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an ethical mapping of the transatlantic slave trade

Globalization is an observable event, a phenomenon that moves with extremely rapid, accelerated break-neck speed, interlocking economies, cultures, governmental policies, military affairs and political movements; transcending spatial barriers well beyond the boundaries of countries, continents and oceans.

This globalized reality is propelled by the efficiency of wireless communications, electronic commerce, popular culture and international travel, and yet it is important to keep our memories green that this type of **internationalization** is nothing new.

Many of the large empires and religious movements recorded throughout history represent earlier forms of this type of stranglehold, wherein trade and consumption between countries **promoted transoceanic interconnectivity and complex webs of reciprocity** around the world for hundreds of years.

Now the story that best illustrates the head-on collision between racism and globalization is a story that I heard in the Black Church community while growing up in Kannapolis, NC, and the story goes like this:

There was once a renowned organ musician who was giving a concert performance in one of the grand, magnificent music halls in North America. It was back in the days of pump organs.

The recital was so splendidly breathtaking that when the musician concluded the first half of the performance, there was a ten-minute standing ovation before the

intermission. So, as the maestro walked to his dressing room, he was all beside himself, puffed up with pride and feeling real good about his accomplishments. So, the maestro said to himself, “I AM WONDERFUL!” “I AM A CREATIVE GENIUS!” MY RECITAL IS PAR EXCELLENT!

About that time, the Black man who had been working behind the scenes, the African American brother who was laboring under the organ, sending air up through the pipe chambers, caught up with the maestro as he strutted down the corridor. And the Black man said to the white man, “Tonight we are doing a wonderful job. I think that this is our best performance yet.”

The maestro spun around on his heels and angrily confronted the Black man, saying, “WHAT DO YOU MEAN ‘we’? ‘WE’ HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT! WHY, I am the accomplished musician. I am the consummate master of technique and artistry who studied for more than twenty years in the great conservatories around the world. I am the skilled musician who memorized all the notes and hit every key correctly. Didn’t you hear that standing ovation? Well, that was for me, and for me alone. You didn’t have anything to do with it.”

The maestro then turned abruptly around, walking with his head erect, his nose in the air, leaving the African American man alone in the hallway.

Needless to say, when the second half of the recital began, the crowd stood up and sent forth another long ovation, even before the maestro had time to take his seat at the organ. Eventually, when the maestro did sit down and touched the keys of the organ to resume the concert, there was no sound. The maestro tried again and again and still no

sound came forth from the organ. The audience was shocked. The maestro was embarrassed. He kept hitting the keys but not one note of music chimed forth.

Finally, it dawned on the maestro what had happened. The maestro called out his assistant, the Black man who had been working behind the organ even harder than the maestro was working out front. The maestro introduced the African American brother to the audience and publicly apologized by saying, “Your standing ovations tell me that you really like my music, but you would not hear a note of my music, if it were not for this Black man, my co-partner, who sends up the air.”

The two men then went back to their respectful places and finished the concert with even greater musicality.

How short are our memories? How quickly do we forget? Where are the women in this story? Where are the children? Where are your ancestors, your foremothers and forefathers situated in this cautionary tale? With whom do you identify in such histories of entangled interrelationships? Who are people who pumped up the air, morning by morning and day by day, so that you and I could be present in this place for such a time as this, and yet the vast majority of such folk are rendered invisible, so much so that, the pounding of their heartbeats now registers as the sound of silence to our ears.

Indeed, these are the kind of questions that come to mind when **we begin at the beginning** in wrestling with an ethical framework of global international networking of networks, especially when we concentrate on the underlying substance of racial economic disparities and the slow rate of progress toward equity in wealth and wages that are increasingly impacted by global market forces and international institutions far beyond the control of our individual nation states.

Nowadays, the maestros who are severely constricting our possibilities and potentials, demanding our blood, sweat and tears are large multinational corporations and conglomerates of hybridity who organize free-market production on a worldwide scale that turn so many of our co-laborers into modern-day slaves. Each step in the value-added chain of high-tech, state-of-the-art strategic planning, from research and development to processing of raw materials, production of parts, assembly of components, and marketing of final products; each of these steps is carried out in geographical locations that maximize the greatest profit, regardless of where corporate headquarters might be located or where the final product is sold.

Clearly our task at this conference is to get a grip on what all of this means for our ongoing work as doers-of-justice as we work in coalitions to combat powers and principalities, spiritual wickedness in high places.

We can not sit idly by as spectators witnessing more and more long-term traumas brought on by foreclosures, displacements, family upheavals, the devaluation of entire neighborhoods, the eroding of energy sources, and the decline in public services.

Nor, can we allow a tiny group of global elites situated at the top of the economic pyramid to dull our sensibility with a parallel universe of the ultra-rich, so much so that we are baffled and mystified by their heavily bankrolled efforts that increase their profits through various degrees of exploitation, wherein they plunder natural resources and abuse workers, in the ongoing trajectory from slavery to imperialism to colonialism to war to monopolistic trade practices. Little by little, single companies gain control over entire sectors of the economy, creating monopolies that have so much power that they can tell governments what to do and bring governments down if they refuse to obey.

To make this point another way is to say that since we cannot turn back the hands of time, how do we systematically tackle these contemporary social and economic changes that depend on exploiting both labor and natural resources at one and the same time? And in turn, the basic law of supply and demand is implemented by way of global networks who make sure that borders are broken down, and the laws of capital are imposed on the world, so much so that we end up with an amalgamated everyday existence of watching the same major events, listening to the same financial forecasts, and seeing the same three-minute audio-visual clips of ecological disasters 24 hours each day, seven days each week and 365 days year-in and year-out.

Indeed, Dr. Charles Long, the famous professor of history of religion says that if we are serious about understanding the intersection of racism and globalization then we must look at transatlantic slavery because the international slave trade was **the beginning of democratizing evil** in the modern world.

Dr. Long says that Christian countries ran **the 40,000 slave ships** that traveled the waters of the Atlantic Ocean. Christian practitioners of democracy lied and cheated, stole and lynched, and raped anytime they wanted with impunity. When this type of ruthless violence is not enough, there is always the force of the military –industrial-complex.

Therefore, I would like to place our current reality of extreme inequality in historical context by sharing with you this evening **an ethical mapping of the transatlantic slave trade** that can be used as a paradigm for debunking, unmasking and disentangling the real-life consequences of maximizing profits, exploiting natural resources, and breaking labor unions, so that a few reap endless benefits, while the vast majority continue to pay the cost of pumping up air for everyone except themselves.

First of all, ethical mapping always begins with **CONSCIENTIZATION**. Most scholars who study the transatlantic slave trade talk consistently about quantitative numbers and business transactions without any mention of the ethical complexities that offer a critique of the quality of African life that was lost during four hundred years of slavery. Due to the slave trade, all kinds of divisions were taking place. In the most essential sense, when the traditional exchange of mutual obligations between the elders and youth was disrupted, there was gradual disestablishment of the transference of skills, and in turn the profitability and energy from particular African industries dried up. Thus, the central component of my argument is that Ghana's descent from the Gold Coast to the Slave Coast is a foundational paradigm wherein contemporary globalization is foreshadowed in deep histories intersecting reciprocal relationships across vast distances.

In this presentation, I draw on a lecture, *The Slave Trade and Its Continuing Impact on Ghana*, presented by Dr. Cornelia Rose, wherein she tells the story of Ghana's willingness to profit from the capture of massive numbers of women, men, and children who were sold as chattel property. As a professionally trained historian, Dr. Rose begins her lecture with the following statement: "Ghana's participation in the transatlantic slave trade (1520-1860) is not a topic for tea."¹ Most investigators of slavery in the Americas are familiar with the enslavers who were Portuguese,² Spanish,³ Dutch,⁴ French,⁵ and British,⁶ but Rose's claim of Ghana's willingness to sell other Africans as slaves almost always earns her scathing criticism.

Especially with the growing demand by African Americans for reparation,⁷ payment for the grievous crimes committed against Black people, the capital upon which capitalism was built, and the damage we have suffered and continue to suffer as a result

of nearly two hundred and fifty years of chattel slavery in the USA, and one hundred years of legalized racial discrimination, Dr. Rose maintains that the pressure is increasing for Africans to admit that they sold their own people into slavery. Dr. Rose says that

Africans in the Diaspora should never think that your parents sold you into slavery. Someone stronger than your parents enslaved Africans. We may be of the same color, but African raiders and traders did not think of themselves as Black against Black selling their own.

They thought of themselves as Abos people in the Cameroon; Conia people in Senegal; Kabiye people in Togoland; Gango and Mandingo people in Sierra Leone; Ibos and Yoruba people in Nigeria; Pombo people in the Congo; Akan, Ashanti and Wassa people in the Gold Coast. Anyone outside one's own people-group was considered the enemy, fair game as captives for the slave trade.

Dr. Rose encourages us to reject the current tendency wherein the continent of Africa, far too often, is presented as one huge, homogeneous black blob of similarity, a black hole where everything is the same--everyone looks the same, everybody acts the same and everybody thinks the same. Dr. Rose sounds the trumpet-call for conscientization in this way:

If you travel to Europe and you tell Englishmen that they are the same as Portuguese or Italians, they will refuse such identities and connections because in their world they acknowledge their differences, especially their major cultural differences. But as soon as you enter the kingdoms of Black people, you assume that all Africans look alike and have the same mindset. Most people do not give recognition to the multitude of differences among people in Africa. Each nation-state is different and has developed along certain philosophical lines. Some are warriors. Others are not. These are some of the issues in the slave trade discourse that some groups refuse to

accept as valid information.

Age-Old Religious Topography

Secondly, an ethical mapping of the transatlantic slave trade requires that we participate in **emancipatory historiography**. One of the most significant aspects in mapping the Transatlantic Slave Trade is studying the role of religion. It is important to note that during this historical period feudal states of European countries were just beginning to unite and major religious wars were being fought between Christians and Muslims, especially the Moors.

Now, feudalism, as a conceptual antecedent to globalism was a top-down authoritarian system where the vast majority of people lived in poverty and were completely subjected to the will and the whim of kings and nobles who did as they royally pleased. The feudal lords owned all the land, which was the single most important source of wealth. The peasant and serfs worked the land. They were allowed to keep a small part of the crops, while giving the majority of their harvest to the feudal lords and to the church. The aristocracy and the clergy got all of the goods but did little of the work. A few people were becoming very rich at the expense of the masses.

So, let us ask ourselves what does it mean If EVERYTHING THAT WE NEED IN LIFE COMES FROM THE LAND, EXCEPT FOR LOVE AND SUNSHINE, AND YET WE OWN NO LAND? What does it mean to be a landless people?

Just imagine for a moment how it might feel to be banished from our plot and province, to be dispersed from our habitation and homestead, to be displaced from our humble abode and familiar address, to be ostracized from the dusty dirt and gritty ground

where we were born, to be deported from and made a fugitive-on-the-run, a refugee from the only residential place and living space that we call home.

By engaging in **emancipatory historiography** we discover, for instance, that Ghana operated an ingenious, first-class fishing industry long before the Portuguese arrived in 1471. The Africans used barks from trees to make fishing nets. In this inherited compendia of scientific traditions, the fishermen experimented with various trees in order to figure out the best bark for the most efficient results. The elders deliberately shared with the younger fishermen their acquired skills of physics and chemistry, identifying how to make different types of fishing nets from different types of tree bark so that they could catch various species of fish.

Moreover, we must not overlook the significance of European trading companies who deliberately and aggressively undermined the Ghanaian fishing industry by selling large European needles to the Africans. In turn, the African fishermen shaped the needles into fishing hooks. The European merchants decided that commercially it would be better to bring and sell ready-made fishing hooks and ready-made yarn to Ghana so that the Africans would no longer need to make fishing nets by using the bark from trees. The predictable consequence of Africans buying imported ready-made fishing hooks and imported ready-made fishing nets meant that the Ghanaian fishing industry became more and more dependent upon European traders for the fishermen's basic necessities. It became cheaper to buy ready-made things than to make hand-made stuff. And in turn, this type of rapid depletion of industrial knowledge set in motion economic destabilization and the technological decimation of people well beyond discrete geographical spaces and identifiable cultural places.

Capitalist entrepreneurs grew fat at the expense of everyone else, by swallowing up self-sustaining, smaller markets, smashing local economies and forcing out of existence indigenous homegrown industries. European trading companies destroyed the livelihood of thousands of farmers, fishermen, and craft-persons, turning into dust the corresponding socio-cultural foundations of local economies that sustained much of the population.

In turn, the frightening everyday repercussions of such crushing systemic destruction of people, places and things are widespread hunger, disease, mass emigration and chaotic unrest.

At this point it is also important for us to note that this type of globalization of the Transatlantic Trade of Africans was founded on Christianity. For instance, religion was key in motivating Prince Henry of Portugal, later called “Henry the Navigator” (March 4, 1394-November 13, 1460), to put in motion Europe’s aggressive and ruthless expeditions to Africa. Henry was not only the governor of Algrave, Province, who managed a large economic infrastructure based on the unbridled grasp of enormous wealth from African commerce, but he was also the administrator of the Order of Christ, the Portuguese successor to the Knights Templar, a famous Western military order founded in the aftermath of the First Crusade in 1095.

In order to further God’s intentions for humankind, religious leaders offered rights of patronage to Prince Henry, authorizing him to appoint clerical orders of evangelism so that they could fend off other European countries competing for markets and raw materials. According to Peter E. Russell, Henry the Navigator considered conversion and enslavement as interchangeable.

Prince Henry experienced no cognitive dissonance in using Christianity as a civilizing agent for making converts into slaves. In essence, Prince Henry's administration is a hallmark of the rise of globalized voyages of captivity—aided by an unholy alliance of contorted logic of white supremacy.

In the bulk of literature on chattel bondage that has come down to us the **missiology of imminent parousia** can be defined as the link created between biblical urgency and cultural reasoning that legitimates the mission strategies of Christian imperialists. Strictly speaking, European expansionists who perpetrated the trafficking of human beings merely as numbers in socio-political arithmetic synchronized the Christian understanding of parousia-- the quickly approaching, expected hope of the return of Christ as Judge to terminate this world order, with the early church's confession of a universal **christophany**, commonly referred to as *the great commission* based on Matthew 28:18 – 20.

Thus, for more than three centuries the **missiology of imminent parousia** served as the standard European false justification with vicious consequences for more than 12 million Africans who embarked on hellish voyages to the Americas in wretched, suffocating, demeaning conditions, shackled and chained as marketable commodities.¹

According to The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, the word *parousia* is a transliterated word used in classical and Koine Greek that was adopted as a technical term by the Christian community indicating the present time, but parousia also refers to the future arrival of the secretly manifested final day, when the expected eschatological

¹ See Rod Brown's achingly vivid paintings and startling image of enslaved Africans stacked seven-high in the hold of a ship in From Slave Ship to Freedom Road by Julius Lester and Rod Brown (NY: Dial, 1998). Also, Stephanie E. Smallwood, Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Pr., 2007); and Marcus Rediker, Slave Ship: A Human History (NY: Viking Pr., 2007).

return of Christ will end history, bring this world to a close, and set up another one that is unending.

In general the New Testament writers expected an imminent, dramatic, visible return of Christ to usher in the New Age. The work begun in his ministry, death, and resurrection was to culminate in his triumphant parousia.²

We find that based on mere wickedness and warped defensible warrants of the Gospel, the enslavers of Africans used **the imminent parousia** as a convenient rhetorical weapon for deepening the conjunction between evangelism and judgment. Their logic was rooted in the belief that whoever is a disciple of Jesus Christ must go into the entire world and “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” And since no one knows the exact day or the hour when Jesus will return, these patrons of the governors’ trading companies decided that they would enhance their nation’s economic, political, and spiritual health by accelerating the spread of Christianity.

Truth be told, “Christianity has been present on the African continent,” says Mercy Amba Oduyoye, “for almost as long as people considered themselves followers of Jesus Christ.”³

Therefore, it is important to note that this new form of imminent parousia missionary activity began in Africa during the fifteenth century when Europeans merged trade and conquest with a three-step conversion process. First, invite the king or paramount chief to a meeting. The second step took place at the meeting’s end, when the

² H. K. McArthur, *Parousia* in The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible Vol. 3 (Nashville: Abingdon Pr., 1962) p. 659.

³ Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis books, 1986).

king and the indigenous masses were encouraged to pledge full submission to Jesus Christ as saviour. And, finally, if indigenous people refused to forsake the god of their religion and resisted entrusting their lives to the conqueror in the name of Christ, it was not only legal, but also an act of faith, a religious duty sanctioned by God, for Christian imperialists to use whatever force was necessary-- murder, starvation, rape, disease, physical exhaustion, and slavery in perpetuity, in order to rescue inferior benighted brethren, identified as heathens, savages, infidels, pagans, and enemies of Christ. Such self-serving racist myths trapped millions of Africans and their descendents in a lifetime of chattel slavery and unmitigated poverty.⁴

In other words, drunk with power and driven by grand delusions, many government officials and officers of trading companies, as well as captains, sailors, and common seamen working in this maritime world of deadly journeys between the coasts of Europe, Africa and the Americas, succumbed to the lies and manipulations that their soul salvation depended on the ceaseless replication of systemic violence in converting non-Christians, controlling their territorial lands, and exploiting their natural resources, which supposedly would result in establishing God's kingdom on earth as soon as possible. God, glory and gold were posited as part of divine providence.⁵ The more heathens saved prior to the second coming of Christ, the more one could rest assured of their right to the tree of eternal life.

⁴ David Brion Davis, Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World (NY: Oxford Univ. Pr., 2006); David Brion Davis, In the Image of God: Religion, Moral Values and our Heritage of Slavery (New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr., 2001).

⁵ James A. Rawley, The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History (NY: Norton, 1981); Forrest Wood, The Arrogance of Faith: Christianity and Race in America from the Colonial Era to the Twentieth Century (NY: Knopf, 1990).

Theology of Racialized Normativity

Now, the third and final point in the ethical mapping of the transatlantic slave trade focuses on the **theology of racialized normativity**. **Racialized normativity** is a concept that has its own unique history inside of Christianity. As a theoethical idea it refers to the constellation of structured white supremacy ideology, wherein Caucasian people of European descent proclaim themselves ordained by God as the superior, *natural masters*, hereditarily pure, glorious, free citizens, while crafting subordinate status justifications for people of African descent as *natural slaves*, inherently defective, depraved and inferior. Culturally appalling essentialized stereotypes of inferiorization served as boundary markers, labeling Africans and their descendents as beast of burden, liabilities to civilization, infectious progenitors of sin, and carriers of the corruptive powers like the snake in the Garden of Eden.⁶

More than forty years ago, Dr. George D. Kelsey in Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man⁷ threw into bold relief and confirmed that racism is an idolatrous religion. White supremacy is the “Trojan Horse” within organized Christianity, undermining and subverting the liberating news of the Gospel Story. Such idolatry taught enslavers that this highly respected, booming and lucrative transatlantic commerce of embodied commoditized labor violated neither divine nor natural law. Traders, merchants, and slaveholding planters should have no fear in losing their chattel property

⁶ Joseph R. Washington, Jr., Anti-Blackness in English Religion, 1500 – 1800 (NY: The Edwin Mellen Pr., 1984); Winthrop D. Jordan, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550 – 1812 (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969); Robert E. Hood, Begrimed and Black: Christian Traditions on Blacks and Blackness (Minn: Augsburg/Fortress, 1994).

⁷ George D. Kelsey, Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man (NY: Scribner, 1965).

because with baptism Africans become efficiently subservient. Striking at the core where enslaved women, men and children lived, enslavers tried to indoctrinate Africans to believe that they were duty-bound to serve Jesus Christ while they worked for their oppressors, performing their duties with great diligence and fidelity to God. The traditional notion that a baptized person was entitled to freedom was no longer applicable in the African world; spiritual freedom was only personal freedom from the bondage of personal sin.⁸

Imperialistic Christianity adheres to a hierarchal chain of human being-ness.⁹ Wrapped in irrational contempt, this superficial false dogma of ontology presents non-white people as creatures of a separate and inferior species distinguished by darker pigmentation and physiological differences.

This essentialization of difference characterizes people of African descent as women, men, and children with thick lips and grimacing teeth, portraying Black people as ugly, smelly, distasteful, hideous masses of loosely connected arms, legs, eyes, and hands, laughing when nothing is funny and scratching when there is no itch, simply boys and girls uttering incomprehensible ebonic sounds.

Supposedly, people of color are inferior to whites in the endowment of both body and mind, fit for nothing more than “hewers of wood and carriers of water.” Arrogantly, merchants and industrialists alike hypothesized that the mental and spiritual deficiencies of Africans would be corrected under the tutelage of European Christians who knew how

⁸ Albert J. Raboteau, Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South (NY: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1978).

⁹ Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea (1936; rpt. Ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Pr., 1971). See Kelly Brown Douglas, What’s Faith Got to Do with It? Black Bodies/ Christian Souls (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005).

to discipline black bodies without distinguishing the life within. Carefully calibrated violence and perverse cruelties were excused atrocities.

The imperial elites who controlled the military, political, economic, cultural and ecclesiastical institutions deliberately exalted white superiority with self-deifying pronouncements, while simultaneously working to nullify Africans as fully recognizable human beings. Using the Bible as the world's constitution, regime apologists used legalistic literalist hermeneutics to convince themselves that African people are cursed to a never-ending servitude. In turn, Europeans are ordained by God to control inferior people and exhorted to deal with people with darker skin complexions as usable, disposable functionaries. Supposedly, people of color are supposed to endure the whole weight of horrific oppression and abject misery in total submission because God ordained it this way.¹⁰ The curse against Canaan in Genesis 9:18 –27 was fitted to the condition African people occupied in the transatlantic slave system, and was thought to be squarely in conformity with divine ordinance.¹¹

An explicit ethical aspect of the **theology of racialized normativity** focuses on altruism, charitable acts of “civilizing” Africans. The so-called *master race* believed that an extension of their humanitarianism was to help the so-called barbarians grow up in their Eurocentric image, indoctrinating them in their worldview, texts, and languages. Those who put in place verifiable measures of superiority imposed cultural domination

¹⁰ David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Pr., 2003); Don Cameron Allen, *The Legend of Noah* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Pr., 1963); Thomas Virgil Peterson, *Ham and Japheth* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Pr., 1978); Hilrie Shelton Smith, *In His Image But...* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Pr., 1972); Stephan R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (NY: Oxford Univ. Pr., 2002).

¹¹ Some of the other scriptural passages that enslavers wrenched out of context to legitimize white supremacy are the following: Genesis 4:16; Colossians 3: 22 – 4:1; I Timothy 6: 20-21; and Philemon verses 10-18.

over the least, the last, and the lost by trampling on every aspect of human rights in the name of religion.

As part of conversion, life-denying, death-dealing powerbrokers attempted to normalize all social relations, behaviors, rights, duties, codes and liberties. In particular, people of African descent were forcibly alienated from the most basic norms of everyday life, owning nothing because they themselves were owned. Christian expansionists concluded that they not only had the right, but a vocational responsibility to colonize the lands, the bodies, the labor, and the minds of the rest of the world.

Conclusion

Indeed, as we conclude the ethical mapping of the transatlantic slave trade, several difficult questions emerge.

First, where, how, and to whom do we tell our stories of resistance, rebellion and resilience against such unspeakable evil?

Secondly, when it comes to questions of parallel dynamics between the transatlantic slave trade and globalized, capitalist free-trade market, why do God-fearing women and men far too often look on silently while people are still being oppressed, compressed, depressed and suppressed by economic exploitation and systemic underdevelopment?

Perhaps most importantly, is the final question about the mission of the church under the present global empire. What does it mean that the law abolishing the Slave Trade was passed in the USA in 1807, and yet the legacy of human trafficking accounts for millions of enslaved women, men and children in 2008?

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the quotations throughout this paper come from a July 10, 2000 lecture, “The Slave Trade and Its Continuing Impact,” presented by Dr. Cornelia Rose Makola (Upon personal request, this pseudonym, Cornelia Rose Makola, is being used.).

² According to the timeline created by The Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at the Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University, the first organized Portuguese expedition to capture Africans and to enslave them in Europe occurred in 1441 when sea captain Antam Goncalvez returned from exploring West Africa with two Africans. In 1443, one of Goncalvez’s men, Nuno Tristo, captured 235 Africans. This marks the beginning of the Portuguese as the principle carriers of enslaved Africans to Europe for the next four centuries. C. R. Boxer, Four Centuries of Portuguese Expansion, 1415-1825 (Berkeley: Univ. of CA Pr., 1969).

³ In 1493 the Spanish began importing Africans to the Americas. Colin A. Palmer, *The First Passage 1502-1619*, in To Make Our World Anew: A History of African Americans edited by Robin D.G. Kelley and Earl Lewis (NY: Oxford Univ. Pr., 2000) says “In response to the request from the governor of Hispaniola for African labor in 1501, the Spanish Crown authorized the shipment of slaves in 1502. The slaves in this first cargo had lived in Spain for some time before they were shipped to the Caribbean. Not until 1518 would slaves be transported to the Americas directly from Africa.” In 1565 the Spanish took enslaved Africans to St. Augustine, the first permanent settlement in what would become Florida.

⁴ The Dutch began in the early 1600s to arm their boats and capture Portuguese forts along the African coast. They dominated the Trans-Atlantic slave trade until the 1700s.

⁵ Throughout the first half of the 18th century, the French and English, adopting Dutch tactics, built new forts and created companies for the organization of slave trade from Africa.

⁶ The British took the Portuguese slave trade from the Dutch by way of Cromwell’s Navigation Act, which forbade the importation of enslaved Africans into English and French colonies. In the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 the British won the *Assiento* or contract, the monopoly license to ship each year thousands upon thousands of African people as slaves to Spanish controlled territories in America. After the Anglo-Dutch War ended in 1784, the British slave trade to the Dutch colonies became important. Profiles of the Transatlantic Slave Trade can be reviewed in Hugh Thomas, The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1440-1870 (1997); J.A. Rawley, The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History (NY: W.W. Norton, 1981); and Colin A. Palmer, Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739 (Urbana, IL: Univ. of IL Pr., 1981); David Northrup, The Atlantic Slave Trade (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1994); David Brion Davis, Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World (NY: Oxford Univ. Pr., 2006).

⁷ The U.S. government’s first reparations plan to compensate African Americans for the legacy of slavery was 40 acres and a mule apiece—that was General William Sherman’s promise to former slaves shortly after the Civil War ended in 1865. His order set aside land on the Georgia and South Carolina coasts for the settlements of thousands of newly freed families. But the promise was quickly recanted and the land was taken back, with no plans for reparations. There is now an increased focus on getting compensation from corporations that once profited from slavery. Adjoa Aiyetoro, a legal consultant to the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America, and Robert Sedler, a professor at the Wayne State University Law School, have filed a class action lawsuit to seek restitution. See W.E.B. DuBois, Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860 -1880 1935, rpt (NY: Russell & Russell, 1966); Randall Robinson, The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks (NY: Penguin Putnam, Inc., 2000); Clarence J. Munford, Race and Reparations: A Black Perspective for the Twenty-First Century (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Pr., 1996).