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What's in a Title?
Writing a History of the Counter-Reformation for a Postcolonial Age*

By Simon Ditchfield

"If Europe was 'literally the creation of the Third World' via the colonialism that long defined it, as the French Martinician-born revolutionary thinker Frantz Fanon memorably phrased it in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), much remains to be done to arrive at a full understanding of how Europe was *re-created* once its territorial expanse receded."[1] Reading this passage from a recent book written by a former colleague, it struck a chord with my own findings in researching a work with the title *Papacy and Peoples: The Making of Roman Catholicism as a World Religion, 1500-1700.* I suppose I should not have been surprised, since I have been aware for some time of the parallels between the "new imperial history," with its determination to unite "home" and "away," "empire" and "metropole." Furthermore, my efforts to understand the reciprocal relationship between Reformed Roman Catholicism in the Old World and the forms it took in European colonies and settlements in the New World and Asia, have led to a provisional conclusion that is not a million miles away from Frantz Fanon's provocative contention. Since I believe, building upon Donal Lach's insight reflected in the title of his opus magnum, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, that the experience of attempting to convert indigenous societies in Asia and the New World led, in due course, to the conversion of the Old World by the New – a process that is still continuing.[2] From this it might perhaps be argued that Fanon's claim that Europe is a creation of the Global South needs to be backdated some five hundred years.

In other words, in order to understand how *modern* Europe re-created itself after the *loss* of her colonies, we need in fact to understand how *early modern*

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1. Elizabeth Buettner, *Europe after Empire: Decolonisation, Society and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 9.
2. Donald F. Lach, Edwin J. van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe,* 3 vols. in 9 parts, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965-1993).

Europe was created as a result of the experience of *acquiring* its colonies be-
gun during the so-called "Age of Discovery." The movement of peoples which
accompanied Europe's expansion had its counterpart in the phenomenon cen-
tral to Nicholas Terpstra's new "alternative history of the Reformation": *Re-
ligious Refugees in the Early Modern World*.[3] The obsession of both Protestant
and Catholic reformers with purification, exile, and expulsion resulted in the
forced migrations of peoples in and beyond Europe on a scale unprecedented
since the end of the Roman Empire and not to be seen again until the twen-
tieth century. My reply to the implicit question posed by Robert Bireley in
his presidential address to the American Catholic Historical Association of
2009 – who was more important to the history of Roman Catholicism (and
by extension to the history of the Reformations), Christopher Columbus or
Martin Luther? – would therefore be that they are both symbols of processes
that need to be taken account of together if we are to understand our con-
temporary world in which one in four Christians living in Europe is from the
Global South and the forced displacement of peoples on this planet is at its
highest recorded level.[4]

   Turning first to the word "peoples" in my title, historians are usually warned
that they should forget the future and try to view the period they study, as far
as possible, only in its own terms. Hindsight is seen as a hindrance. However,
it can also be a help, which I believe to be the case here. We need to appreciate
that Christianity, let alone Roman Catholicism, was not yet a world religion, at
least geographically speaking, even by the middle of the *twentieth* century.[5] It is

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   3.   Nicholas Terpstra, *Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World: An Alternative History of the
Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
   4.   Robert Bireley, "Early-modern Catholicism as a Response to the Changing World of the
Long Sixteenth Century," *Catholic Historical Review* XCV (2009): 219-239. According to the latest
available figures from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by the
end of 2014 the number of global forced displacements had grown to 59.5 million individuals,
including 19.5 million refugees, up from 51.2 the previous year. See *UNHCR Statistical Yearbook
2014*, 27, which is available to download at http://www.unhcr.org/566584fc9.html (accessed 8
May 2016).
   5.   However, it should be appreciated that 1800-1900 saw the most spectacular rise in the
number of Christians vis-à-vis the total world population since the birth of Christ, from 22%
to 36% (200 to 550 million). The twentieth century has undoubtedly seen the biggest absolute
rise in the number of Christians (from 550 to 2,000 million; although this actually represents
a reduction in the number of Christians relative to world population: 36.6% to 33.3%). These
figures are derived from the data made available by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity,
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, http://www.gordonconwell.edu/ockenga/research/
documents/graph-7-1.pdf (accessed 6 June 2016). I am most grateful to Luke Clossey for drawing
my attention to this data set.

perhaps surprising to learn, for example, that not a single African was invited to attend the landmark World Missionary conference that met in Edinburgh in 1910.[6] If we focus on Roman Catholicism in Africa, in 1955 there were only about 16 million Catholics, up from 9 million in 1900; by 1978 this had risen to 55 million and today it stands at over 170 million. By 2025 an expected 230 million Africans will represent one-sixth of the world population of Roman Catholics.[7] This will represent a sea-change in the regional distribution of Christianity in the world, since as recently as 2010 there were equal numbers of Christians in Europe, Latin America and Africa, representing some 75% of the world's total (at around 25% each).[8] It has also been speculated that by 2050 one in four Christians in Europe and North America will be from the "Christian" South.[9]

Nevertheless, if the making of Roman Catholicism as a world religion was not in fact realised until sub-Saharan Africa found Catholicism in the second half of the last century, the early modern period certainly did witness the triumph of the *idea* of Roman Catholicism as a faith with global reach if not grasp. This is perhaps seen most graphically in one of the emblems taken from that extraordinary example of the printers' and engravers' art which celebrated the centenary of the Society of Jesus and was put together by the Jesuits of the Flemish province in 1640: the *Imago primi saeculi*.[10] This 952-page folio production was also a monument not only to neo-classical Latin panegyric but also to the art of the emblem – 127 of which conclude the prolegomena and the six books in which the *Imago* is divided. In book two, which was entitled "Societas crescens," one finds the emblem of a young, winged child standing between two globes showing the two hemispheres of the world. This image is immediately below the words "Societatis Missiones Indicae" and immediately above the

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6.   Andrew F. Walls, "Christianity in the Non-Western World: A Study in the Serial Nature of Christian Expansion," *Studies in World Christianity* 6 (1995): 1-25, here 7.

7.   Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity,* 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 72-73.

8.   In addition, Europe is the only region where the absolute number of Christians is set to decline, from 553 to 454 million. Simultaneously, Europe's decline as a percentage of world Christians will plummet from 25.5% to 15.6%. By comparison, Latin America's percentage remains more or less steady, with a decline only from 25.5% to 22.8%. See http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/christians/ (accessed 8 May 2016).

9.   Jenkins, *The Next Christendom* (see note 7).

10.   *Imago primi saeculi societatis Iesu a provincia Flandro-Belgico eiusdem societatis repraesentata* (Antwerpiae: Ex officina Plantiniana Balthasaris Moreti. Anno societatis saeculari, 1640).

words "Unus non sufficit orbis" – "One World is not enough."[11] The first three lines of the poem that is printed beneath run: "What aspect of a highborn soul shall I say that this is? / This boy extends his embraces in front of each of the two globes / Tell me, boy: is your heart broader than the whole / of earth and is each world smaller than your soul?"[12]

The period 1500-1700 witnessed a veritable tsunami of reports and accounts of missionary and merchant derring-do (both printed and manuscript) which had the ultimate effect, I argue, of forcing the inhabitants of the Old World to rethink what it meant to be a Christian.[13] It was only thanks to the expanded missionary imagination and set of practical skills, developed in response to the challenge of evangelising the New World and the East Indies, that the Old World came to be (re-)Christianised in the way it was. Central to this process was the "invention of the indigenous" (to borrow the phrase of the historian of science, Alix Cooper, who describes in this way the impact of New World flora and fauna on sensitizing observers of nature in the Old World to the unique "indigeneity" of their own local natural world).[14] By this I mean that missionaries to the New World, such as the Jesuit José de Acosta (1540-1600), sometime Provincial of Peru (1576-81), were struck by the insight that what the indigenous peoples were now, the missionaries themselves had been in a far-off, primitive age. As Acosta put it with disarming honesty: "Let anyone read about the customs of the Ancient English [in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*], they will find they were much wilder than our Indians."[15]

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11. Ibid., 326.
12. "Esse quid hoc dicam generosae mentis? Utrumque / Hic puer amplexus expedit ante globum. / Dic, puer an toto pectus tibi latius orbe est, / Et minor est animo mundus uterque tuo?"
13. Three excellent, recent treatments of the impact of the New World discoveries on the Old World are: Christine R. Johnson, *The German Discovery of the World: Renaissance Encounters with the Strange and Marvelous* (Charlottesville, London: University of Virginia Press, 2008); Michiel van Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590-1634)* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2008) and Carina L. Johnson, *Cultural Hierarchy in Sixteenth-Century Europe: The Ottomans and the Mexicans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
14. Alix Cooper, *Inventing the Indigenous: Local Knowledge and Natural History in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
15. "Legat qui volet antiques anglorum mores, duriores nostris indis inveniet." José de Acosta, *De procuranda indorum salute*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, 1984-1987), vol. 2 (1987), 40; cf. *De procuranda indorum salute*, trans. and ed. by G. Stewart McIntosh, 2 vols. (Tayport: Mac Research, 1996), vol. 2, 14; cf. Lesley Abrams, "Bede, Gregory and Strategies of Conversion in Anglo-Saxon England and the Spanish New World," *Jarrow Lecture* (2013). I am grateful to Glyn Redworth for drawing this sparkling lecture to my attention.

This connection between the missions in the Old and New Worlds is not, however, a discovery of modern historiography. It was freely acknowledged at the time as reflected in the widespread and early use of the term "Other Indies" (*otras Indias*, *Indias de por acà*, *Indie di quaggiù*) to describe the barely Christianised rural hinterlands of Western Europe, from Brittany to the Basilicata, Campania to Castile. An early example of this comparison may be found in a letter of 7 February 1553 from the Jesuit missionary Silvestro Landini (1503-54) to Ignatius Loyola. Landini related his shock and horror at the dreadful, idolatrous state of the inhabitants of the island of Corsica, where the priests themselves were indistinguishable from their parishioners not only in their lifestyle – working every day (even Sundays) to support their concubines and children – but also in their ignorance of the sacraments in general and of the Eucharist in particular. "I have never experienced lands which are more of the need of the Lord than this one […]. This island will be my India (*sarà la mia India*), just as worthy [of attention] as that of Prester John, since here there is a massive ignorance of God."[16]

Returning to the two main keywords of the title to my current book project, *Papacy and Peoples*, it is within this force field of (unbalanced) reciprocity that one needs to understand both terms. Notwithstanding its pretensions to universal authority, as shown in the papal bull *Inter caetera* of 1493, whereby, in an act of presumption that still takes one's breath away, the global spheres of influence of Spain and Portugal were marked out by Pope Alexander VI by means of a single line of longitude, it is the term "papacy" that has proved most resistent, until recently, to the "global turn" in historiography: notwithstanding the foundation of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in 1622. This was encouraged by the fact that until recently the Vatican Archives have been traditionally studied along nationalist lines since their opening to scholars in 1881, as reflected in the series of historical institutes founded in Rome in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, beginning with the École Française de Rome in 1873.[17] This was reinforced by the configuration of early modern papal diplo-

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16. Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza. Inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), ch. 28 "Le nostre indie," 551-599, here 555; cf. Carlo Luongo, *Silvestro Landini e le "nostre Indie"* (Florence: Firenze Atheneum, 2008), 270-289.

17. This was followed by those of Austria (1881); Prussia (1883); Hungary (1892); Great Britain (1901); and Belgium & Holland (both 1904). Cf. Benadetta Albani, "The Apostolic See and the World: Challenges and Risks Facing Global History," *Rechtsgeschichte / Legal History* 20 (2012): 330-331. This is available open access online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.12946/rg20/330-331 (accessed 14 May 2016).

macy (whose network of *nunziatures* provided the template for the reciprocal establishment of permanent embassies), which has made it all too easy for historians to see the colonial expansion of Europe primarily in terms of negotiations between the papacy and the great Catholic powers, in this case, Portugal and Spain.[18] The current project to reorganise the archives of the Congregation of the Council, which was founded in 1564 in the immediate aftermath of the Council of Trent to oversee – and carefully control – interpretation of its disciplinary decrees throughout the Roman Catholic world, promises to break with this pattern in a fundamental way.[19] However, there has been a further obstacle in the form or our (mis)understanding of the degree to which the privilege of "royal patronage" (known in Spanish as *patronato real* and in Portuguese as *padroado regio*), according to which, in the case of Spain, all communication to and from Rome had to receive approval (*pase regio*) by the Council of the Indies, actually prevented appeals to Rome by subjects of the Iberian overseas empires.[20] Since the papacy is traditionally seen to have challenged the hegemony of the Iberian overseas empires only from the foundation of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, the findings of Benedetta Albani and her team promise to overturn not a few shibboleths.

To continue the glossing of my title, I turn briefly to the term "world religion." The scholarly consensus now is that, as we use it today, this label was only made possible by the parallel emergence of the fields of comparative theology and linguistics in the nineteenth century, which in turn permitted the emergence of a new discipline for the academic, comparative study of religion (*Religionswissenschaft*) as shaped initially by Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900) and his pupils.[21] According to Müller, it was axiomatic that "in the history of

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18. Guiseppe Marcocci, "Is There Room for the Papacy in Global History?," *Rechtsgeschichte / Legal History* 20 (2012): 366-367. This is available open access online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.12946/rg20/366-367 (accessed 14 May 2016). Cf. the reassessment to be found in contributions to Maria-Antonietta Visceglia, ed., *Papato e politica internazionale nella prima età moderna* (Rome: Viella, 2013).

19. http://www.rg.mpg.de/reorganization_of_the_archive_of_the_congregation_of_the_council (accessed 14 May 2016). It was begun in 2013 and is directed by Albani.

20. Benedetta Albani, "Nuova luce sulle relazioni tra la Sede Apostolice e le Americhe: La pratica della concessione del 'pase regio' ai documenti pontefici destinati alle Indie," in Claudio Ferlan, ed., *Eusebio Francesco Chini e il suo tempo: una riflessione storica* (Trent: Fondazione Bruno Kessler, 2012), 83-102.

21. Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or how European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), ch. 7; cf. Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2013).

the world, our religion, like our language, is but one out of many and that in order to understand fully the position of Christianity in the history of the world and its true place among the religions of mankind, we must compare it with the aspirations of the whole world."[22]

In this way, it might perhaps be said, with Luke Clossey, that comparative philology begat comparative religion.[23] To paraphrase what Goethe said of language, which Max Müller took as his motto: "He who knows one religion, knows none." The nineteenth century thus saw the emergence of such "constructed" categories as Buddhism (1801), Hinduism (1829), Taoism (1839), Zoroastrianism (1854) and Confucianism (1862), which are therefore to be considered as offspring of what was an essentially Eurocentric, colonialist mentality that "mask[ed] the globalisation of particular Euro-American concerns, which have been presented as universal aspects of human experience."[24]

So what place can such retrospective labels as "world religion" or even "religion" have in a history of the Counter-Reformation written for a postcolonial age? In view of this volume's 500th anniversary theme (1517-2017), it is perhaps appropriate that to unpack what we can mean by "religion" in the early modern period, I begin by looking at the concept of "faith." A recent, comprehensive study of what was meant by the concept in the Roman world at the time of the emergence of Christianity reminds us that the Greek word *pistis* – which occurs fourteen times in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians (though it is a mere five chapters long) – did not refer to "belief" but rather trust, allegiance and loyalty.[25] This points to the importance of personal relationships over theological

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22. F. Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. 1 (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1871), xxvi.

23. Luke Clossey, "Belief, Knowledge and Language," in David Christian, ed., *The Cambridge World History, vol. 1: Introducing World History to 10,000 BCE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 132-164, here 138.

24. Jason Ānanda Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 3. The dates of "birth" of these world religions are taken from Michel Gardaz, "History of the Discipline of the Study of Religion," in Peter B. Clark, Peter Beyer, ed., *The World's Religions: Continuities and Transformations* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 276-289, here 279; cf. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 27-54; Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *From Stone to Flesh: A Short History of the Buddha* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). Judaism too has a claim to have been "invented" as a religion in 1783 with the publication of Moses Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem oder über religiöse Macht und Judentum.* Cf. Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011).

25. The same was true of its Latin equivalent "fides." Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and*

propositions to religious conversion in the first Christian centuries.[26] Such a focus on the affective over the cognitive is also relevant when considering how religion can be best understood in the early modern period. By conceptualizing religion, first and foremost, as interpersonal, visible behaviour rather than private, interior belief – religion *as verb* over religion *as noun* – it is easier to appreciate the degree to which certain behaviours entailed certain beliefs. In the case of Tridentine Roman Catholicism, the reaffirmation of such prominent acts of ortho*praxy* as the lighting of candles, praying for the souls of the dead, the veneration of saints and the (forty-hour) devotion to the host displayed in monstrances on high altars or paraded in procession, indicated ortho*doxy* and thereby provided the most obvious markers of confessional identity as well as the most visible targets for Protestant iconoclasts. This emphasis on orthopraxy over orthodoxy to describe Tridentine Catholicism might seem eccentric in the light of the fact that the Council provided, in its decrees and canons first published altogether in 1564, a template for Roman Catholicism that endured for almost exactly 400 years. However, as John O'Malley has recently reminded us, so many of the Council's decrees were sketchy, hurried, incomplete or even silent on key matters, it was left to the bishops, those building blocks of the Tridentine Church, to establish what it all meant: local orthopraxies within orthodoxy, if you like.[27]

"In addition to being historical actors in their own right, Catholics have also been good to think with." These words are taken from the conclusion of a recent book about how, in the centuries following the Reformation, Catholicism became the paradigmatic religion of real divine presence and Protestantism its counterpart as a religion of its absence.[28] I think Orsi is in danger here of dichotomous thinking: what about the role of "holy seeing" in communicating presence for Protestants as well as Roman Catholics, that Bridget Heal, Andrew Spicer and others have reminded us persisted in Lutheran culture as well as the enduring presence of the miraculous in Protestantism as illuminated by

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Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

26.   This point that has also been made in relation to understanding contemporary Jihadism in Scott Atran, *Talking to the Enemy: Violent Extremism, Sacred Values, and What it Means to be Human* (London: Lane, 2010).

27.   John W. O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, MA, London: Belknap Press, 2013).

28.   Robert A. Orsi, *History and Presence* (Cambridge, MA, London: Belknap Press, 2016), 250.

Bob Scribner, Alex Walsham and Phil Soergel?[29] However, it is undeniable that presence has come to be associated with superstition, the primitive and the irrational – in a word, with the "unmodern"; or as Orsi puts it: the unseeing of the gods became a foundational requirement for Western modernity. The underlying challenge for historians of early modern religion is not only to make them visible again but to acknowledge the degree to which the New World came to reshape their presence in the Old.

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29. Bridget Heal, "Seeing Christ: Visual Piety in Saxony's Erzgebirge" in Jeffrey Chipps Smith, ed., *Visual Acuity and the Arts of Communication in Early Modern Germany* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 43-60; Andrew Spicer, ed., *Lutheran Churches in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Robert W. Scribner, "Incombustible Luther: The Image of the Reformer in Early Modern Germany," *Past & Present* 110 (1986): 38-68; Alexandra Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Philip M. Soergel, *Miracles and the Protestant Imagination: The Evangelical Wonderbook in Reformation Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). The phrase "holy seeing" is taken from Diana Eck, *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).