup>14</sup> Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1990), 211-12.

42.

### Moving Away from Geography



This alternative model would move away from the traditional geographical model of mission.

43.

### Towards a Deeper Encounter



Instead, it would move towards a missiology of reconciliation and deeper encounter. In other words, going into the “regions beyond” would be less about traveling through physical space and more about having a deeper encounter with the “other.”

44.

### Mission as Reconciliation



Contemporary missiologists have noted that reconciliation is a central aspect of *Missio Dei*. For example, in an essay that Bishop Douglas wrote about God’s mission and the Anglican

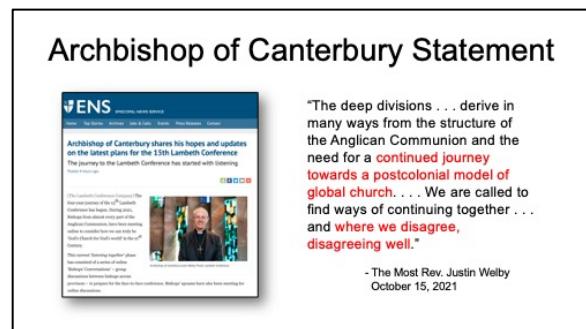
Communion, he argued that the focus of *Missio Dei* should be on the “reconciliation of all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.”<sup>15</sup>

45.



This focus on reconciliation is particularly appropriate in light of the ongoing divisions in the Anglican Communion over race and sexuality. These divisions have existed openly for at least a quarter of a century, beginning with Resolution 1.10 from the 1998 Lambeth Conference, which expressly rejected “homosexual practice” as being “incompatible with scripture.” Resolution 1.10 also rejected the blessing of same-sex unions as well as the ordination of those in such relationships.<sup>16</sup>

46.



Just this past Friday, the Archbishop of Canterbury issued a statement about the upcoming 2022 Lambeth Conference and the ongoing divisions in the Anglican Communion. In his statement, Archbishop Welby expressly noted that the Communion aspires to a “postcolonial model” of church. He wrote:

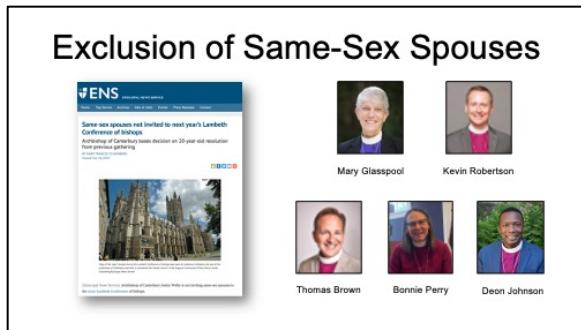
“The deep divisions . . . derive in many ways from the structure of the Anglican Communion and the need for **a continued journey towards a postcolonial model of**

<sup>15</sup> Ian T. Douglas, “Restoration, Reconciliation, and Renewal in God’s Mission and the Anglican Communion,” in *Waging Reconciliation: God’s Mission in a Time of Globalization and Crisis*, ed. Ian T. Douglas (New York: Church Publishing, 2002), 217.

<sup>16</sup> Resolution 1.10, Lambeth Conference (1998), <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/document-library/lambeth-conference/1998/section-i-called-to-full-humanity/section-i10-human-sexuality>.

**global church**. . . We are called to find ways of continuing together . . . and **where we disagree, disagreeing well.**<sup>17</sup>

47.



Aspiring to a postcolonial ecclesiology and “disagreeing well” is a lovely goal. However, this doesn’t change the painful fact that the same-sex spouses of at least five bishops – who are shown on this slide<sup>18</sup> – remain excluded from the upcoming Lambeth Conference. This exclusion seems particularly callous (or dare I say cruel?) in light of the fact that the conference’s program expressly includes the spouses of all the other bishops.

48.



So it’s clear to me that we need an alternative model of mission that can help us to reconcile with one another over issues of race and sexuality in the Anglican Communion.

How, then, can we construct an alternative missiology that is grounded in reconciliation and deeper encounter?

<sup>17</sup> Justin Welby, “The Lambeth Conference: The Journey Is Under Way – An Update from the Archbishop of Canterbury,” October 14, 2021, <https://www.lambethconference.org/the-lambeth-conference-the-journey-is-under-way/>.

<sup>18</sup> The bishops shown on this slide are (in chronological order of consecration): The Rt. Rev. Mary D. Glasspool, Assistant Bishop, Diocese of New York; The Rt. Rev. Kevin Robertson, Suffragan Bishop, Diocese of Toronto; The Rt. Rev. Thomas J. Brown, Bishop, Diocese of Maine; The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry, Bishop, Diocese of Michigan; and The Rt. Rev. Deon K. Johnson, Bishop, Diocese of Missouri.

49.



One approach might be to draw from the insights of postcolonial queer theory. Since the early 1990s, queer scholars of color and others have been doing important work at the intersections of both postcolonial and queer thought. Here are some key works in this area, in addition to the books that I have previously referenced in this lecture.<sup>19</sup>

50.



In my view, the insights of postcolonial queer theory can help us to find areas of agreement that might lead us towards a *Missio Dei* of reconciliation and deeper encounter.

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<sup>19</sup> The books shown on this slide are: John C. Hawley, ed., *Postcolonial and Queer Theories: Intersections and Essays* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001); John C. Hawley, ed., *Postcolonial, Queer: Theoretical Intersections* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001); Philip Holden and Richard J. Ruppel, eds., *Imperial Desire: Dissident Sexualities and Colonial Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); and Christopher Lane, *The Ruling Passion: British Colonial Allegory and the Paradox of Homosexual Desire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

51.

### Three Postcolonial Queer Practices

- a. Question the “obvious”
- b. Let the marginalized speak
- c. Embrace backwardness

Specifically, I would like to propose three postcolonial queer practices that might help us reach that goal.

First, question the “obvious.”

Second, let the marginalized speak.

Third, embrace backwardness.

52.

#### a. Question the “Obvious”



First, question the “obvious.” As Dorothy and her friends in *The Wizard of Oz* realized, things are not always what they seem. Sometimes the “Great and Powerful Oz” is nothing more than a fraudster or a con man behind the curtain.

53.

a. Question the “Obvious”



Take, for example, the division between “East” and “West.” Most people think of this dichotomy to be obvious and a fact of nature.

54.

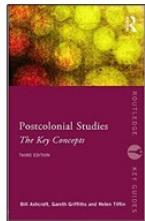
a. Question the “Obvious”



Who among us – myself included – hasn’t at some point engaged in binary thinking about the exoticism and mystery of the Orient on the one hand, and the familiarity and transparency of the West on the other?

55.

a. Question the “Obvious”



“[Orientalism is] a supreme example of the construction of the other, a form of authority. The Orient is not an inert fact of nature, but a phenomenon constructed by generations of intellectuals, artists, commentators, writers, politicians and, more importantly, constructed by the naturalizing of a wide range of Orientalist assumptions and stereotypes.”

- Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin

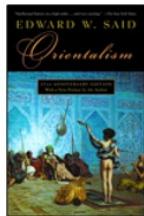
But the “Orient” is actually not a fact of nature. As the editors of *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts* have written:

“[Orientalism is] a supreme example of the construction of the other, a form of authority. **The Orient is not an inert fact of nature, but a phenomenon** constructed by generations of intellectuals, artists, commentators, writers, politicians and, more importantly, **constructed by the naturalizing of a wide range of Orientalist assumptions and stereotypes.**”<sup>20</sup>

In other words, what appears to be obvious and “natural” as a result of repetition over generations is actually a means of exercising control over the “other.”

56.

#### a. Question the “Obvious”



“Orientalism [deals] with the Orient . . . by making statements about it, authorizing views about it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: **in short, Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.**”

- Edward W. Said

This is the insight that gave rise to postcolonial theory in the late 1970s. In his groundbreaking book *Orientalism*, the late Prof. Edward Said of Columbia University argued that the “Orient” is less about the natural order of things, and more about a mechanism of domination. (For Said, the “Orient” referred to the Middle East instead of East Asia.) Said wrote:

“Orientalism [deals] with the Orient . . . by making statements about it, authorizing views about it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: **in short, Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.**”<sup>21</sup>

57.

#### a. Question the “Obvious”



“I have found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault’s notion of a discourse, as described by him in *The Archeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*, to identify Orientalism.”

- Edward W. Said

<sup>20</sup> Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Studies*, 185.

<sup>21</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 3.

Said's critique of Orientalism should be familiar to many of you. What is less well known, however, is that Said credits one of the foundational – or should I say “anti-foundational” – figures of queer theory, Michel Foucault, for his work. Said wrote:

“I have found it useful here to employ **Michel Foucault’s notion of a discourse**, as described by him in *The Archeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*, to identify Orientalism.”<sup>22</sup>

58.

a. Question the “Obvious”



So what does all this have to do with the Christian gospel? To paraphrase Tertullian, what does the Athens of postcolonial queer thought have to do with the Jerusalem of missiology? Well, actually quite a lot.

If you think about it, questioning the “obvious” is at the heart of what we profess as Christians. From the perspective of the gospel, things are never what they seem. The world teaches us that there is no life after death. The world teaches us that we do not need to take care of others. And the world teaches us that we can accomplish anything if we only try hard enough.

But the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ turns upside-down what seems “obvious” to the world. In fact, death is never the last word. In fact, we are all part of one body and thus interdependent upon others. And in fact, we are saved not by our own works, but only by the grace of God.

Question the obvious.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

59.

### b. Let the Marginalized Speak



Second, let the marginalized speak.

60.

### b. Let the Marginalized Speak



"The Hindu widow ascends the pyre of the dead husband and immolates herself upon it. This is widow sacrifice. . . . The abolition of this rite by the British has been generally understood as a case of 'White men saving brown women from brown men'. . . . Against this is the Indian nativist argument, a parody of the nostalgia for lost origins: 'The women actually wanted to die.' The two sentences go a long way to legitimize each other. One never encounters the testimony of the women's voice-consciousness."

- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

Prof. Gayatri Spivak of Columbia University is perhaps the leading postcolonial theorist of today. Among other things, her work focuses on the subaltern, or the most marginalized elements of society. In her famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Prof. Spivak notes that the voices of the marginalized are rarely present in the conversations that are about them.

In discussing the practice of widow sacrifice in India, Spivak writes:

"The Hindu widow ascends the pyre of the dead husband and immolates herself upon it. This is widow sacrifice. . . . The abolition of this rite by the British has been generally understood as a case of 'White men saving brown women from brown men'. . . . Against this is the Indian nativist argument, a parody of the nostalgia for lost origins: 'The women actually wanted to die.' The two sentences go a long way to legitimize each other. One never encounters the testimony of the women's voice-consciousness."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 93.

61.

### b. Let the Marginalized Speak



In her essay, Spivak raises this key question: How is it possible to discuss – let alone pass legislation about – the practice of *sati* without listening to the voices of those who are the most impacted by it?

62.

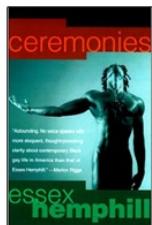
### b. Let the Marginalized Speak



It's not surprising that church-related debates about racial or sexual minorities often exclude the very voices of the individuals who are being discussed. Although the conversations may be about us, we are not invited to the table. Think, for example, of Resolution 1.10 from the 1998 Lambeth Conference. Or the decision to exclude same-sex spouses from the 2022 Lambeth Conference.

63.

### b. Let the Marginalized Speak



"I speak for the thousands,  
perhaps hundreds of thousands  
. . . who live and die in the  
shadows of secrets, unable to  
speak of the love that helps  
them endure and contribute to  
the race. . . . This is what the  
race has depended on in being  
able to erase homosexuality  
from our recorded history."

- Essex Hemphill

This silencing is particularly true for queer people of color. In his book *Ceremonies*, Essex Hemphill, the late gay African-American poet and activist, talked about how many queer Black folk are unable to speak their truth. Hemphill wrote:

“I speak for the thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands . . . who live and die in the shadows of secrets, unable to speak of the love that helps them endure and contribute to the race. . . . This is what the race has depended on in being able to erase homosexuality from our recorded history.”<sup>24</sup>

Hemphill wrote *Ceremonies* in 1992, but his basic point is still applicable to other sexual and gender minorities, including nonbinary, transgender, and intersex persons of color.

64.

#### b. Let the Marginalized Speak



Giving voice to the marginalized is a central aspect of the gospel. In fact, it could be said that much of Jesus Christ's life was lifting up the marginalized and dispossessed. Instead of magnifying the voices of the wealthy and powerful, Jesus interacted with the outcast, the unclean, and the least among us.

Jesus' encounter with the Syrophoenician woman was one example of this practice. She was deemed to be unclean by society on multiple levels. Even Jesus was reluctant at first to listen to her. But he relented when she ultimately talked back to him. “Sir,” she said, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”<sup>25</sup> And so he listened to her and healed her daughter.

Let the marginalized speak.

<sup>24</sup> Essex Hemphill, *Ceremonies: Prose and Poetry* (New York: Plume, 1992), quoted in Dwight A. McBride, “Can the Queen Speak,” in *Why I Hate Abercrombie & Fitch: Essays on Race and Sexuality* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 203.

<sup>25</sup> Mark 7:28 (NRSV).

65.

### c. Embrace Backwardness



Third, and finally, embrace backwardness. In our forward-looking society, newer is always better. We are obsessed with technology, progress, productivity, and the shiniest new thing.

66.

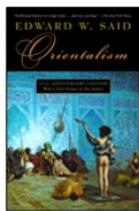
### c. Embrace Backwardness



In recent decades, however, many critical theorists – particularly those in the realm of postcolonial and queer theory – have challenged our obsession with the future. Instead of worshipping at the altar of linear (that is, straight) time, such theorists have encouraged us to spiral backwards and embrace the past.

67.

### c. Embrace Backwardness



"Theses of Oriental backwardness, degeneracy, and inequality with the West most easily associated themselves early in the nineteenth century with ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality. . . . Thus the whole question of imperialism . . . carried forward the binary typology of advanced and backward (or subject) races, cultures, and societies."

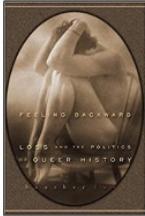
- Edward W. Said

Edward Said, for example, noted how themes of backwardness were used to justify the conquest and colonization of those who lived in the “regions beyond.” He wrote:

“Theses of **Oriental backwardness, degeneracy, and inequality with the West** most easily associated themselves early in the nineteenth century with ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality. . . . Thus the whole question of imperialism . . . carried forward the **binary typology of advanced and backward (or subject) races, cultures, and societies.**”<sup>26</sup>

68.

### c. Embrace Backwardness



[M]odernization . . . perfect[ed] techniques for **mapping and disciplining subjects considered to be lagging behind** – and so seriously compromised the ability of these others ever to catch up. Not only sexual and gender deviants but also women, colonized people, the nonwhite, the disabled, the poor, and criminals were **marked as inferior by means of the allegation of backwardness.**”

- Heather Love

Similarly, the queer theorist Prof. Heather Love of the University of Pennsylvania has argued that allegations of backwardness are often used to mark the “other” as inferior or deviant. In her book *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*, Love writes:

“[M]odernization . . . perfect[ed] techniques for **mapping and disciplining subjects considered to be lagging behind** – and so seriously compromised the ability of these others ever to catch up. Not only sexual and gender deviants but also women, colonized people, the nonwhite, the disabled, the poor, and criminals were **marked as inferior by means of the allegation of backwardness.**”<sup>27</sup>

69.

### c. Embrace Backwardness



It’s not surprising that Jesus embraced backwardness in his ministry. He was born and raised in a backwater province on the edges of the Roman Empire. He did not call the popular,

<sup>26</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 206.

<sup>27</sup> Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 5-6.

the social elites, or the highly educated to be his disciples. Rather, he called lowly and uneducated fishermen like Peter, James, John, and Andrew to be his closest colleagues.

As St. Paul wrote in First Corinthians, “God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise,” and “God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.”<sup>28</sup>

Embrace backwardness.

70.

### A Postcolonial Queer Missiology



a. Question the “obvious”



b. Let the marginalized speak



c. Embrace backwardness

To summarize, I have proposed three postcolonial queer practices that might help us to move closer towards the *Missio Dei* of reconciliation. In a Communion that is deeply divided by race and sexuality, it is my hope that these practices can help us to establish deeper relationships with whoever the “other” for us might be.

Question the “obvious.”

Let the marginalized speak.

And embrace backwardness.

71.

### Some Companions for the Journey



Altigracia  
Perez-Bullard



Carla  
Rozand-Guzman



Deon  
Johnson



Eric  
Law



Horace  
Griffin



Isaiah  
Brookerig



Jaird  
Robinson-  
Brown



Patrick  
Chang



Paul  
Murray



Winrie  
Varghese

In recent years, a number of queer of color voices have emerged in the Episcopal Church and in the broader Anglican Communion. The individuals on this slide are all queer persons of

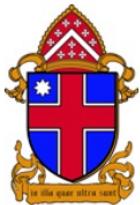
<sup>28</sup> 1 Cor. 1:27 (NRSV).

color who have written about or otherwise wrestled deeply with issues of race and sexuality in their ministries.<sup>29</sup> If you are looking for a companion on your journey towards reconciliation and deeper encounter, I commend their work to you.

I note in particular that a highly-acclaimed documentary about the late Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray – called *My Name is Pauli Murray*<sup>30</sup> – is now available for home streaming.

72.

“Into the Regions Beyond”



So we have reached the end of our journey through the constructions of race and sexuality in the “regions beyond” of the British Empire.

73.

“Into the Regions Beyond”



In this lecture, I have suggested that we think of mission less in geographical terms and more in relational terms. In other words, going into the “regions beyond” is less about a physical journey “out there,” and more about reconciliation and making a deeper internal connection with the “other.”

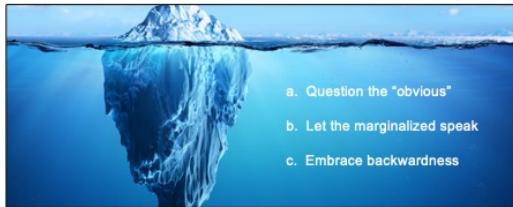
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<sup>29</sup> The individuals mentioned on this slide are: The Rev. Canon Altagracia Pérez-Bullard; The Rev. Dr. Carla E. Roland Guzmán; The Rt. Rev. Deon K. Johnson; The Rev. Dr. Eric H.F. Law; The Rev. Dr. Horace L. Griffin; The Rev. Isaiah Shaneequa Brokenleg; The Rev. Jarel Robinson-Brown; The Rev. Dr. Patrick S. Cheng; The Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray; and The Rev. Winnie Varghese. For an overview of the queer of color theologies written by many of these individuals, see Patrick S. Cheng, *Rainbow Theology: Bridging Race, Sexuality, and Spirit* (New York: Seabury Books, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> *My Name is Pauli Murray*, directed by Julie Cohen and Betsy West (New York: Amazon Studios, 2021).

74.

### “Into the Regions Beyond”



- a. Question the “obvious”
- b. Let the marginalized speak
- c. Embrace backwardness

I have also suggested that certain postcolonial queer practices might help us to see what lies beneath the surface and to form deeper relationships with the “other.” These practices include questioning the obvious, letting the marginalized speak, and embracing backwardness.

75.

### “Into the Regions Beyond”



It is my hope that such practices ultimately can help us form deeper connections between our siblings in the Episcopal Church, the broader Anglican Communion, and the Body of Christ.

76.

The  
End

A dark, textured background with the words "The End" written in a stylized, white, serif font. The letters are slightly shadowed, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to this lecture. I hope that it has prompted you to reflect on what a postcolonial queer missiology might look like into your own life and in your own ministerial context.

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