

Immanuel: The God That the Poor Seek

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*The missio Dei in which the church participates, is not just about helping the poor but about following Christ and discovering that those whom one is called to serve also have something to give.*¹ Fr. Daniel Groody, missiologist

Background to the Book

My writings have always had a context. They are rarely mere academic explorations of an interesting topic. They emerge out of my own struggles to understand the world we live in and what it means to follow Christ in such a world. My latest book *The God that the Poor Seek: Conversion, Context and the World of the Vulnerable* is the result of one such journey.

The issue of poverty and a concern for the poor has been a part of my personal spiritual journey for a long time. The question that haunted me was whether God was really concerned for the poor, the injustices that enslaved the marginalized, and the violence and conflicts that destroyed lives and societies. Study, research, conversations, life experiences, and reflection over decades culminated in the publication of *Compassion and the Mission of God: Revealing the Invisible Kingdom* and *Strangers in the Kingdom: Refugees, Migrants and the Stateless* (both published by Langham). The question that I asked and tried to answer was, *why* does God care for the poor, the marginalized, and the displaced?

Having gotten a glimpse of how God feels about human beings, *I often wondered what the poor, the victims of human trafficking and abuse, and the refugees think about God.* I often find myself reacting with anger at the injustices I see, realizing that this is not the way God intended this world to be. However, because of my position of privilege, I have not been able to see the world through the eyes of those who are victims of evil. I do not understand why they would even turn to a God who seemingly has betrayed them and ignored their destitution and desperation.

In my work I would often hear the poor talk about their faith. Their ability to survive in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges was something that I have admired. It seemed to me that their resilience is rooted in a worldview expressed through their faith and spirituality that is very different than mine. Listening to their life experiences and the simplicity of their faith pushed me beyond my safe and comfortable religious traditions to seek the reality of God through Jesus Christ, who is known as *Immanuel*, in my daily life and challenges.

The stories of the poor, especially those from non-Christian backgrounds opened a Pandora's box for me of trying to understand how God works in the lives of people to reconcile and restore them to himself. There doesn't seem to be a standard template and process that God uses. It raised

¹ Daniel G. Groody, *Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees - Monograph 15* (Oxford: Crowther Centre Monographs, 2010), 26-27.

questions about the God that the poor seek and why they would seek God. These questions led to the genesis of this book.

While much has been written about poverty and how to respond to their physical and social needs, what has been missing in both the literature on the spirituality of the poor and in missional practice is an understanding of *how* and *why* the poor choose to worship Jesus Christ. What do the poor themselves have to say as to what attracts them to Christ and the gospel? A growing number of Majority World and Western missiologists are writing about how conversion in different cultural and religious contexts may vary from the standardized approaches used by Western mission agencies. Recent research has shown that the poor tend to be more religious than the nonpoor. However, there is very little empirical research on how the poor in the Majority World encounter Christ as articulated by the poor themselves.

The research in this book recorded the spiritual journeys to Christ of Hindu slum dwellers in Bangalore, India (chronic and generational poverty) and Syrian Muslim refugees in Lebanon (event based poverty). It then used the literature on spiritual conversion and contextualization as a framework to analyze and understand the stories. What emerged were experiences of conversion that had deep roots in church history and attested to in the breadth of literature on conversion and contextualization.

To understand how and why the poor choose to follow Christ is critical in knowing what does the Gospel, the Good News, mean to them. They respond to the Good News of Jesus Christ for reasons that are very different than what many Western evangelicals think what the Gospel is about. If this is understood, it will also enable Christian development practitioners to design effective holistic community development programs that don't just try and tack on a standardized verbal Gospel presentation as part of their relief or development interventions and then presume that Gospel they shared has been understood.

As I heard the stories, there were certain questions that needed answering. Can a person become a follower of Christ, a Christian, without fully understanding sin and the saving grace of God offered in Christ? Isn't it wrong to follow Christ because he had answered prayers or had done a miracle for me? Aren't we supposed to follow Christ and worship him for who he is and not because he answers prayers and provides for me? What if he stopped answering my prayers – would I still follow him? Is the good news that Jesus, the apostles, and the early church proclaimed only about forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God, or is it that the reign of God had dawned with the coming of Christ, even though it is not here in all its fullness?

What I saw emerging among the poor was a raw and unvarnished faith with echoes from the Old Testament and the early church where God's presence was real and tangible. Why was this new for me, and why was I surprised? Isn't the biblical narrative one of God dwelling with his people in creation – a God who, at the beginning of the New Testament, identified himself as *Immanuel*?

The motivation for this book was to try to see God and his work of redemption through the eyes of some of the poor. Jürgen Moltmann writes about a theology of hope where the starting place is despair, either because of the loss of faith in any type of utopian or religious ideals, or an ignorance of or unwillingness to accept the eschatological promise of Christ. Yet the despair is evidence of

a human yearning for there to be something else, something transcendent, that will sustain and give meaning and shape to life on earth. Moltmann writes, “Thus despair, too, presupposes hope. ‘What we do not long for, can be the object neither of our hope nor of our despair’ (Augustine). The pain of despair surely lies in the fact that a hope is there, but no way opens up toward its fulfillment.”²

The poor we interviewed despaired because the deities they worshiped had failed them. The object(s) of their faith and trust turned out to be impotent and uncaring. What they longed for was a God who would hear their prayers and help them, who would be with them in the midst of their poverty, a God who understands their despair and struggles. The failure of their deities to respond and being unaware of the eschatological promise of Christ drove them into despair. They finally found hope in the God revealed in Christ because he was real to them in very tangible ways. This hope and reality are what attracted them to Christ and enabled them to survive and cope with their poverty. The gospel for them was not an other-world reality or only an expectation of life after death. God in Christ known as *Immanuel*, present in the midst of their destitution, was good news for them.

Findings from the Interviews

In order to interpret and assess the stories through the lens of missiological history and practice, the history of Christian conversion, and the literature and practice of contextualization, four questions will be explored.

- Are the stories those of genuine spiritual conversion to Christ?
- How did the poor, who told their stories, become followers of Christ?
- Why did they choose to follow Christ?

The key to understanding the responses of the poor to the above questions is to interpret their responses in the contexts of poverty in which they live and their life experiences. These determine their worldview and their spiritual priorities, and ultimately how and why they chose to become followers of Christ.

Genuineness of the Conversions

The question of the genuineness of conversion is important because it changes how the local church or the community of Christ-followers relates to the individual. In the Early Church, the genuineness of the conversion which was attested by instruction, observation, and baptism, allowed the convert to participate in Christian worship and the sacrament of Communion, and be introduced to the mysteries of their new faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the past few centuries, a liturgical act such as baptism or confirmation, or an intentional action such as reciting the Sinner’s Prayer or going forward in an evangelistic meeting have been evidence of conversion.

The genuineness of their encounter with Christ was attested by their change in allegiance from the deities they had worshipped to Christ and Christ alone. This was confirmed by changes in

²Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993) 23 ..

behaviour, attitudes and relationships, and by the evidence of spiritual life reflected by a desire to read the Bible, listen to biblical teaching, prayer, and worship, all directly attributable to their new-found faith. Local Christian leaders and mission workers in each location also used the above criteria to attest to the genuineness of the faith of new converts. Though they did not have a complete understanding of God's plan of salvation, they knew that because of Jesus, God was real. In most cases that was enough to change their allegiance from their traditional deities to Christ. John Stott writes that the result of evangelism is conversion, which he emphasized is "a radical change in lifestyle with new relationships with Christ, the church, and the world."³

This radical change in lifestyle was evidenced in a number of ways. One Syrian refugee said,

I changed as a person. I had lived in fear. My personality was fearful. I was full of hate. Maybe I would have been a killer. Maybe I would have killed my brother or neighbour. Today I cannot think about anyone, even for one minute, and say I am going to kill you. Jesus doesn't teach us to think about killing, he teaches us to think about love.

Another Syrian refugee told her story.

My family life has completely changed. My marriage is much happier because we have Jesus bringing us together. I have a peace like I have never experienced before. I don't worry about my future.

Speaking further about her faith she said, "God revealed himself to me in ways I couldn't deny that he was the Messiah. He consistently pursued me... Making Christ the most important thing in your life. Reading the Bible daily and learning more about Christ and who he is."

A slum-dweller in India said,

I am from a Hindu family; a very religious family and I adopted all Hindu customs. I was facing a lot of problems in the family. My husband and I lost our jobs for no reason. We were struggling for even daily food... I started attending the prayer meeting from that day onwards. COME missionaries would visit our home and we asked them to pray to get jobs. Always they were telling to me to go to church. One day I prayed to Jesus and accepted Christ as my personal saviour and prayed to get a job. By miracle, Jesus gave us jobs and changed our lives and given peace in our family. Now we are blessed by Him and living peacefully.

Her spiritual allegiance changed. The God she worshipped was not an idol but "Almighty God, Eternal God... peace-giver." As part of her changed allegiance, she had turned away from witchcraft, addictive substances, and conflict in the family. Her testimony is not just about getting jobs but about a new relationship with Christ and a new way of living and worshipping.

Though some Syrian refugees shared how hard life continued to be for them as refugees, many spoke about the joy, peace and hope they had in the midst of the civil war and their very difficult

³ John. R. W. Stott, "Conversion as a Complex Experience," in *Down to Earth: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, ed. R.T. Coote and J.R.W. Stott (Grand Rapids, MI: William.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 23.

circumstance. Even though materially little had changed, God had answered prayer for their needs and provided for them. Some spoke about not worrying any more about the future. Others shared about how their attitudes had changed and some spoke of how they had moved from the “darkness” of their traditional religion.

For the slum-dwellers in India, their decision to change their allegiance and to convert to Christ resulted in immediate behaviour changes. Many spoke about being freed from the addiction to chewing tobacco and alcohol. Some were physically healed or had seen family members healed through their new-found faith in Christ. Others spoke about how they stopped practicing witchcraft as a means to have some control over their lives and to try and have their needs met. All of them stopped worshipping idols once they had encountered Christ. The changes were not only immediate, but also had a longer-term impact. One person spoke of how their changed lives and broken addictions had enabled them to save money and be able to buy a small piece of land.

Further evidence was sought for the genuineness of their conversion by assessing whether their faith had been tested. A little less than half (42.8% of the refugees and 45% of the slum-dwellers) said that they had faced mild to severe persecution and harassment because of their spiritual allegiance. In spite of this, all the participants in both locations could not imagine going back to their traditional deity and worshipping the way they used to because their conversion experience had been so profound.

These criteria for conversion are in sharp contrast to a traditional Evangelical that states that conversion happens when a person acknowledges Jesus Christ as redeemer and saviour, as the one who forgives their sin, saves them, and they are thus “born again”. Their understanding is based on commonly used key verses as proof texts on conversion such as Acts 16:30-31, John 3:3,16-18 and Rev. 3:20.⁴ A verse often used is Rom. 10:9, “If you declare with your mouth ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” So, an act of faith in a moment of time attested by a verbal confession, as well as the content of their belief, are the indicators of conversion. This understanding assumes that conversion is a punctiliar event.

This study did not negate the need for an act of faith and the fact that there is a moment in time when the Spirit of God breathes new life into the individual. There is a need to distinguish between regeneration, which is God’s work, and conversion, which is the human response. John Stott writes, “Regeneration is a new birth, a birth ‘from above’ (*anóthen*), a birth ‘of the Spirit’. It is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit who himself infuses life into the dead. Conversion, on the other hand, is what we do when we repent and believe.”⁵ According to Stott, regeneration is unconscious, while conversion is normally conscious. Regeneration is an instantaneous and complete work of God, while conversion (repentance, a turning away from, and faith) is a process rather than an

⁴ Acts 16:30-31, “‘What must I do to be saved?’ They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.’” Jn.3:3, 16-18, “Jesus replied, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again... For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.’” Rev. 3:20, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”

⁵ J Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 169-170.

event.⁶

The reality of conversion being attested by a changed life and a transformed spiritual allegiance while the individual grows in their understanding of who Christ is, has deep historical roots in the practice of the Early Church. In the Early Church, conversion consisted of four stages during which the catechumen would learn the basic truths of the Christian faith – especially Christ as Lord and Redeemer. Throughout the process, the quality of their life and spirituality were observed for evidence of genuine conversion.⁷ It was assumed that conversion would only have occurred if what the catechumen believed resulted in a changed life.

What is evident from the stories of the refugees and slum-dwellers is that intellectual beliefs and the experienced reality of God are integrally linked. Either individually or some combination of both can lead to changed lives. The interviews instead showed that an initial supernatural experience can also lead a person to faith in Christ even before they fully understand the issues of sin and salvation. This initial experience is then reinforced and confirmed by facts and beliefs. An initial experience (encounter with Christ) resulting in changed lives and changed spiritual allegiance is attested by David Garrison in his review of mission among Muslims, as well as by the research of Iyadurai among Hindus and Hildebrand among Buddhists.⁸

How did They Become Followers of Christ?

When analyzing the stories of the poor, there were two observations about how they became followers of Christ. The first is that in all the stories, conversion was a process punctuated by encounters, experiences, and decisions at various points, accompanied by a growing understanding of who Christ is and what he has done for them. The second observation is that in a significant number of stories the poor had had a supernatural encounter with Christ that was decisive in their abandoning of their traditional faith and becoming followers of Christ.

The reality and challenges of poverty resulting in specific personal or family crises, made them deeply aware that their traditional faith and the gods they worshipped did not provide the help and support they needed to cope. This then opened them to the possibility that God revealed in Christ is compassionate and is present with them in their difficult circumstances. They experienced this

⁶ Ibid, 171-174.

⁷ Key verses that illustrate this understanding would be from the teachings of the Apostle Paul about how the reconciling grace of God results in changed lives. II Cor. 5:17, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” Eph. 4:22-24, “... in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” Col. 1:21-22, “And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.” Rom. 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

⁸ David Garrison, *A Wind In The House Of Islam: How God Is Drawing Muslims Around The World To Faith In Jesus Christ* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2014), 235. Joshua Iyadurai, *Transformative Religious Experience: A Phenomenological Understanding of Religious Conversion* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015). Kelly Michael Hilderbrand, “What Led Thai Buddhist Background Believers to Become Christians: A Study of One Church in Bangkok,” *Missiology: An International Review* 44, no. 4 (2016): 400–415.

reality of Christ either through the love and compassion of Christians during their time of need, through reading the Bible or hearing it preached, at prayer meetings or church services, through supernatural encounters (dreams, visions, and miracles), or through answered prayer. It was usually some combination of these that was pivotal in the process by which they became followers of Christ. One Syrian refugee shared,

I was living in Syria and before I came here I didn't know anything about Christ. Everyone kept his religion to himself and we never talked about it, ever. I came to the church for help. I heard there was an Evangelical Church giving food portions. I came on Sunday at prayer time to get it and the Pastor invited me to stay and pray. I came again to hear more. I learned something about myself and my heart and it made me very happy. I decided that I would pray, I didn't know what to pray. I didn't know if I was going in the right direction or the wrong direction but I chose to go the right direction.

While early on she could not articulate exactly what she believed, she took a step of faith to follow Christ. Because of consistent teaching at the church over a year, she was much clearer about what she believed by the time her story was recorded.

I decided to follow Christ for the love, for peace, for brotherhood. It was the love, the idea that you should love your enemy, that was very important. We don't have that kind of love. He's the true saviour and I have peace.

Connecting supernatural and mystical experiences, and correct beliefs, is important and often requires time. Robin Lane Fox writes that conversion in the Early Church was a process which may have started with a supernatural or mystical encounter with Christ but was almost always followed up with teaching.

While there may be numerous reasons as to why they abandoned their traditional faith, what were the triggers that facilitated their encounter with Christ? In the Indian stories, 20% chose to follow Christ as a result of reading the Bible or hearing Scripture being taught or preached. Among the Syrian refugee stories, 33.3% became followers of Christ by either hearing the Bible being taught or preached, or by reading the Bible themselves. None of the 20% in India or the 33.3% in Lebanon mentioned supernatural experiences as part of their conversion process.

In contrast, 66.6% in Lebanon and 80% in Bangalore first encountered Christ supernaturally, either through a dream, a vision, healing, answered prayer, or a miracle. This then caused them to want to find out more about Christ. Most chose to follow Him almost immediately after their encounter. It is important to note that in most of these cases, the individuals and their families had been in contact with Christians, may have heard about Christ, and heard the Word of God being read, taught, or preached. However, it was their supernatural experience that was pivotal in causing them to decide to follow Christ.

A critical question is: what did they understand and know about the Gospel and Christ at the point when they chose to follow Christ? This was assessed by reviewing how they described what had happened to them. Among the Syrian refugees, there was no standard way in which they described

what they had experienced. To most of them, their Christian faith was very new and they did not have the Christian vocabulary yet to articulate their experience.

What was evident in both contexts was that a smaller percentage of those interviewed (and that too, mainly in India) understood the issue of sin, the need for forgiveness, and accepting forgiveness offered through Christ at the point when they decided to follow Him. For the rest, even though they lacked this understanding initially, their lives changed and none were in doubt that they had abandoned their traditional deities and were now followers of Christ only. Their identity and social location had changed. But it was over time that their understanding of Christ as saviour deepened.

A number of theologians and missiologists believe that conversion is more than just a punctiliar event – a decision that can be dated. Orlando Costas writes that conversion is a process rather than a single event. He describes it as “a journey into the mystery of the Kingdom of God which leads from one experience to another.” While there is a point of initiation to this journey, conversion is a lifelong process, “a plunge into an eschatological adventure where one is confronted with ever new decisions, turning points, fulfillments, and promises which will continue until the ultimate fulfillment of the Kingdom.”⁹ So in essence what Costas is suggesting is that conversion is not just the moment of justification (regeneration), but encompasses the whole process of salvation, including sanctification, culminating with glorification. The 1978 International Consultation on Gospel and Culture (of the Lausanne movement) also affirmed this understanding of conversion, that it is not just a crisis event but a process as well, with public and social implications. This was evident in the stories of both the Syrian refugees and the Indian slum-dwellers.

The history and literature on conversion identifies that there are different types of conversion experiences. Context, culture, religion, and life experiences influence how a person becomes a follower of Christ. The 1988 Consultation on Conversion and World Evangelization of the Lausanne movement differentiated between “insider” and “outsider” conversions. The conversion experiences of Hindus and Muslims who told their stories for this book, would be categorized as “outsider” conversions because they had had little or no prior knowledge of Christ or of fundamental Christian truths.¹⁰ As was evident in most of the stories, in order to change their allegiance and become followers of Christ, they needed to change their worldview, give up the rituals and spiritual practices of their traditional faith, and learn what it means to follow Christ and be a people of God. This required behavioural, attitudinal, and relational changes. It is what Joshua Iyadurai referred to as a *transformative religious experience*, which is divine in its origin and power. Such changes require time and is a process. The 1978 Consultation on Gospel and Culture highlighted the radical nature of conversion using the language of death and resurrection, which requires a break from the past and then making a new beginning.

The 1988 Lausanne Consultation Report went on to state that “the fundamental meaning of conversion is a change of allegiance. Other gods and lords – idolatries every one – previously ruled

⁹ Quoted in Stott, “Conversion as a Complex Experience,” in *Down to Earth*, 182.

¹⁰ This is an important point. Many educated Hindus and Muslims would have attended Christian schools (originally established by missionaries) or have been exposed to the wider world and Christianity through their education. The poor would have had limited educational opportunities or attended government schools, which in Syria and India would not have exposed them to Christianity.

over us. But now Jesus is Lord.”¹¹ The understanding is that conversion is not just about forgiveness of sin but is a change in allegiance from the deities they had worshipped to worshipping Christ the Lord. Theologians Matthew Bates and Scott McKnight argue that the true climax of the Gospel is the enthronement of Jesus and not just a reconciled relationship with God through a forgiveness of sins made possible by the sacrifice of Christ.¹² Bates draws extensively from ancient literature on the meaning of the word *pistis* (faith) and writes that *pistis* has a much broader meaning than “to believe” (i.e. acknowledging the truth of something). The range of meanings include fidelity, faithfulness, commitment, and pledged loyalty.¹³ McKnight in the *Foreword* to Bates’ book writes, “The gospel is the power-releasing story of how Jesus became king and the only adequate response is allegiance alone.”¹⁴ So in essence conversion is not just about experiencing forgiveness or changing one’s divine allegiance, but is transformed behaviour, attitudes, and relationships which is in response to the gift of reconciliation with God and of life from God. It is a commitment to live in a new way, in obedience to Christ and his Word.

Conversion therefore not just a mental acceptance of a truth or a prayer inviting Christ into one’s life, but it is a change in allegiance in whom they worship – a renouncing of and turning away from their traditional deities and submitting to Christ the King. This change in allegiance from their traditional deities to the living God, is the predominant motif of conversion in the Old Testament. This is exactly what the stories of the Syrian refugees and Indian slum-dwellers show. In almost all the stories in both locations, there was clear evidence of a change in allegiance from the deities and gods they worshipped, to Christ. As mentioned earlier, with a change in allegiance there were changes in behaviour and attitudes, relationships healed, and spiritual hunger.

“Outsider” conversions are primarily a process, and evangelism has to consider the context of the individual and community. Their life experiences, challenges, crises, and frustrations of being poor were critical factors in motivating them to seek a God who cares and answers prayer. As discussed earlier, John Stott states that understanding the context, and presence in that context are a prelude to evangelism. He writes, “True evangelism can never take place in a vacuum. It presupposes a context from which it must not be isolated.”¹⁵ So the process of conversion starts well before the moment of justification by God. The beginning of the process is when the poor start searching for a God who is real and not distant, and Christ reveals Himself as such a God, as was seen repeatedly in most of the stories that were told.

The model most extensively used by missiologists to understand conversion is by Paul Hiebert. His model provides a framework to understand when and how conversion is an event or a process. The conversion experiences of Muslims and Hindus recorded here would fit the mould of “well-formed centred sets” in Hiebert’s model. As they move towards Christ, the process may include supernatural encounters with Christ, interactions with Christians, worship, prayer, reading and

¹¹ Ibid, 94.

¹² Kelly M. Kopic in her review of Bates’ book asks the question whether there is a need for a stronger word than “faith”, which unfortunately has been reduced to cognitive assent. Kelly M. Kopic, “Do We Need a Stronger Word for ‘Faith’?,” *Christianity Today*, 2017, accessed August 20, 2017, www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2017/july-august/do-we-need-stronger-word-for-faith.html?utm_source=ctdirect-html&utm_medium=Newsletter&utm_term=10383464&utm_content=531164721&utm_campaign=email.

¹³ Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone*, Kindle Location 2-3.

¹⁴ Ibid, Kindle Location 43.

¹⁵ Stott, “Conversion as a Complex Experience,” 21.

hearing the Bible. Somewhere along the process, the seeker crosses a boundary and becomes a member of the Kingdom of God – at which point justification and regeneration take place. The stories indicate that there is no predetermined point in the process or in their understanding of who Christ is, as to where and when that boundary is. It varied across the testimonies of the poor.

The story one of the Syrian refugees summarizes so many of the elements of the process of conversion. It includes disillusionment with their existing faith, a crisis because of their circumstances, a miraculous encounter with the reality of God in Christ, explanation about the work of Christ which helped them understand what they had experienced, further teaching, and finally acceptance into a new community of faith through baptism.

My wife and children went to the [church] centre for sustenance [to get food aid that was being provided]. We were happy about the worship and it broke down almost all Islamic barriers [against Christians and Christianity]. I was, at the time, fed up in my heart because of my violent religion and was seeking Christianity. We were introduced to a Christian pastor who wanted to visit our house. He came and talked with us about salvation in Christ. I recall one time I asked about being baptized, but he rejected the idea and asked why I wanted that. I told him I was convinced that Jesus is alive! He saved my daughter from a fire in the house while she was sleeping, the curtains were falling on her with the flames. I watched this happen and was amazed by the peace my daughter had and her faith in Christ. She told me she prayed before going to sleep and Jesus was with her. The second thing I can't forget is that not even one hair on my daughter's head burned. The pastor then led me through the plan of salvation. My wife and I, our two children and my brother were saved. We are disciple and were later baptized.

Why Did They Choose to Follow Christ?

Missiology has very little on understanding why the poor choose to follow Christ. Any study of the conversion narratives of the poor has to start with the context within which the poor live, out of which come their existential questions. As with any other ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic group, their context influences their worldview and spirituality, and their perception and understanding of who Christ is. "Confession of Jesus Christ takes place in particular historical and cultural contexts."¹⁶

Understanding the contexts and life experiences of the refugees and slum-dwellers (their social-emotional system) will provide insights to explain why they chose to follow Christ, because it is the contexts of poverty that are the frameworks through which they interpret life and life experiences, and seek for a God who understands their poverty and despair. Were there specific factors which influenced their decision to leave their traditional faith and follow Christ? One social scientist pointed out, a personal crisis creates a push away from their traditional faith. To resolve this crisis, there has to be something new that attracts them and satisfies their quest.

The context of the Syrian refugees was the reality of their displacement and the resulting consequences. While they had not been destitute in their homes in Syria, they had descended into

¹⁶ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 197.

devastating poverty because of the conflict (event-based poverty). They were now living in deplorable housing conditions with limited access to water and proper sanitation, no proper access to health care, and little or no schooling for their children. They were dependant on food supplements for survival and had limited and insecure livelihood opportunities, with many of them involved in begging, child labour, or prostitution as means for survival. They had lost most of their possessions, had few material assets, and no security for the future. The hardest part is that they were despised and marginalized by the majority of the Lebanese host population, with very few human rights protecting them.

An important element in understanding why they became followers of Christ is in understanding what had disillusioned them about their traditional faith. Some of the refugees spoke how the conflict had disturbed their understanding of Islam and caused them to question their traditional beliefs. For some, they interpreted the war in Syria as religious violence between the different sects of Islam and were turned off by it. Others felt overwhelmed with evil and did not know how to respond. Some found in Christ something that they had missed in their traditional faith but were yearning for – such as experiencing peace and love.

I had always felt overwhelmed by evil.

We used to be so scared of dying and facing a judgemental God.

But in Islam, I feel like that there is racism – he [Mohammed] came to certain people.

...with Islam, it was full of fear. Always taught to fear Allah. He was the one that punishes us, kills us; our ability to choose is taken away.

All of these were strong drivers pushing them away from their traditional faith towards Christ. One refugee woman summarized her experience. “I am not living in fear. My Lord is the saviour. He will never leave me and my children. If later someone in my family comes here and sees my life maybe they will change. The Lord changes people... Our hearts were always heavy. Now I rejoice. In our religion, everything was hitting you. Now peace and joy are part of [our] faith. Jesus is my joy and peace.”

In the midst of their new experience of poverty, rejection by most Lebanese, and in the context of the hatred, violence, and brutality they had witnessed in Syria, a little less than half of the refugees interviewed were attracted to the love of Christ. A fifth of the refugees in this study were attracted to Christ because of the peace he gives in the midst of turmoil and uncertainty. As they had witnessed the brutality of the struggles for power and wealth in Syria, some (14%) were attracted by a different value system that they saw in Christ and his sacrifice.

While the majority of the Muslim refugees were attracted to a God who is different from the deity and religion that they had traditionally followed, a smaller percentage became followers of Christ because Christ is saviour and forgives their sins. The assurance of the forgiveness of sins was something they were never sure of in their traditional faith. 14.2% said that they were attracted to Christ because “He is the only saviour,” because “Jesus loved us and was crucified and died for our sins on our behalf,” and because “He’s the only One who died for us on the cross. He alone

can give eternal life.” 28% referred to Christ as their salvation, saviour, one who forgives their sins, their intercession, and their redeemer.

I heard that how God would save us and forgive us in Christ. I cried and cried, and I felt something washing me clean on the inside. I went forward, and when I went forward my husband asked me if I wanted to be a church member and I said, “I don’t know, but something has cleaned me on the inside.”

The context of the slum-dwellers in Bangalore is one of chronic poverty, which in most cases was also generational. Being poor, they had settled in the urban slums, living in poor quality housing in unhealthy neighbourhood. Most had insecure livelihoods and were involved in menial work or as daily labourers, resulting in substance abuse and addictions. They barely earned enough to meet their daily needs, with very little to spare. The majority were unskilled and about half were either illiterate or had very low levels of literacy. The women particularly were vulnerable to domestic violence, depression, and suicide. The nutritional status of the women and children was poor. Slum-dwellers do not have access to basic services – especially proper medical care. They have no social or financial safety nets. All of them are politically marginalized and voiceless, unable to advocate for improvements to the settlements where they live. Being slum-dwellers, they are socially ostracized.

The Hindu slum-dwellers in this study felt ostracized and marginalized because of their poverty and having no one to help them cope. As a result, many of them turned to their deities for help. Here are the reasons they gave.

Because my husband went to jail. [She did not have the financial ability or the political patronage that would have helped gain freedom for her husband].

Because of my sickness.

Because I did not get a second child there was no peace in my life.

Did not get healed from TB. No peace in the family.

No peace in the family. Financial problems.

Because of my father’s illness.

Because of my husband drinking alcohol.

Because we lost everything, even job. No peace in the family. Financial problems.

When in spite of *pujas*, rituals, and supplications, their traditional deities did not respond, they became disillusioned and turned away from their gods. A quarter of them wanted peace in their family life in the midst of the challenges of poverty. They were unable to find this peace in their traditional faith. All of them saw God (and Jesus Christ) as almighty, one who helps them because

he is healer, provider, life-giver, sustainer, peace-giver, and deliverer (35%), and is real (20%). This is in contrast to their traditional deities who were either unable or unwilling to help them.

About 20% of the slum-dwellers said that Christ for them was saviour, one who forgives their sin. That was their motivation to follow Christ.

[The COME missionary] shared from James 1:13-14 – [that] from our desires we commit sin [and these were] put on God. These verses touched me and I thought that Jesus only can wash my sins, forgive, and will give eternal life. So after hearing from him, God talked to me and I bitterly cried and accepted him as my personal saviour Jesus Christ.

The poor who had few resources to meet their daily needs, were attracted to Christian spiritual songs, Bible stories about Jesus, and messages from the Word of God through which they found comfort, strength and hope that helped them cope with their challenges. One person said, “God’s Word... attracts me to be closer to Christ, as well as spiritual songs.” It helped them understand that God is real and that he does hear them and care for them. It helped them express their faith and trust in Christ and submit to his Lordship. This is similar to the experience of African American slaves. The Bible and songs were foundational to their spirituality. Though most of them were illiterate, the Bible was the source of images to process their experience and then express them in their Spirituals (songs). Albert Raboteau explains that when reading the Bible, there was a sense of “sacred time,” when past events in the Bible were seen as being in the present time.

For the slum-dwellers, there was a sense of powerlessness resulting from their poverty where they felt that they were trapped in their circumstances and they did not see a way out. In the theologizing of the African American slave, the awareness of being trapped in poverty and oppression was mitigated by a cry to God for deliverance. From their Spirituals, it is apparent that many of the slaves did not believe that society and their circumstances could be changed. So instead, they sought the consolation of God in their circumstances and looked forward in hope to being delivered from this world. For the poor in the slums of Bangalore, the worship songs expressed not only their cry to God for help but was also their acknowledgement of who God is. The stories from the Bible, especially those about Jesus, encouraged them because in them, they saw that God cares and provides.

Considering the corruption and opulent lifestyles of the politicians and many of the religious leaders that they would regularly witness, 20% of the slum-dwellers were attracted to the sacrifice of Christ and Jesus’ lifestyle (10%). They found in Christ something different from what they saw in the world around them and were drawn to it.

There is a strong connection between poverty and spirituality. The 2009 Gallup global survey on poverty and spirituality concluded that religion has a functional role in the lives of those in the poorest countries as it helps them cope with the daily struggles of providing for themselves and their families. Tomas Rees, in his multi-country study, found that personal insecurity evidenced by income inequality was an important determinant of religiosity. Scott Schieman in his North American study on socioeconomic status (SES) and beliefs about God in everyday life, found that individuals from poorer communities professed higher levels of divine involvement and control in their everyday lives compared with individuals from a higher socioeconomic status. The poor

being ostracized and marginalized because of their poverty, sought a higher power who would help them and enable them to cope.

This connection between poverty and spirituality was repeatedly confirmed throughout the stories recorded here, as most of the poor had been religious but had been dissatisfied with their traditional faith. What they were seeking was the reality of God in the midst of their poverty. Richard Shaull who had studied Liberation Theology in Latin American and their work with the base communities, observed (in the 1960s) the following about the Pentecostal churches in similar poor communities across the continent. He writes,

For men and women whose approach to life and the world is essentially religious, Pentecostalism addresses them in their language and offers them what they most long for: a rich and rewarding experience of the closeness and power of God who gives them life and joy and hope. An experience that permeates their whole being and transforms what has become the supreme burden of their daily life: their struggle to survive.¹⁷

Many Pentecostal churches in the Majority World seem to have understood the motivations of some of the poor as to why they seek God.¹⁸ Korean Pentecostal missiologist Wonsuk Ma writes, “Pentecostalism is a religion *of* the poor and not *for* the poor.”¹⁹ This is probably best illustrated by sociologist Christian Lalive who describes Chilean Pentecostal churches in the 1960s. They understood what the poor sought spiritually and responded accordingly.²⁰

The large painting which adorns Pentecostal sanctuaries depicts a restless sea surrounding an island upon the rocks of which a Bible lies open, illuminated by a ray of light from heaven... The symbolism is obvious. In a deeply evil world of misery and perdition, the

¹⁷ Richard Shaull, “The Pentecostal Appeal to the Poor,” *Church and Society* 86, no. 4 (1996): 51–52.

¹⁸ The literature on the Pentecostals and their work among the poor in Latin America referred to here is dated. It is important to note that the Pentecostal Churches in Latin America have grown beyond their initial work among the poor. Today, they are very much a church of the middle class, while still having a strong impact in poor communities. However, their experience among the poor (though dated) is a critical historical perspective about the motivations of the poor and what attracts many of them to Christ.

¹⁹ Wonsuk Ma, “‘When the Poor are Fired Up’: The role of pneumatology in Pentecost-charismatic Mission,” *Transformation* 24 (1 January 2007): 29.

²⁰ Because of the influence of Liberation Theology, it has always been assumed that the poor want liberation. The experience of Liberation Theology and the Pentecostals side by side in Brazil provides some interesting insights. John Burdick’s critical, and sometimes negative assessment of Liberation Theology writes, “I did not doubt that many people were having their consciousness raised by the Church. Yet I found myself puzzling over the implications of Brazilian field reports sent by parish priests to the Church’s Commission on CEBs [*Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* – base communities], which made clear that in any given town those who participated actively in the Catholic Church comprised only a very small minority.” (John Burdick, *Looking for God in Brazil: The Progressive Catholic Church in Urban Brazil’s Religious Arena* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), Kindle Location 12.) Burdick goes on to state that in any given town in a predominantly Catholic country, there were more Pentecostals in the town than there were Catholics involved in CEBs. He wondered why “hadn’t the CEB swept all these other people off their feet?” (Ibid, Kindle Location 21). Burdick called this the paradox of numbers. For a mass movement that was supposed to transform Brazilian society and politics, studies in a number of archdiocese showed no more than 3-4% of the adults were involved in CEBs while the Pentecostals made up 8-10% of the local population. (Ibid, Kindle Location 111). While Liberation Theology experienced through the CEBs was attractive to some, the Pentecostal experience apparently addressed other issues that many of the poor responded to.

Christian communities stand like islands of peace and repose. The task of the elect is to give refuge to the drowning, without a thought for how the angry sea might be calmed.²¹

This is similar in African Pentecostalism. One of the distinctives of African Pentecostal theology is the *experience* of the Holy Spirit in all aspects of daily life. Allan Anderson at the University of Birmingham, in his review of African Pentecostal theology writes, “God’s salvation is seen in different manifestations of God’s abiding presence through the Spirit in everyday life, seen by Pentecostal believers as divine revelations that assure them that ‘God is there’ to help in every area of human need.”²²

Most of the poor in this study responded to the good news that God revealed in Christ is loving, compassionate, almighty, and real. He is not distant and responds to their cries for help. He protects and provides. These were their motivations to become followers of Christ. For most, their understanding of sin came later as they gained an awareness of the righteousness of God. In effect, they were encountering the Kingdom of God and Christ the King, just as Jesus had announced in Matt. 24:14 and Mk 1:15 – that the Kingdom of God had drawn near. This broader understanding of the Gospel is slowly gaining traction among Evangelical missiologists. The 1988 Manila Manifesto refers to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God (and not just the forgiveness of sins) as part of the Gospel. The Cape Town Commitment provides a more comprehensive understanding of the Gospel when it says that it is God reconciling the world (all of creation) to himself through Jesus Christ.

A critical question that must be asked is: did the refugees and slum-dwellers become followers of Christ only for utilitarian reasons – because of the benefits they received such as answered prayer and miracles? Would they continue to follow Christ if He did not answer prayer or they did not

²¹ Christian Lalive, “The Pentecostal ‘Conquista’ In Chile,” *The Ecumenical Review*, (January 1968), 24. It is important to note that Pentecostals were not preaching an other-world, escapist gospel. Pentecostals have struggled to find a theology of social engagement without compromising their tradition. For a detailed discussion see Ivan Satyavrata, *Pentecostals and the Poor: Reflections from the Indian Context* (Baguio City: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 2017). However, records show that the Pentecostals in Latin America did end up having a social impact. Brazilian sociologist Cecilia Mariz writes that both the Pentecostal and Liberation Theology promote similar practices (such as biblical reflection leading to praxis, developing networks of solidarity), attitudes, and values (the human worth of the individual, overcoming the dualism of faith and life) that enable the poor in their midst to overcome the problems of poverty. Cecilia L. Mariz, *Coping With Poverty: Pentecostals and Christian Base Communities in Brazil* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 34-36, 81-100, 131-148.. Michael Bergunder at Heidelberg University in his analysis of the Pentecostal Movement in Latin America refers to the social transformation that resulted when individuals got involved with Pentecostal churches. It was not just a religion of escapism from the problems of society, but the status of women in their domestic life changed, there was behavior change with the resulting economic benefits to the family when alcohol, drugs and tobacco were renounced, and there was social engagement in communities when they had the opportunity. While they may have been less politically engaged than other communities, this began to change as their numbers grew and they became aware of their importance in society. Michael Bergunder, “The Pentecostal Movement and Basic Ecclesial Communities in Latin America: Sociological Theories and Theological Debates,” *International Review of Mission* 91, no. 361 (2002): 163–186. Frans H. Kamsteeg in his study of Pentecostalism in Chile refers to it as having an accent of Liberation Theology. Frans H. Kamsteeg, “Prophetic Pentecostalism in Chile,” *Studies in Evangelicalism* 15 (1998): 23–24.

²² Allan Anderson, “Intercultural Theology, Walter J. Hollenweger and African Pentecostalism,” in *Intercultural Theology: Approaches and Themes*, ed. Mark J. Cartledge and David Cheetham (London: SCM Press Ltd., 2011), 141.

experience miracles? This issue was not explored with the poor in this study. However, in a previous research done by the author in a slum in Bangalore among similar participants, this question was asked. Their responses were:

Whatever God does in my life is OK. God's joy is greater than the problems. The prayers God has answered allow me to trust in him and rest in peace.

We are going through a financial crisis and the peace of God is helping me.

I will believe regardless of what happens. We have been married for eight years and have no child. Even if we have no child, we have joy and peace. When I used to worship [the goddess] Yellama, there were a number of accidents that almost killed me. Now there aren't any.

Even when there are problems, God gives me peace when I pray.

I aborted three and a half months ago. In the midst of difficulties, I have peace.

Even in suffering we will not leave Jesus. We have two daughters and wanted a son. When the third daughter was born, I will still not leave Him. I know God hears me.

To summarize, forgiveness from sin motivated some to become followers of Christ. However, for the majority their contexts of poverty influenced their decision. For the Syrian refugees who had experienced violence and been displaced, they were disillusioned by the brutality, hatred, and evil of the conflict, which they saw as an intra-religious conflict within Islam. In sharp contrast, they were attracted to the teachings about love and forgiveness they were hearing at church, and the love and charity they were experiencing from Christians in the churches. They were attracted to the love of Christ and the peace he gave. For the slum-dwellers in India, the overwhelming motivation for changing their allegiance to Christ is the fact that he is almighty and is their healer, provider, life-giver, sustainer, peace-giver, and deliverer, and is real. In addition, the Hindu slum-dwellers were attracted to the songs and Bible stories, as it helped them articulate their faith and their feelings and gave them strength and hope in their circumstances. The poor in both contexts were also attracted to the sacrifice of Christ and his sacrificial lifestyle.

So, Is There Anything New and Surprising?

Community development practitioners have failed to understand that social injustice is so deeply entrenched in the socioeconomic and political systems of society that the poor are unable to extricate themselves from it by their own efforts. When these practitioners empower the poor to stand up for their rights, more often than not they set them up to fail, especially in societies that only have a veneer of democracy.²³ The Bible nowhere exhorts the poor to seek social justice or

²³Movements for socioeconomic and political justice among the poor, oppressed, or marginalized that have achieved any degree of success *peacefully* have done so because there were individuals among the elite and powerful who actively supported them and pushed for political change. For example, in the fight against apartheid, white church leaders and certain political leaders openly opposed apartheid. There were at least 139 white South African anti-apartheid activists. The situation was similar in the Civil Rights movement in the US in the 1960s. "The white

to rebel against oppression, probably because of the understanding that the powerful will oppose anyone who challenges their power, authority, and control. Instead the exhortation to ensure social justice is directed at the wealthy, the elite, those in power. In the Old Testament, the exhortation was to the nation of Israel as a whole. Ultimately, it is God himself who defends and vindicates the poor and marginalized and brings judgment on the oppressors. He uses human agents for this task.

The first thing we have learned is that if we had taken the time to listen to the poor, we would have seen the world through their eyes. The poor know that they are snared in the swamp of poverty. They see no way out, and no one is willing to help them, regardless of what the politicians promise. These reasons are why many of them are looking for a God who is real, is with them, and is a deliverer. Looking for divine help, they despair because their traditional deities have failed them. They find the help they need in the God revealed in Jesus Christ.

The second new thing we have learned is that the poor in this book understood the good news of Jesus Christ from within their social, economic, and political context. Context identified their spiritual priorities. The reality of poverty, marginalization, war, and violence “pushed” them away from their traditional deities who seemed silent and impotent. What attracted them to Christ was that Christ is Immanuel, a God who is with them, who provides for them, delivers them, and comforts them. Contextualization in traditional missions has focused on language, culture, and religion. The contexts of the poor create their own unique culture, out of which rise their existential questions.

The third thing that we learned in this study is not something new but a reaffirmation of what many throughout Christian history have said – that conversion of those especially from non-Christian backgrounds is a process. The poor may encounter the reality of God without fully understanding sin, who Christ is, and what he has done. The pivotal moment in their conversion was when they abandoned their allegiance to their traditional deity to worship Christ, because they had found a God who was concerned for them. As they experienced regeneration, the Holy Spirit over time revealed Christ more fully to them and made them aware of their sinfulness.

The final thing we learned from this study is that the conversion of most of the refugees and slum dwellers was the result of an encounter with the person of Christ. Gordon Smith writes, “People are converted not because they have come to terms with ‘spiritual laws’ or questions that might be asked ‘when they get to heaven,’ or even ‘evidence that demands a verdict’ – but because they experience the transforming grace of God through an encounter with the risen and ascended Christ.”²⁴

In the end, this book is not about the poor but about the God that the poor seek. Looking at who God is through the eyes of the poor, I saw things that had not seemed important to me from my position of privilege and comfort. I realized the poverty of my own spirituality.

Southerners who fought US segregation,” BBC News (12 March 2019). A key political ally was the US attorney general Robert Kennedy.

²⁴Quoted in Smith, “Conversion and Redemption,” 219–20.

The God that the poor seek is not *Christus Victor*, the conquering hero who through his death and resurrection saves us from our sin by overcoming the powers of darkness – the devil, sin, the law, and death.²⁵ They cannot relate to the sense of triumphalism in the midst of the destitution of their daily lives. Instead they found themselves drawn to the God who was crucified and knows their suffering.

So much of our Western theology is based on God being absolutely transcendent, far beyond anything that our minds can even conceive, much less comprehend. Because he is beyond time and space, and the origin of all that exists, he is immutable. This view reflects the influence of Plato's concept of the separation of the material world from the spiritual realm on the Early Church Fathers and the development of Western theology.²⁶ This chasm between the material and physical realms kept God distant.

The question is how does a transcendent, immutable, holy, and morally righteous God relate to a constantly changing and flawed world?²⁷ Irenaeus of Antioch never questioned the divine attributes of God. Being a pastor rather than an academic or a philosopher, he focused on the anthropomorphic attributes of God, stating that Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit are the "hands of God." Justo Gonzales writes that Irenaeus' purpose in using such imagery was to show that God is not distant but relates directly with the world.

While Justin [Martyr], Clement [of Alexandria], Origen, and the entire tradition which springs from them tend to separate God from the world using the second person of the Trinity – the Word, Logos, or Son, as the link between the two – Irenaeus speaks of a God whose hands enter into the world in the work of creation and in the leading of history.²⁸

God's presence not only permeates his creation but he is deeply involved with what happens to the human beings he created and the history of the world that shapes their lives.

Ernesto Cardenal found that the poor *campesinos* in Nicaragua were able to comprehend such a God because as farmers they saw him work in nature all around them. They did not necessarily find a place for God in their lives but realized that they are part of the larger narrative of God. Just as God cared for his creation, he would care for them. For the refugees and slum dwellers, God was not silent and distant; they came to know him as *Immanuel*, God with us.

²⁵Swedish Lutheran theologian Gustaf Aulén in his book *Christus Victor* presents the three theories of atonement in Christianity. He argues that theologians have concluded incorrectly that the early church fathers believed in the ransom theory of atonement. Instead Aulén argues that the church fathers believed that the crucifixion was not a payment of ransom to the devil, instead it represented the liberation of humanity from the bondage of sin, death, and the devil. It was a rescue or liberation of the human race from slavery, sickness, and sin. Aulén and Hebert, *Christus Victor*.

²⁶These church fathers include Clement of Alexandria and Origen.

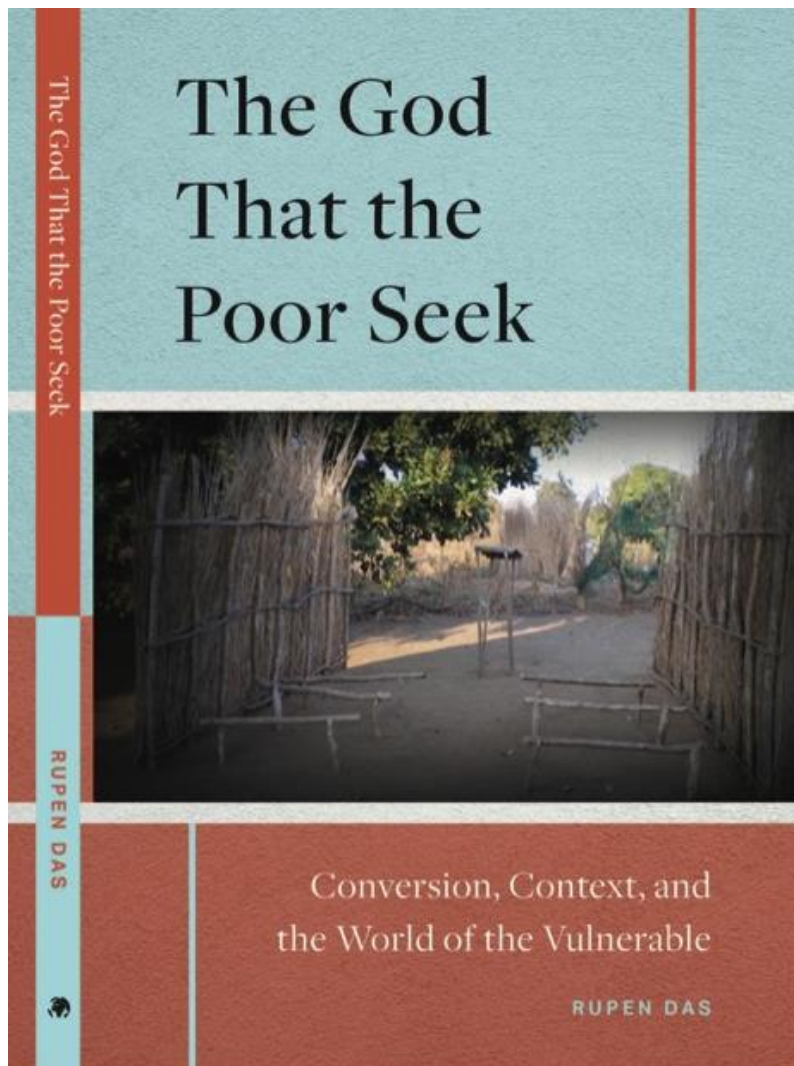
²⁷Justo Gonzales writes about the three centers of learning centered around Alexandria, Carthage, and Antioch which embodied three distinct schools of theology. Each struggled with different images of God based on the religious challenges they faced in their context. Origen in Alexandria and Justin Martyr conceived of God as transcendent and immutable, and the only way he could relate to the flawed world was through an intermediary – the Logos or Word. This view raised serious questions as to whether this intermediary is mutable or immutable in order to relate to both the world and God. Gonzales, *Christian Thought Revisited*, 24–26.

²⁸Gonzales, *Christian Thought Revisited*, 28.

So, who is the God that the poor seek? Jürgen Moltmann writes:

In concrete terms, God is revealed in the cross of Christ who was abandoned by God. . . . The epistemological principle of the theology of the cross can only be this dialectic principle: The deity of God is revealed in the paradox of the cross. This makes it easier to understand what Jesus did... He revealed his identity amongst those who had lost their identity, amongst the lepers, sick, rejected, and despised, and was recognized as the Son of Man amongst those who had been deprived of their humanity.²⁹

The God that the poor seek is not physically and emotionally distant but is the crucified God who understands their suffering because he has experienced it. They recognize him in Jesus Christ, the man of sorrow, who although he is almighty, great, and powerful, yet is loving enough to respond to their desperate prayers.



²⁹Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 27.