



Mixology and Theology

Michael Coffey

Week Six: Gin and Tonic, and Postcolonial Theology

Mixology: Gin and Tonic

The gin and tonic is a cocktail with a very colonial history. The British colonized India during the 19th century after a long period of trade and control through the British East India Company. Malaria was a problem for the British and they depended on quinine, a bitter extract from the bark of the cinchona tree. Quinine powder was so bitter it was added to water and sometimes sweetened. To make it more palatable, and enjoyable, the tonic water was added to the Brit's new favorite spirit: gin. Add a lime and there you go. Today's tonic water has less quinine in it and is less bitter than the original. Also, fun fact: Quinine fluoresces, so shine an ultraviolet light on it and see what happens.

Gin and Tonic

2 oz	gin	4 oz	tonic water
1/4	lime		

Add ice to a tall glass. Squeeze lime over it and add lime wedge to ice. Add gin, then tonic water. Stir gently to maintain the fizz in the tonic water.

Gin and Tonic Mocktail

6 oz	tonic water	1/4	lime
2 dashes	orange bitters	1	rosemary sprig

Add ice to a tall glass. Squeeze lime over it and add lime wedge to ice. Add rosemary sprig, then tonic water, then orange bitters. Stir gently.

Theology: Postcolonial Theology

Postcolonialism is the study of the cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism on peoples that were formerly colonized. Postcolonial critical thought is found in many scholarly disciplines including philosophy, politics, economics, literature, and religion. One key work in the field is *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said, which shows how Western scholarship about Eastern cultures is inherently imperialist and denigrates non-Western cultures.

Postcolonial theology arises from postcolonial critical theory in the 1990's, first with biblical scholarship, and then in the areas of contextual and systematic theology. Postcolonial theology seeks to show how Western forms of Christianity are strongly shaped by imperialism and colonialism. Scholars offer critical reflection on the dominant assumptions of Western superiority and the church's support of and dependence on colonialism. They seek to construct a Christian theology and practice informed by indigenous cultures while still recognizing the colonial history that has so strongly shaped the contemporary reality for many nations where indigenous churches exist.

The most prominent regions for postcolonial theology are Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

R. S. Sugirtharajah

Sugirtharajah is a biblical scholar from Sri Lanka, who studied at United Theological College in Bangalore, India, and received a PhD from the University of Birmingham in England, where he then taught. He helped pioneer the field of postcolonial biblical criticism. He shows through his work that the scholarly discipline of biblical studies itself is rooted in colonial assumptions and privileges Western thought. He points out how little attention has been paid by Western biblical scholars to the themes of empire and domination, since they had often focused on intellectual questions of rationalism and interpretation, and doctrinal questions related to the text. Instead, Sugirtharajah writes:

What postcolonialism makes clear is that biblical studies can no longer be confined to the history of textual traditions, or to the doctrinal richness embedded in texts, but needs to extend its scope to include issues of domination, Western expansion, and its ideological manifestations, as central forces in defining biblical scholarship. (Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation, p 74)

Sugirtharajah sees postcolonial theology and biblical criticism as distinct from Liberation Theology from Latin America and elsewhere. Those theologians, he contends, do their work through Western categories of thought and strive to appeal to those power structures of the West. In contrast, postcolonial theologians seek to make indigenous categories of thought the foundation of their work, without appeal to Western approaches.

African Theology

There were ancient forms of Christianity in Africa from the earliest times, especially in Ethiopia. The modern church in Africa is largely shaped by missionary efforts carried out under colonialism. In addition to bringing the good news of Jesus, and ministries to teach and help the people, missionaries brought Western culture as the assumed superior way of thinking and behaving. Much of this colonial inculturation be-

came internalized in African churches and is still a strong cultural expression of the church.

In the middle of the 20th century, the development of a distinctive African theology began. This is a separate movement from the rise of Black Theology in the United States, a liberation theology which also influenced the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. African theology is concerned with indigenous culture and religion as a framework for Christian theology. This shift is best expressed by the phrase: Africanizing Christianity instead of Christianizing Africa. (Thank you, Kaghondi!) This move is an attempt to decolonize the church. It is also a recognition that Christianity was in Africa long before it was in Western Europe. It is further an affirmation of the legitimacy of African cultures as appropriate means of expression the Christian faith, rather than something that must be judged or modified according to Western standards. One scholarly article exploring the issues involved in interpretive methods in Africanizing Christianity is here: http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2413-94672016000200027

One example of how Africanizing Christianity can change theological conversation and focus is found in this quote from *A Survey of African Christology* by Dominic Ndubuisi Nwuzor (<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/83563195.pdf>)

Existence in relation sums up the pattern of the African way of life. The African maintains a vital relationship with nature, God, the deities, ancestors, the tribe, the clan, the extended family, and the cosmos. Into each avenue he enters with his whole being, without essentially distinguishing the existence of any boundaries dividing one from the other. Western authors have, in fact, also attempted to develop the notion of person as relation, inspired in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, but Africans seem to be more spontaneously at home with the notion. This co-naturality is rooted in African vital experience and tradition, which include such strong values as the extended family, initiation rites into a community, and intense community support of individuals. This concept of being as «being-related» profoundly determines the nature and direction of present-day African Christology. The traditional Christian description of Christ as the Son of the Father, for example, seems assimilated with greater ease by Africans, since tight family bonds are a familiar phenomenon to them.

In his 1969 foundational work, *African Religions and Philosophy*, John Mbiti, an Kenyan-born Anglican priest, showed how Western interpretations of African religion were rooted in colonialism and inherently negative. He showed a positive interpretation of traditional African religions through a Christian perspective.

Tanzanian-born Catholic theologian Laurenti Magesa is a leading voice in examining Christian theology from an African perspective. He was one of the first English-speaking African scholars to examine African religions, as opposed to European scholars doing the same. One of his most important works is *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (1997), described this way: *This is the first comprehensive exploration of the moral and ethical imperatives of African religion that treats the religious tradition of Africa as an equal among the world's faiths. Laurenti Magesa argues that, just as Christianity or Islam do, traditional African religion defines how people ought to live. By integrating the natural, the human, and the spiritual its moral teachings delineate distinctive values, norms and principles which promote standard of spiritual abundance, and also infuse community life with meaning and harmony.*

As the field of African theology has grown, so has the concern of African women theologians for their voices and concerns to shape the conversation. In 1989 the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians was formed in Ghana to address issues of gender justice, violence against women, and the AIDS epidemic.

Asian Theology

Asian postcolonial theology has been broadly concerned with “discontinuity with Western theology and denounced the usefulness of a theology that allied itself with colonial powers and their dominance.” (Wong, *Asian Theology in a Changing Asia*.) Much of Asian postcolonial theology is strongly anti-Western and seeks to reread Christian texts through various Asian cultures. It is seen as a resistance to Western colonial power and thought. (See <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=de4JAgAAQBAJ>)

Similar to African theology, Asian theology often sees Christianity as emerging within a Western Asian context, not a European one. The term “Asian” is itself too broad. Much of Asian postcolonial theology is expressed in particular national and cultural contexts.

Dalit Theology in India: I am sharing here a section of the Wikipedia page on the subject for a brief overview:

A major proponent of Dalit theology was [Arvind P. Nirmal](#) (1936–95), a [Dalit Christian](#) in the [Church of North India](#).^[4] Nirmal criticised [Brahminic](#) dominance of Christian theology in India, and believed that the application of liberation theology to India should reflect the struggle of Dalits,^[4] who make up about 70% of Christians in India, as claimed by Poor Christian Liberation Movement (PCLM).^{[5][6]} Nirmal also criticised the [Marxist](#) element within [South American](#) liberation theology.^[1] Nirmal drew on the concept of the [Suffering Servant](#) in [Isaiah 53](#)^[7] to identify [Jesus](#) himself as a Dalit – “a waiter, a *dhobi*, and *bhangji*.”^[8]

Dalit theologians have seen passages in the gospels, such as Jesus' sharing a common drinking vessel with the [Samaritan woman](#) in [John 4](#),^[9] as indicating his embracing of Dalitness.^[10] The [parable of the Good Samaritan](#) is also seen as significant, providing a “life-giving message to the marginalized Dalits and a challenging message to the non-Dalits.”^[11]

[M. E. Prabhakar](#) expanded on the Dalitness of Jesus, stating that “the God of the Dalits ... does not create others to do servile work, but does servile work Himself.”^[12] He also suggested that Jesus experienced human, and especially Dalit, brokenness in his [crucifixion](#).^[12] Prabhakar has developed a Dalit [creed](#), which reads in part:

“Our cries for liberation from harsh caste-bondage
Were heard by God, who came to us in Jesus Christ
To live with us and save all people from their sins.”^[13]

[Vedanayagam Devasahayam](#) (b. 1949) of the [Church of South India](#) followed Nirmal as head of Dalit theology at the [Gurukul Lutheran Theological College](#), and further developed Nirmal's ideas, writing a number of books.^[14] Devasahayam later became bishop of the Church of South India's Madras Diocese.^[14]

Dalit theology opposes [indigenization](#) movements within Indian Christian liturgy, since these are seen as reinforcing traditional caste hierarchies.^[15] However, the incorporation of some pre-Sanskritic Indian religious traditions is supported.^[15]

Minjung Theology in South Korea: Again, from Wikipedia on this subject:

Minjung theology (Korean: 민중신학; RR: *Minjung Sinhak*; lit. the people's theology) emerged in the 1970s from the experience of South [Korean Christians](#) in the struggle for [social justice](#). It is a people's [theology](#), and, according to its authors, “a development of the political hermeneutics of the Gospel in terms of the Korean reality.”^[1]

History

[Minjung](#) theology began in South Korea in the 1970s with figures such as [Ahn Byung-mu](#), often considered the “father of minjung

theology," [Suh Nam-dong](#), [David Kwang-sun Suh](#), and [Kim Yong-bock](#).^[2] *Minjung*, which means the "people" in the communist sense of the proletariat, is made up of people who are ostracized by the larger community.

It is part of a wider Asian theological ferment, but it was not designed for export. It "is firmly rooted in a particular situation, and growing out of the struggles of Christians who embrace their own history as well as the universal message of the Bible."^[This quote needs a citation]

As South Korea has grown to be more a prosperous nation, later generations of minjung theologians have needed to reevaluate who are the poor and oppressed [minjung](#) of Korea. As such, a number of minjung theologians such as [Park Soon-kyung](#) have focused on questions of reunification with North Korea, identifying the minjung as all those oppressed in both Koreas.^[3]

Burakmin Theology in Japan: Another example of a local, contextual theology is this theological movement among this outcast part of Japanese society. One online source is here: <https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/nfile/4133>

A quote from the source:

THE BASIC THEME of this paper is the suffering and liberation of outcasts in Japan. This theme is the natural outgrowth of my belief that our theological task in contemporary Japan is to reflect critically on the liberating activity of God in the midst of oppression, taking as our focus the concrete socio-historical context of Japan's three million outcasts, the Burakumin.¹ This paper, therefore, seeks to analyze the suffering and pain historically experienced "by the Burakumin and to discuss their situation as it relates to the biblical theme of liberation. The sole purpose of such theological reflection is to articulate the meaning of God's redemptive work in the anguished communities of Japan, thus giving the Japanese outcasts to understand that their striving for freedom is not only consistent with their legitimate desires and expectations as human beings but also is it-self the central theme of Christian faith.

The beginning of this paper quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer as an inspiration. This closing quote will help us see the many interconnections between theologies of different times and places that we have discussed so far in this series:

"We have learned to see the great events of world history from below, from the perspective of outcasts."

-D. Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison