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AN APPROACH TOWARDS ETHICAL BODY: Relativizing Social and Religious Morals in Chinese History

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Abstract: This paper focusses on the missionary enterprises within the Chinese territory. Some scholars have argued that the purpose of these missionaries was to reinvent China based on western ideas, architecture, culture, etc. To reorient the ethical model from cultural and identity crises, this paper has employed the frameworks of Albert Memmi and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. To steer this missiological journey for the benefit of communities, the study approaches the entire expedition from an ethical standpoint. Simultaneously, it utilizes St. Paul's analogy of the ethical body—reflecting the image of God and the body of Christ—to address and resolve contemporary issues in China.

Keywords: China, Missionary, Ethical body, Colonizer, Colonized, Missiological, Culture, Identity.

1. Introduction

The gradual demise of Christianity in China has drawn the attention of many historians and theologians. These studies have analyzed this decline from political, economic, and theological perspectives using a variety of methodologies. The researchers

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contend that the four eras are crucial for comprehending the history of Christianity on the roots of Chinese culture, which ultimately had a detrimental impact (Tang, 2014). Apart from this, the overall journey of missionaries' efforts is usually criticized as most of the scholars perceived them as colonizers who came with the intention to gain power and build their colonies to convert to Christianity (Kosuke Koyama, Aloysius Pieris, Stanley J. Smartha, C.S. Song and R. S. Sugirtharajah). This is true in a sense; however, it does not mean that every missionary came with a similar interest. Many missionaries came with the mission to learn the culture and language and to be partakers of struggles to improve the whole phenomenon. For instance, Matteo Ricci, a catholic Jesuit, came and learned the language and culture of China before spreading the word of God to understand the challenges of China (Chauprade, 2022). However, we do acknowledge that some theologians have serious reservations about his services in China (see, Kosuke Koyama, Water Buffalo Theology, 1999). Along with this, on the one hand, the missionaries from the protestant circles had also in common as all were not the same to form Christendom—implicating western culture but rather to understand the contextual significance of this context (Walls, 128-127). On the other hand, the majority of missionaries came to China to gain power and wealth (Latourette, 65). As a result, keeping both positions in mind, this research has traced the historical eras of the Chinese church from the identity and cultural perspectives observing the colonizer and colonized behavior to improve this phenomenon.

This paper contends that this negative phase of navigating missionaries' theological and missiological vocation in this field is not widely accepted among scholars. However, it does not mean that this study would offer to embrace all the missionaries' vocations, including appraising cultural exchange of western discourse, undermining Chinese cultural values and literature as some of the scholars did in this perspective (Ning, 33-47). Because this promotion of cultural exchange that negates the post-colonial theories raises serious questions: Why God has put people into different soils, cultures, and identities? Why do culture and identity matter? So, this study would respond to these questions.

Apart from the above, the aim of the researcher would not be superiorizing the oriental heritage undermining the occidental. Also, the objective would not be to lose one's unique culture and identity but rather the different capacities God has put everyone in. Therefore, in light of the aforementioned, the first task of this study would be to use the analogy of St. Paul in the first letter of Corinthians (12) to construe the mission of the Chinese and the universal church being the body of Christ for understanding the roles and responsibilities. As a result, in this respect, both phenomena need a careful look, one from the negative aspects of missionaries' enterprise and the second from the positive side to learn from their efforts. The second task would be to see the past challenges of theological and missiological vocation in China reorienting the ethical approach to begin the theological and missiological journey.

2. Christianity in China: Historical Perspectives

Christianity in China is not as old as the other Chinese religions. It arrived in China around the seventh century A.D. Noted eastern historian cum theologian of the twentieth century, Kenneth Scott Latourette (1930), observed that Nestorian Christians introduced Christianity from the central east, but its influence waned in the ninth and tenth centuries (63). Interestingly, during the seventh century, Christian teachings were seen as resembling Confucian principles. The Biblical events and messages, especially those related to Jesus' life and the sermon on the mount, resonated with Emperor Tang, who allowed Christianity into China due to perceived similarities with traditional values centered on family and community well-being (Walls, 123). In essence, Christianity's ethical values aligned with Confucian and Buddhist teachings, emphasizing family and social prosperity. The appeal lay in the expectation that adopting these values would enhance the Chinese social system. However, Christianity also introduced unique elements that set it apart from other religions, promising economic, political, and religious prosperity (Latourette, 36-37, 39-40). The Tang dynasty witnessed the development of contextualized Christian content, although full establishment of concepts and terminologies about

Christianity and the crucifixion of Christ did not occur at that time (Chung, 65).

Various scholars provide different explanations for the decline of Tang Christianity. Some argue that Nestorians failed to produce faithful literature, while others suggest that the clergy and converts were predominantly foreign (Bays, 14). The decline began around the ninth century, and despite Christianity reappearing in the thirteenth century during the Yuan dynasty, it dwindled again. The demise is also attributed to factors such as the rise of Islam, the death of Kublai Khan (Chung, 65), and the non-contextualized versions of Christianity that failed to integrate with Chinese culture and identity.

Attempts to revive Christianity in China during the Yuan dynasty faced challenges. Scholars disagree on the reasons, with some citing Pope Gregory X's limited response to Kublai Khan's request for sending missionaries (Burris, 86) and others pointing to geopolitical changes. The non-contextualized nature of Christianity during this period hindered its influence on Chinese culture and identity, leading to another decline again in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The third phase of this missionary endeavor can be segmented into two distinct parts. The initial phase involves the Jesuits, who perceived the essence of Christianity as primarily directed towards the elite, neglecting the common people. Conversely, the Franciscans actively engaged with the lower class, ensuring that the Christian message reached them. This reintroduction of Christianity by Catholics in the sixteenth century marked a crucial period (Latourette, 63). David Emil Mungello explains the importance of this period, highlighting that Jesuit missionaries drew significant inspiration from Francis Xavier. Despite never setting foot in China, Xavier's efforts served as crucial milestones in shaping the trajectory of this missionary enterprise. Mungello also emphasizes the role of Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit missionary in the sixteenth century, regarded as the father of modern mission, who impressed Chinese literati by mastering Confucian classics (Mungello, 18). Ricci pioneered theological contextualization, adapting Roman Catholic doctrines to align

with local Chinese cultural customs. Using the well-known Chinese Buddhist term *Tien Chu* (the Lord of Heaven), Ricci aimed at planting the Gospel message through a strategy known as the 'accommodation policy,' focusing on the higher class rather than the lower class (Chung 68).

Beyond this selective approach, Christianity in this period was disseminated through scientific, philosophical, and technical knowledge (Chauprade 2022). Hui Li notes that Jesuits initially approached China as students, seeking to understand the language and culture through scientific knowledge rather than conveying a religious message. Believing that learning Chinese culture and language was the optimal means of communication, Jesuits targeted the literate class instead of the illiterate, viewing conversion of the educated elite as more effective (Li, 48-63). However, this strategy encountered challenges, as the educated class harbored reservations about Jesus' incarnation and crucifixion, finding it difficult to accept the idea of an elite figure undergoing a low-class punishment. In response, Jesuits refrained from discussing the crucifixion scene with them, contributing to a persistent sense of foreignness and ultimately leading to a decline in missionary efforts. Despite attempts during the late Ming period to reconcile Christian and Confucian teachings, the Qing dynasty forbade such syncretism (Mungello 32, 34).

The fourth phase of missionary activities in China, spanning from the mid-nineteenth century with the 'Opium War' to the establishment of the People's Republic of China, witnessed a detrimental impact on Christianity's reputation due to its close associations with colonial and imperial powers. This era gave rise to enduring anti-Christian sentiments, notably reflected in the anti-Christian stance adopted by Chinese communists (Tang, 81). Conversely, amid this challenging period, the contributions of Protestant missionary, Robert Morrison, in the nineteenth century were noteworthy. His efforts included translating the Bible into Chinese, not only facilitating contextualization but also fostering an understanding of the relationship between Oriental and Occidental academic traditions (Walls, 128). Liang Fa, another significant figure, played a crucial role in this context by exploring

the integration of Christianity into Chinese religious practices, succeeding where Nestorians had failed. Instead of seeking parallels in traditional moral teachings, Liang Fa actively embraced and lived by them (Walls, 127–28). Despite these positive contributions, the present-day acceptance of Christianity in Chinese society remains a minority perspective, ranking lower than Buddhism but higher than Taoism and Islam. This may be attributed to the prevailing 'dominant social structure' in Chinese culture and the overall unfavorable impression left by Christianity as a religion (Li and Cao, 104). The internal divisions within Christianity, marked by competition and criticism among different forms of the faith, further contribute to the fractured nature of the church in the region (Wickeri, 213). In summary, the impressions of Christianity in this period exhibit a complex interplay of both negative and positive aspects.

Therefore, these four periods hold paramount significance in comprehending the missionary enterprise in the Chinese context. Nevertheless, there exists considerable debate surrounding the motives of these missionaries. Some scholars posit that the objective of their work was to reinvent China based on western ideologies, encompassing thoughts, architecture, and culture, possibly leading to the appropriation of Chinese cultural identity. Edmund Tang argues that the arrival of European missionaries introduced the concept of a "nation," a recent western notion, implying a shift in political configuration, while China traditionally identified itself as a dynasty and civilization (81). This transformation may have been driven by a quest for power.

Contrary to the notion of missionary work solely aimed at gaining influence, Burris, in his theological and missiological examination of the global expansion of Christianity, contends that the mission was not solely about converting people for power, as emphasized by the majority of missionaries. Rather, he suggests that the Church recognized the imperative to address the needs of the people, citing Matteo Ricci as an example of fulfilling contextual requirements in the Chinese context (89-90). Burris further highlights the significance of translating the Bible as a crucial accomplishment for understanding the message, asserting

that individuals, sent by God in every era, understood that the mission belonged to the Lord, not to them (92).

3. Culture and Identity Crises

In the initial stages of human history, our ancestors were primarily hunters and gatherers, leading nomadic lives as they searched for food and shelter. Their existence was characterized by constant change and uncertainty, with tents pitched wherever meadows could be found. Relocation was a common practice when resources depleted. As time progressed, humans transitioned to agriculture, mastering husbandry and leading to a more stable way of life. The advent of agriculture allowed our forefathers to settle, cultivate the land, and establish families, laying the foundation for a more structured civilization (Kochhar and Khan, 1).

However, the arrival of missionaries in the Orient brought about a different narrative. Latourette observes that the primary purpose behind the arrival of missionaries in the Orient was often linked to the interests of their respective governments, aiming to secure wealth and power. Consequently, he contends that a significant portion of missionaries represented the destructive and self-serving aspects of the West. However, Latourette acknowledges the diversity of motivations among missionaries, recognizing that not everyone arrived with the same interests (65). Consequently, despite China being a prosperous and civilized dynasty during this period, the impact of missionaries on Chinese culture and identity was targeted during these times from a scientific and civilizing perspective, as outlined by Burris (85).

To comprehend the cultural and identity crises emerging from colonial encounters, our exploration will commence by scrutinizing both the colonizer and colonized viewpoints. It is imperative to examine the missionary vocation from diverse angles to discern the potentially destructive agenda of the West and its ethical ramifications. An illuminating example is Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's depiction in "Petals of Blood," which narrates the story of Ilmorog, a Kenyan community surrounded by a once-thriving forest. The transformative arrival of a powerful man with

cattle unfolds as he clears the land, cultivates alongside his people, and achieves prosperity. This narrative shares similarities with Daniel Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe" (1719), where a village settlement differs significantly from Crusoe's perspective. Our analysis will consider these viewpoints from the standpoint of the native (Chinese) and the adventurer (missionaries).

From the adventurer's standpoint, Defoe's narrative mirrors the prevailing beliefs of his contemporaries, connecting British prosperity with a seemingly tranquil empire founded on free commerce. Crusoe's island, initially abandoned and later occupied by Europeans and converted natives, aligns with Defoe's portrayal of an idyllic and peaceful English colony. This depiction encapsulates the English colonial vision articulated by Defoe in "The Complete English Tradesman." Let us now delve into these perspectives to scrutinize the cultural and ethical dimensions of missionary activities within this intricate historical context.

"Robinson Crusoe," on the other hand, provides another layer in understanding the dynamics of European colonialism and the intricate relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, as exemplified by Crusoe and Friday. When Crusoe encounters a native, he names him Friday and instructs him to address him as Master. "I made him know his name should be Friday … I likewise taught him to say master, and then let him know that was to be my name" (Defoe, 110). A similar dynamic unfolded in the Chinese context, where missionaries arrived with a perspective that the Chinese often misperceived, imposing their own culture without truly understanding the uniqueness of the local cultures. While the novel doesn't delve into Friday's perspective, it prompts readers to contemplate how Friday's relationship with Crusoe influences his sense of identity. The novel portrays Friday imitating Crusoe and adopting aspects of civilization, but the deeper question arises: What impact does this *mimicry* have on the mental psyche of a colonized subject? How do imitation and hybridity influence literary representation and signification in the broader context of colonial encounters? These questions open a window into the complexities of cultural

assimilation and identity formation in the face of colonial influence.

To examine the cultural and identity crises in Chinese society, Albert Memmi's perspective provides a valuable tool for analysis. Albert Memmi, a Tunisian-Jewish writer and essayist who later migrated to France, grew up as a child of colonialism and ultimately rejected the system of which he was a part. Affiliated with the francos-cope critical theory, Memmi is renowned for his influential nonfiction work, "The Colonizer and the Colonized," published in 1957, which explores the interdependent relationship between these two groups. Memmi draws on the words of Jean-Paul Sartre to emphasize that in the context of colonialism, there are neither good nor bad colonists—only colonialists. Sartre's observation underscores that some individuals within this framework may reject their objective reality, unwittingly perpetuating oppressive systems through their daily actions. Such individuals, according to Sartre, contribute to the maintenance of oppression while finding moral comfort in their own discomfort (21-22). Sartre further articulates that when a group of people is left with no choice but to passively receive the gift of despair from its oppressors, a profound transformation takes place. The misfortune endured by the people becomes a source of courage, turning their endless rejection by colonialism into an absolute rejection of colonization (25). Memmi's exploration, rooted in Sartre's insights, sheds light on the complex interplay between the colonizer and the colonized, contributing to a comprehensive analysis of the broader cultural and identity crises in Chinese history.

Memmi further explains the dynamics of colonization by providing two case studies: Case 1, focusing on the colonizer and his worldview, and Case 2, examining the colonized in the world. Within the portrayal of the colonizer (Case 1), he identifies three distinct components:

a) ***The question of the colonial existence***
b) ***The colonizer who rejects***
c) ***The colonizer who accepts***

Hunter Farrell and S. Balajiedlang Khyllep (2022) echo similar sentiments in their analysis of present-day challenges for Christians from a cross-cultural perspective. They argue that misperceptions by many missionaries about other faiths have led to a failure to treat those faiths appropriately. This misunderstanding, they contend, has resulted in a misrepresentation of the true Christian mission faith. Furthermore, Farrell and Khyllep assert that theological justifications for cultural and racial supremacy within the Christian faith contribute an injurious component to cultural violence, with lasting and detrimental effects on people across the Global South (N.pag.). The comparison of Memmi's historical insights with contemporary perspectives illustrates the persistent challenges and consequences of colonial encounters and the need for a nuanced understanding of cross-cultural dynamics.

3.1 Colonizer

Memmi presents a vivid portrait of the colonizer, challenging the romanticized image often projected. He argues:

> We sometimes enjoy picturing the colonizer as a tall man, bronzed by the sun, wearing Wellington boots, proudly leaning on a shovel—as he rivets his gaze far away on the horizon of his land. When not engaged in battles against nature, we think of him laboring selflessly for mankind, attending to the sick, and spreading culture to the nonliterate. In other words, his pose is one of a noble adventurer, a righteous pioneer (47).

However, Memmi contends that such an idealized image of the colonist's cultural and moral mission is no longer tenable, if it ever was. He asserts that the primary motivation for colonists is economic, emphasizing that a colony is essentially a place where one earns more and spends less (48). Memmi uses masculine pronouns, adding that a colonizer claims a twofold legitimacy: not only has he succeeded in establishing a palace for himself, but he has also taken away that of the occupant, securing incredible advantages to the detriment of others who are legally entitled to them (53). This portrayal challenges the simplistic narratives surrounding colonization, urging a reconsideration of the true motivations and consequences of colonial ventures.

Memmi provides a nuanced comparison between the colonizer who refuses and the colonizer who accepts. The one who refuses is described as being taken aback by the sight of a large number of beggars, half-naked children, and the blatant injustice evident in the organization of the colonial system. This colonizer feels uneasy, revolted by the cynicism of his fellow citizens. If he chooses not to return home immediately, he lives under the shadow of a contradiction that pervades every aspect of his life, stripping him of coherence and tranquility (63-64). Memmi notes that while the dissident colonist may support and help the colonized, his solidarity has limits—he does not consider himself one of them and harbors no desire to fully identify with them (67).

Regardless of the dissident colonist's intellectual and political views, Memmi argues that certain values such as political democracy, freedom, economic democracy, justice, rejection of racial xenophobia, universality, and material cum spiritual advancement may not necessarily align with those he wishes to identify with. The dissident colonist may find differences in religious beliefs or attitudes toward individual freedom, yet he does not genuinely love or identify with the colonized people. They were never his people and will never be, as he continues to uphold his language and cultural traditions, reinforcing his sense of isolation, disorientation, and ineffectiveness until he is eventually driven to silence (71, 74-78). In contrast, the colonizer who accepts, reinforces and affirms the colonial relationship, surviving within a mediocre framework (92). Memmi's exploration of these dynamics, sheds light on the complexities and contradictions within the colonizer's stance and its impact on the colonial relationship.

Memmi further asserts that the colonizer who accepts, tends to be conservative in politics, often willing to endorse discrimination and the institutionalization of injustice (99). This colonizer is deeply attached to the remembrance of his homeland (105) and perceives himself as superior to the colonized (108-109). Racism, according to Memmi, is a significant component of colonialism (118). It involves creating a chasm between the cultures of the colonialist and the colonized, exploiting these

alleged differences for the colonialist's benefit, and using these supposed differences as absolute truth standards (115). He highlights that the ultimate act of distortion is when the colonizer positions himself as the guardian of civilizational and historical ideals. This role, in turn, affords him benefits and respect, justifying colonization in every sense with all its implications. According to Memmi, the colonizer who accepts, sees his dominance as a perpetual reality, absolving himself of obligations within this new moral system, while denying the colonized any rights (120). This portrayal captures the deeply ingrained racism and power dynamics inherent in the colonial relationship.

3.2 Colonized

The second part of "The Colonizer and the Colonized" commences with an illustrative depiction of the colonized, portraying them as lazy and weak (123-125), attributes considered to be outcomes of psychological or ethical deficiencies (128). The use of the plural pronoun "they" further dehumanizes and homogenizes the colonized, reducing them to a collective identity (129). Importantly, the colonized are not given the choice to reject colonization, turning them into mere objects fulfilling the colonizer's demands (130). In this scenario, the colonized find themselves confined to what Memmi terms "situations of inadequacy." These situations are characterized by the gradual erosion of historical awareness and identity, leading to the mummification of their society due to the absence of modern power, community, language, and literature (142-152).

The colonized respond to their colonizers in two ways: first, by harboring disdain for the colonial masters, recognizing that any attempt to end the colonial relationship would be vehemently resisted by the colonizers. The second response involves a revolt, initiated by the creation of a counter mythology that glorifies their own culture, customs, traditions, and even elements considered anachronistic or chaotic. This revolt justifies everything within their culture, challenging the narrative imposed by the colonizer (183).

In this context, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2003) sheds light on how colonizers manipulate the image and identity of the colonized, with a particular focus on the portrayal of colonized

women in literature. She writes: "It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English" (306). Additionally, she notes the operation of the 'worlding' of what is today 'the Third World' by a text that has become a cult text of feminism (307). Spivak's feminist theory, recognized as postcolonial feminism, emphasizes the intersectionality of gender, race, and class, challenging traditional feminist theories that overlook the experiences of women from diverse cultural backgrounds. Spivak's theory, outlined in her 1988 article "Can the Subaltern Speak?", contends that colonized women endure oppression on two fronts: as women and as colonized subjects. Therefore, Spivak advocates for global female solidarity and the rejection of western feminism's patriarchal and imperialistic tendencies. Her framework promotes a more inclusive approach to feminist philosophy, acknowledging the diverse experiences of women worldwide.

Colonizers, through methods of injury, humiliation, and division, disrupted the unity and harmony that once characterized our collective body. Humans should dismantle the colonial mentality for the ultimate healing of a body that has been rendered lazy and weakened. Just as the human body comprises various interconnected parts, each with a unique function, so does our global community encompass diverse civilizations, cultures, and tribes, each with its distinct identity. Recognizing and understanding what constitutes this collective body is paramount for its well-being. The path ahead involves acknowledging and valuing the diversity within this shared body, encompassing various cultures and identities.

4. Ethical Reorientation of Theological and Missiological Vocation

Ethics and religion are mutually connected, addressing common issues by emphasizing the divine origin of human beings, grounded in the image of God (McAlister 42). Our identity, rooted in God's image, implies a purpose defined by God, transcending personal objectives. Consequently, the ethical foundation of loving our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31) becomes

paramount in manifesting God's actions in the world. The church's ethical approach extends beyond individual concerns, prioritizing the well-being of communities in fulfilling its missional task. To broaden our understanding of truth, an individualistic mindset must transcend to a communal one that engages with diverse cultures and identities. This prompts the question of prioritizing cultural values rooted in Christian principles. David Tonghou Ngong addresses this, advocating for a balanced approach that values cultural and identity heritage without overshadowing ecclesial identity. Ngong aligns with Walls, highlighting the significance of local context in comprehending God's salvific will, emphasizing Jesus' specific mission within a particular cultural backdrop (253).

Ngong further delves into the complexities of culture and identity, emphasizing the importance of understanding one's identity while avoiding an attitude of superiority. In the postcolonial era, this involves incorporating faith and recognizing its various dimensions, moving beyond narrow western perspectives of salvation. Ngong identifies salvation not only as spiritual atonement but as a multidimensional concept encompassing economic, psychological, physical, and social aspects (Burris, Douglas 1). As an ethical body, the body of Christ must acknowledge its identity in Christ, transcending ethnic, homogenous, racial, and ideological frameworks. Ngong underscores the need for mutual respect and ecumenism, emphasizing the formation of connections within Christian communities (259-60). However, while Ngong's framework is suitable for understanding ecclesial values, it falls short of capturing the holistic nature of the mission. Our new identities are shaped through interactions with individuals from diverse faiths, aligning with Jesus' holistic missional approach aimed at redeeming and liberating the entire universe, rather than focusing on a single race or community (Eṃ Sttīphan 42).

In this case, our theological and missiological journeys in this world encapsulated in an ethical body, embrace all cultures and identities rather than the ecclesial body alone. To put it another way, this body serves in every capacity and condition

without favoring any caste, color, gender, race, etc. Unfortunately, as we have noticed above the missionary enterprises served the elite class undermining the lower that became the failure of this mission. On the other hand, this approach would be limited to propagating one's faith within churches rather than outside the church premises. So, it is important to understand that humans are not just receivers of God's creational goodness; they are part of God's broader purpose, who invites all of creation (McAlister 42) to demonstrate the kingdom values to everyone on earth (1 Peter 2:9b).

As mentioned earlier, numerous missionaries misunderstood the purpose of God's mission, leading to misinterpretations of various cultures and identities. The challenges stemmed from a lack of comprehension of the inherent differences and complexities. However, it is crucial to note that not all missionaries shared identical motivations. Some missionaries recognized and respected the fundamental values of each culture and civilization. Their aim was not to alter the people they encountered but rather to undergo personal transformation. Renowned missiologist David Bosch (1980) articulates this perspective, asserting that the church's primary responsibility is not to change the world but to first undergo a transformation itself. According to Bosch, the Church holds a significant duty to manifest the love of Christ to the world. He contends that Christ exemplified this aspect of love by sacrificing his life on the cross (246-47).

The issue of misconstrued missional strategies extends beyond Chinese Christianity, as highlighted earlier, reaching various regions worldwide. In these instances, a flawed perception prevailed, particularly towards individuals adhering to different religions, portraying them as unworthy in the eyes of God, and neglecting the richness of diverse cultures and values. Contrary to such misconceptions, the Bible illustrates a different approach, showcasing examples where the goal was not to diminish cultural values but to align them with the kingdom of God, drawing people toward Christ (as exemplified in Acts 17:16-34).

Our ethical responsibility, as part of the body of Christ, transcends church boundaries, necessitating the demonstration of God's kingdom values both within and outside the church. This responsibility is rooted in love, care, value, respect, and a willingness to endure for one another, irrespective of differences in cultures, identities, and faiths. The essence lies in fostering a communal mindset, prioritizing the understanding of people's needs over individualism. Therefore, a contextual understanding becomes imperative in addressing ethical concerns. As bearers of the image of God and components of the body of Christ, our role mirrors God's care for every being on Earth. In a parallel fashion, the body of Christ functions to strengthen and nourish every part, contributing to the overall well-being of communities both within and beyond its confines. This highlights the interconnectedness and shared responsibility within the larger human family.

5. Conclusion

No doubt, the conventional mission model, primarily centered on establishing churches and dispatching missionaries to foreign lands, has often misconstrued the true calling of the church as observed by Cardoza-Orlandi (13-15). Notably, the contrasting western concept of 'religion' and the Asian emphasis on 'doing'—guided by the principle of *praxis*, which surpasses western notions of rational knowledge—further complicates this landscape. The current dilemma also involves the dichotomy between academic and congregational theology, along with divisive theological positions (exclusive, inclusive, and pluralist), contributing to the church's fractured identity (Hakim, 49). To counteract some of these misguided agendas, the analogy of the ethical body is employed, emphasizing its allegiance to the missionary God rather than human-made ideologies.

Empowering individuals to grasp this missiological sense for constructing ethical societies is deemed crucial from both the perspectives of being in the image of God and the body of Christ. In essence, theology and practice are inseparable (Bosch, 22), and the burden for the Chinese church is to exist for others (Bonhoeffer, 382) to manifest kingdom values. Despite past misconstrued journeys, the present analysis involves a

reorientation and reimagination, acknowledging historical scars while striving to reclaim the unity that once characterized the body. While remnants of the past's brutalities linger, the hope lies in recognizing the inherent beauty of the unified body and comprehending its diversity and unity. The analogy of St. Paul, depicting the body as one with many parts, serves as an exemplar (1 Corinthians 12:13). This ethical body embraces cultural and identical values, prioritizing kingdom values, thereby defining collective responsibilities to understand each Christian's role, fostering a communitarian perspective that transcends individualism.

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