

MINORITIES

Edited by

Daniel Franklin Pilario, Susan Ross
and Solange Lefebvre

Published in 2017 by SCM Press, 3rd Floor, Invicta House, 108–114 Golden Lane,
London EC1Y 0TG.

SCM Press is an imprint of Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd (a registered charity)
13A Hellesdon Park Road, Norwich NR6 5DR, UK

Copyright © International Association of Conciliar Theology, Madras (India)

www.concilium.in

H
Y
M
N
S
Ancient
& Modern
limited

English translations copyright © 2017 Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored
in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior
written permission of the Board of Directors of Concilium.

ISBN 9780334031444

Printed in the UK by
Ashford, Hampshire

Concilium is published in March, June, August, October, December

Contents

Editorial

Part One: Minorities and Theology

Sacralizing Exclusion: The Rise of Ultra-Nationalism and
Right-Wing Populism
R. SCOTT APPLEBY 15

Secularism, Democracy and Minority Rights
NEERA CHANDHOKE 22

Cultural Minorities and the Catholic Social Tradition
ROLANDO A. TUAZON 32

Spiritual Demands Among Minorities and Elites
DIEGO IRARRAZAVAL 43

Sexual Minorities: The Rainbow-Coloured Body of Christ
STEFANIE KNAUSS 54

White Supremacy, the Election of Donald Trump and
the Challenge to Theology
BRYAN MASSINGALE 65

Part Two: Minorities in Global Contexts

Christian Communities in the Middle East: Persecuted Minorities or
Indigenous Peoples?
MICHEL ANDRAOS 77

The Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar MAUNG JOHN	84
Churches in the Mirror: The Rom(a) as Evangelical Test CRISTINA SIMONELLI	91
The Rights of African Indigenous Peoples: Lessons from the Struggles of the Ogoni of the Niger Delta STAN CHU ILO	97
Pacific Island Peoples: Resilience and Climate Change KATHLEEN RUSHTON	105
Churches and Theology in Canada after Residential Schools: The Difficult Path of Truth, Reparation and Decolonization JEAN-FRANÇOIS ROUSSEL	113
Part Three: Theological Forum	
Older Anglican Laywomen: Their Struggle to Oppose Women Priests ABBY DAY	123
The ‘Apparitions’ at Fatima ANSELMO BORGES	130
Contributors	135

Editorial

Right wing nationalism is on the rise and the lives of minorities are placed under constant threat. After Donald Trump's recent victory in the United States, graffiti abounds saying: 'This is Trump's America. In other words, get out'; 'Build the wall'; 'You are no longer welcome here, Muslim!' Despite his protestations to the contrary, Nigel Farage, the British leader responsible for the success of Brexit, has been severely criticized to be racist and dismissive of minorities in preferring a 'British-born' for work, or that Romanians are responsible for 92 per cent of crimes at London ATM machines. Not to mention that he is also Trump's good friend. Another EU leader, Marine Le Pen of France's Front Nationale, promises a 'Frexit' referendum parallel to that of Britain. Her party's 2015 campaign poster portrayed two women's faces – one with flowing hair and a French flag painted on her face and the other wearing a *burqa*. The caption says: '*Choisissez votre banlieue. Votez Front.*' Rodrigo Duterte, the newly elected President of the Philippines, is more complex and ambivalent. On the one hand, he wants to incorporate the Muslims of Mindanao, leftists, and marginalized sectors into mainstream politics, but, on the other hand, vows to kill all drug addicts and drug sellers – his own version of an inhuman minority – most of whom come from the ranks of the poor. Killing 7000 after seven months in office, his administrative rule is a curious mix of leftist alliances, liberal policies, dictatorial pronouncements and populist rhetorics which ironically enjoy an 80 per cent satisfaction rating. Scott Appleby's opening article 'Sacralizing Exclusion' dissects this present, ultra-nationalist populism and religious nationalism which converge on one point – the sacralization of the nation. 'The nation is absolute because it partakes of the sacred; the sacred is bound up in the destiny of the nation.' In effect, minorities are constructed as the impure others, the foreigner who encroached on the sacred land, people who are less human, thus making them 'justifiable targets of violence'.

In ordinary contexts, because minorities belong to the dominated realms of any social space, they are vulnerable to both brazen and subtle exercises of social power. Owing to the insignificant size of their population, their lack of economic and political capital, the biases and prejudices against their cultural identities, religions or languages, minorities easily fall victim to real and symbolic violence from both state and non-state actors on whom they cannot count for protection. Concrete forms of marginalization, discrimination and exclusion abound: denial of citizenship; stigmatization; violence of non-state actors and impunity; internal displacement during armed conflicts; fleeing to become refugees in other countries; prevention from the practice of their religions or the use of their languages, denial of access to education, public office, and many others.

In other contexts, however, a powerful and elite ‘minority’ can also take control of power to dominate the whole socio-political discourse; and if threatened does not hesitate to retaliate with socio-economic and political measures on those who pose danger to their hegemonic dominance. Think of the previous white colonial minority in apartheid South Africa, the Tutsis’ dominance in Rwanda, the Hindutva politics in India, the rising ultra-nationalist and populist movements worldwide, and others. This elite racism in high places manages all political, religious, corporate, media and academic resources in order to help maintain and reproduce their dominance in the whole social space. For instance, Michel Andraos’ article suggests how the once disadvantaged Eastern Christian communities in the Middle East converted to Roman Catholicism during the Ottoman Empire, earned the patronage protection of the Christian West, transformed themselves into a new bourgeoisie and subsequently became the ‘extension of European power and its civilizing mission to the Muslim East’. Or, from another historical context, as Bryan Massingale observes in his interview, Donald Trump did not actually get the majority vote (Trump received 2.8 million votes fewer than his rival). He only won the Presidency, not the election. In his interview, Massingale argues that in the Trump phenomenon, ‘a beleaguered section of the population’ – the white majority of a past era – is desperately trying to hold on to power in the context of the migrant’s ‘browning of America’. This view also puts into perspective the high emerging racist rhetoric in Europe and other places in the new situation of massive global migration and the refugee crisis.

It is this ambivalent relationship with power in the phenomenon of ‘minorities’ that we intend to address in this issue. The United Nations and governments are not wanting in declarations and statements on the protection of peoples belonging to minorities.¹ The 1992 UN Declaration opens with this sentence: ‘States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity’ (No.1). In the context of re-emerging ethnicities – once drowned by hegemonic states in the Cold War era – that began to assert themselves, the United Nations and national governments acknowledge that the rights of minorities do not only proceed from the benevolence of any state; they are universal human rights. And these states have to prove that they have fulfilled this obligation on forgotten peoples; each state needs to ‘adopt appropriate legislative and other measures to achieve those ends’ (No. 2).

However, in the present context of global migration, refugee crisis and ‘war on terror’, the view on minorities takes a different turn. Both autochthonous minorities located within one’s national territories and the ‘new minorities’ – most of them migrants, economic or political refugees with ‘strange’ linguistic or cultural-religious affiliations – find themselves on the defensive. Minorities are now viewed as ‘terrorists’ – all threats to the political and economic security of the state. In this move on the ‘securitization’ of minority rights, ‘states have inverted the burden of proof: the State no longer needs to prove its compliance with its obligations in regard to minorities, but rather minorities must prove their loyalty vis-à-vis the State’.² And if they don’t or can’t, political and economic power is wielded against them and their families.

It is in this context that Neera Chandhoke’s article insists on two companion concepts in the defence of minorities – democracy and secularism. On the one hand, secularism prohibits the state from protecting a religion or legitimizing itself through some religious authority; instead it ensures that all citizens possess the right to practise their own individual beliefs (or non-belief) within the whole social space. Democracy, on the other hand, understood as fundamental equality, forces the State to protect those belonging to minority groups against hegemonic majorities. The grant of ‘minority rights’ is an essential part of democracy as it ensures

that all persons have equal freedom to practise one's culture/religion 'irrespective of what the majority believes at a particular point in time'.

How does the presence of minorities influence the way we do theology? How do they help us rethink our theological categories? Rolando Tuazon's reflection on the Catholic social tradition asserts that the postmodern context – in contrast to the colonial and modern periods – makes the Church and its theology more sensitive to marginalized voices of maligned cultures, degraded races, suppressed genders, and disparaged religions. Postmodernity helps these forgotten perspectives assert themselves as they ironically become sources of critique and transformation of the dominant systems that side-lined them in the first place. In contrast, Diego Irarrazaval's article argues that some global postmodern processes distort and disintegrate the lives and religious cultures of minorities. The liberal global market offers a myriad of goods for salvation, including rituals and values, devotion and even transcendence, in the neo-spiritual and postmodern forms. But like Tuazon, Irarrazaval also believes that from the fragile, fragmented but inexhaustible energies among the minorities, from their solidarity and faith, a new hope dawns for the world. Stefanie Knauss's article asks how sexual minorities challenge our theological categories. Queering God renders 'strange' what is taken for granted and leads us to new ways of thinking about God, Christ and the Church. She talks about the desiring God who is a transgressive and polyamorous divinity passionately in love with myriad humanity; a bi-sexual Christology which crosses established cultural and gender boundaries; and the Church of our times as the rainbow-coloured Body of Christ. Susan Ross's interview with Bryan Massingale in the wake of Trump's rise to power also unmasks some problematic directions in the (American) Church and theology – its view of race relations, its 'minoritizing' of the faith experience of more than half of the population, the call to prophetic discourse in the public sphere. First, Massingale argues that American bishops have an individualist view of race relations that neglects the structural or social sin present in racist violence. Second, he critiques theology for neglecting the experience of blacks, women, and Asians who compose the new American majority. To be 'Catholic' used to mean 'Irish-European immigrant white'; but with the changed demographics, theology still looks at other races as peripheral to the theological curriculum and theological thinking. Third, he challenges

theologians to exercise their prophetic calling beyond classrooms and journals to places of crisis and solidarity among the pains and struggles of the dispossessed.

Part Two of this volume attempts to understand the situation of selected minorities from different continents, e.g. Christians in the Middle East, Rohingyas of Myanmar, Roma population in Europe, Ogoni peoples of the Niger Delta, and the new Christian minority of Canada. These are articulated by theologians whose location on the ground enables them to articulate a deeper and more nuanced view of these minorities. Already mentioned earlier, Andraos's article puts into question the notion of the 'persecuted Christian communities in need of protection' in a predominantly Islamic Middle East context. The discourse of a 'Christian minority', he argues, hides more than it clarifies for these complex politically charged situations, products as they are of past Western colonial policies. Maung John, a lay theologian and development worker in Myanmar, traces the history and present problems of the now controversial Rohingya minority whose name is even a taboo in this predominantly Buddhist country. Cristina Simonelli, a theologian who has worked and lived among the Roma, argues for a way from below – a life of sharing and solidarity with them as a way to understand this specific population – both as a political and pastoral approach. Politically, what is suggested is to listen to the voices of the Roma grassroots groups in order to effectively implement the many EU legislative initiatives on their well-being. Pastorally, Simonelli suggests that church people should live among them in their small residential areas, in caravans and shacks (*chabolas*), not so much to evangelize them as to be evangelized by their lives. Stan Chu Ilo, a Nigerian theologian, writes about the struggles for resource control of the Ogoni minority in the Niger Delta against the encroachment of multinational oil companies. He outlines the lessons learned from their advocacy moment and the theological directions to which their struggle for determination points. Lastly, in the context of the Church's diminished moral and social influence among the Canadian population, Jean-François Roussel asks how the present committed Christian communities, being the new minority, can resolve to pursue their pastoral commitment of reparation to the aboriginal population. Shall this new kenotic experience give rise to new forms of shared solidarity with indigenous peoples?

Editorial

Part Three, the Theological Forum, presents two articles on Anglican women's ordination and the 'apparition at Fatima'. The Anglican churches first ordained women to the priesthood in 1976 (United States and Canada) and in 1977 (Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia). Forty years after, Abby Day gives voice to older Anglican laywomen and their struggles to oppose the priesthood for women. In the centennial year of the apparition in Fatima (1917), the Portuguese theologian Anselmo Borges revisits the significance of this religious experience to millions of people worldwide.

Daniel Franklin Pilario, Susan Ross, Solange Lefebvre

Notes

1. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965); International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990); Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities (1992). The European Union (EU), Council of Europe and other bodies also followed the same direction towards the protection of minorities: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (Copenhagen, 1990); European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (1992); Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995), etc. Parallel movements also manifest the same spirit in other countries and continents.
2. Francesco Palermo, 'The Protection of Minorities in International Law: Recent Developments and Trends', in *Les minorités: un défi for les États. Actes du colloque international*, 22-23 May, 2011 (Brussels: Academie royale de Belgique, 2013), 173.