

APPLYING ECOFEMINIST THEORY TO CHRISTIAN MISSION
WORK IN HONDURAS: BUILDING THEORETICAL
BRIDGES FOR REAL CHANGE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S STUDIES
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

BY

MICHAEL JOSEPH FRANKLIN B.A.

DENTON, TEXAS


AUGUST 2012

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
DENTON, TEXAS

May 25, 2012

To the Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Michael Joseph Franklin entitled "Applying Ecofeminist Theory to Christian Missions Work in Honduras: Building Theoretical Bridges for Real Change." I have examined this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Women's Studies.

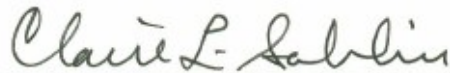


Claire L. Sahlin, Ph.D., Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:



Danielle Taylor Phillips, Ph.D.



Claire L. Sahlin, Ph.D., Department Chair

Accepted:



Dean of the Graduate School

Copyright © Michael Joseph Franklin, 2012 all rights reserved.

DEDICATION

To Gloria Lacayo, daughter of the first Garifuna physician. Your
life is an inspiration for a better world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the many individuals who have contributed to this thesis. I would like to thank Dr. Claire Sahlin for introducing me to ecofeminism and for serving as my thesis committee chair. The way Dr. Sahlin helps her students explore the relationships between discrimination and nature is truly an eye-opening experience. I would like to thank Dr. Christa Downer for her overwhelming patience as I came to grips with the writing process. Her wise words of encouragement and patience have served as strong winds in my sail throughout the last year. I would like to thank Dr. Danielle Phillips for serving on my committee and for reminding me that methodology and outline go hand in hand. I would like to thank the Women's Studies faculty and the Texas Woman's University Graduate School. It is with their encouragement and inspiration that I am learning how to say what I mean and mean what I say. Although she must remain anonymous, I must express my sincerest thanks to the person who helped me correctly format this thesis. I would like to express much gratitude to Dr. Laura Franey for introducing me to Women's Studies as an undergraduate. It was her guidance that put me on track to becoming the person I want to be. I would like to express extreme gratitude to Dr. Tom Camp for introducing me to Honduras. Your

mentorship is certainly a blessing. To the people of Honduras, thank you for sharing your lives with me during my formidable years. Your love, perseverance, and strength are truly enlightening. Finally, I would like to thank my four parents for always teaching me how to live, laugh, and dream. You are all amazing at what you do.

ABSTRACT

MICHAEL JOSEPH FRANKLIN

APPLYING ECOFEMINIST THEORY TO CHRISTIAN MISSION WORK IN HONDURAS: BUILDING THEORETICAL BRIDGES FOR REAL CHANGE

AUGUST 2012

This thesis encourages the tens of thousands of Christian missionaries traveling yearly to Honduras to look to the ecofeminist theories of Rosemary Radford Ruether and Mary Judith Rens in order to more effectively confront the social, political, and economic hurdles preventing more Hondurans from living more empowered lives. This thesis first articulates why the colonialist patriarchy within Christianity must be abandoned in favor of unconditional love of all creation before a Christian ecofeminist mission work can be realized. Second, this thesis invites Christian ecofeminist political activism by addressing some of the international politico-economic forces at work contributing to Honduran poverty, violence, and environmental degradation. Finally, this thesis imagines the shape of long-term community empowerment programs led by Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras. This thesis hopes to inspire more appropriate and effective Christian missionary practices in Honduras so that the positive energy of Christian missionaries in Honduras is fully utilized.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
COPYRIGHT	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	v
ABSTRACT	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
PROLOGUE.....	ix
INTRODUCTION.....	xi
Chapter	
I. AN ECOFEMINIST EVANGELISM.....	1
II. POLITICAL ACTIVISM AS MISSION WORK.....	23
III. RELATIONSHIPS-BASED MISSIONS.....	52
IV. CONCLUSION	68
WORKS CITED	71

PROLOGUE

Since my first visit to Honduras in 1997, I have been searching for more beneficial solutions to the structural downfalls of Honduran society. After thirteen years of traveling back and forth to the same Garifuna and mestizo communities along the North Coast of Honduras with a network of medical, educational, and evangelical short-term missionaries, I have seen many communities grow healthier, but meaningful development is still lacking. Dependence rather than resolution has become all too visible due to the powerful assimilatory effects of U.S. commercialism. Honduran reverence for the United States is baffling. When more vehicles began appearing on the road and more brick houses, rather than the typical thatch huts, began being built, our groups quickly learned that growing symbols of prosperity did not stem from our own mission work or an improved Honduran economy but were the result of communities' family members sending money back from the United States. Even those without remittance incomes follow behavioral patterns of *Norteamericanos*, as U.S. citizens are called. I notice people spending their minimal disposable incomes on soft-drinks, unhealthy mass-produced snack foods, and cell phone minutes, but I don't see significantly decreased rates of malaria or dysentery. Malnutrition, poor hygiene and sanitation, and limited mobility continue to be normal for most of the Honduran communities where we work. The invisible killer, HIV/AIDS, only further complicates an already very complex situation. Violence, kidnapping, and rape amidst unstable and corrupt political systems leave a

majority of the Honduran people experiencing unresolved suffering. From my point of view, Christian mission work in Honduras must go beyond mere relief work in order to make a difference. I am confident that each mission team saves at least one life and prevents the downward spiral of at least several others during our ten-day visits, but I am less confident that the tens of thousands of missionaries spending millions of dollars each year to travel around Honduras are doing enough. As part of such a vast community of volunteers, we have to do more.

INTRODUCTION

While tens of thousands of Christian missionaries travel to Honduras each year with the explicit intentions of healing sick communities, feeding malnourished families, and spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, their approach could be considered short-sighted and self-serving because of the minimal positive long-term effects of short-term Christian missionary projects on local Honduran communities. Short-sighted may be a less confrontational word to describe many short-term Christian missionary projects, but colonialist and patriarchal may be more accurate. Colonialist patriarchy, after all, involves a one-sided relationship where a male-centered group feminizes, dominates, and exploits the environment of another group. On the one hand, Christian missionaries assuredly provide much-needed medical care, nutrition, and optimism; on the other hand, Christian missionaries often assert that they get more out of the missionary experience than they provide. In her article “Short Term Missions: Are They Worth the Cost?” Jo Ann Van Engen of Calvin College’s Development Studies Program in Honduras notices that short-term missionaries to Honduras cumulatively raise millions of dollars each year to travel to and work in Honduras but come away doing more for their own self-esteem than that of the communities where they worked. “When people return from their trip, they don’t talk about what they did, as much as what they saw and how it changed them” (20). As a 13-year short-term missionary, I have been a part of medical teams more proud of the fact that they had seen 2,000 patients rather than about the type of care they

provided. I have also seen the amount of garbage accumulated and pollutants dispersed from the giant carbon footprint with which Americans travel the globe. This is not to say that Christian missionaries should not be proud of the work they have done. Furthermore, missionaries should use this excitement to raise greater consciousness of the realities of daily life for most Hondurans. I comment on the fact that many Christian mission teams don't have a lot to show for the tremendous effort they put forth helping Honduran families live better lives because I have been a part of many teams where my own sense of self had improved far beyond that of the communities I sought to help. Christian mission work in Honduras needs a new, strategic approach beneficial to all parties involved so that American volunteers may be empowered to better work on behalf of Honduran communities. As Christian missionaries more effectively work on behalf of Honduran communities, Honduran communities may more appropriately and efficiently contribute to their own empowerment.

Christian mission teams in Honduras can serve as a greater benefit to themselves and the communities where they work by enabling communities to join the empowerment process. The old saying that "the road to Hell is paved with good intentions" very aptly applies to Christian mission work. So often, medical brigades, construction teams, and especially evangelist groups are guilty of providing for, instead of empowering, Honduran communities. The good intentions of providing, however, can stifle or reverse the empowerment process. Instead of enabling Hondurans to overcome and prevent outbreaks of intestinal parasites in a community, many medical teams only provide

temporary relief with invasive chemical treatments. Medical relief is necessary to save lives, but why not also work alongside Honduran doctors to teach communities that they can use their own resources to overcome public health issues? Construction projects, like medical brigades, are central concerns for many mission teams. Oftentimes with construction projects, however, many teams confuse lack of funds for lack of know-how. In one instance, Van Engen mentions how a Honduran bricklayer's excitement to work with a team quickly subsided when he realized "the group wanted to do things their way and made me feel like I didn't know what I was doing" (22). If communities can be made to feel that they are not capable of maintaining public health and infrastructure, evangelism efforts may also make local communities feel similarly about their spiritual foundations. In the case of evangelism, how do Honduran communities feel about themselves and their spiritual roots when Christian missionaries preach that the only way to understand God is through Jesus Christ (John 14:6)? Van Engen argues that many communities which are the focus of Christian mission work can become worse off than they would have been without being visited by Christian missionary groups. "Because short-term groups often want to solve problems quickly, they can make third-world Christians feel incapable of doing things on their own... Since the groups are only around for about a week, the nationals end up having to pick up where they left off but without the sense of continuity and competence they might have had they been in charge from the beginning" (22). But what if, instead of committing valuable resources to short-term and often destructive projects, Christian missionaries infused their religious calling to spread

“faith, hope, and love” (1 Corinth. 13:13) throughout the world through a more meaningful, long-term framework? A long-term framework does not mean short-term missionaries have no role in mission work or that they must move to Honduras to be more effective. Rather, a long-term framework means that short-term missionaries invest time and energy in planning for meaningful solutions to complex problems instead of employing a quick-fix mentality. Because of their deep reflections on the strong ties between Third World women, Christianity, and the environment, the ecofeminist insights of Rosemary Radford Ruether and Mary Judith Ress provide just such a framework for helping to ensure the benefits of Christian mission work in Honduras.

Doing more in Honduras does not mean contributing more money or sending more mission teams; doing more involves Christian missionaries evolving their perceptions of mission work from that of a short-term fix to a long-term investment. This thesis contends that Christian missionaries in Honduras should look to ecofeminism for insight into how to make short-term mission work more appropriate and effective in helping Honduran communities join the empowerment process. When buttressed with ecofeminist insight of Ruether and Ress, Christianity can better enable Hondurans to join the empowerment process. Ruether says “there is much of our Christian and Western past which is useable, but only by being reconstructed in new forms, as material reorganized by a new vision, as compost for new flowering” (*Ecofeminism: First* 80). Accordingly, Ress knows that “Christian ecofeminists search the Judeo-Christian tradition for a theology of God that is compatible with an organic vision of the Earth” (*Ecofeminism*

115). In short, Ruether and Ress believe Christianity to be a sound pathway for meaningful change in Honduras, but they both agree that energies must be aimed at disrupting colonialist patriarchy, racialized discrimination, and environmental decay. By positioning women, minorities, and the environment at the center of the conversation, a Christian ecofeminist mission work in Honduras stands to develop neglected communities into self-sustaining beacons of prosperity with the capacity to envision and enact change. Ruether and Ress believe Christian missionaries should strive to focus on which structural forces combine to prevent Honduran women, racialized minorities groups like the Garifuna, the environment, and the Republic of Honduras as a whole from reaching their full potentials. Perceiving mission work within a Christian ecofeminist framework will transform Christian mission work in Honduras into a much more meaningful force for enabling the empowerment process to take hold. Doing more in Honduras means collaborating along common core goals with disparate groups, and by buttressing the bridge to the future with the ecofeminist frameworks of Ruether and Ress, Christian mission work in Honduras can do more.

A three-pronged approach allows Christian missionaries to do more to empower Honduran families and build the bridge to a brighter future. First, Christian missionaries and ecofeminists in Honduras must traverse the gulf preventing open dialogue between the two groups. Chapter One, therefore, outlines why the ecofeminist positions of Ruether and Ress are not at odds with Christian teaching and argues that both ecofeminism and Christianity operate according to very similar principles. Chapter One

defines Christian missionaries and ecofeminists as allies in the same fight in order to demonstrate how ecofeminist insight can help Christian mission work in Honduras become less colonialist and more effective. Chapter Two discusses the importance of Christian ecofeminist mission work as a political activism to empower Honduran families to live healthier, more self-determined, and upwardly mobile lives. Chapter Two invites Christian missionaries to consider the structural economic and political forces working against Honduran liberation and join forces with ecofeminist advocates in challenging them. All feminist circles, especially ecofeminist ones, understand that politics are personal (Hanisch). Chapter Three, therefore, takes the reader from the international politico-economic advocacy to explore individual social activity on the local level. Arguing for Christian missionaries in Honduras to maximize their effectiveness by coupling short-term relief efforts on the ground with long-term community empowerment programs, Chapter Three presents ecofeminist models geared toward helping local Honduran community leaders meet specific local needs. Together, Christian missionaries and ecofeminists can work to help Honduran families overcome the manifestations of colonialist patriarchy and environmental abuse which coalesce to prevent an entire nation from realizing its potential. Christian ecofeminist mission work in Honduras can enable Honduran families to build the bridge to a more prosperous future, and it begins by bridging an imagined gulf of difference between Christian missionaries and ecofeminists.

CHAPTER I

AN ECOFEMINIST EVANGELISM

Before demonstrating the political and social avenues Christian ecofeminist mission work in Honduras may take, a smooth pathway linking Christian mission work and ecofeminist theory must be built. The ecofeminist theories of Ruether and Ress provide just such a pathway. In this chapter, I argue that ecofeminists and Christian missionaries in Honduras must work together to overcome the problems of colonialism and more effectively empower Honduran communities. To support my argument, I outline how Ruether and Ress' ecofeminist writings draw from Christian teachings. I also explain why some biblical teachings must be bracketed for effective missionary work in Honduras. Finally, I create the framework for a Christian ecofeminist missionary activism and posit that this type of missionary activism can enable Honduran families to join the empowerment process. It is possible to lay the groundwork for future collaboration between ecofeminists and Christian missionaries in Honduras by demonstrating how ecofeminists like Ruether and Ress do not disregard Christianity as a means for encouraging more favorable political and social living conditions for the people of Honduras and their environment. Furthermore, I accent Christianity's own ecofeminist foundations in order to pave the way for a more empowering, liberative, and sustainable Christian mission work in Honduras. Through collaboration, both groups can

much better advocate for the healthier, more upwardly mobile lifestyle Honduran families deserve.

To begin, Christian missionaries in Honduras must explore what essential elements of Christianity should inform their philanthropy and which can be discarded from the mission field. Christian missionaries do not deserve to be shunned for their belief, but they do need to more clearly assess how to practice their faith in the mission field in the least exploitative manner. Ruether and Ress provide this clarity. Ruether and Ress are certainly critical of Christianity's colonialist practices, but they also see immense value in Christianity as a force for positive change. In *Gaia and God*, Ruether plainly states that Christianity is “marked by a legacy of patriarchalism and must be reinterpreted” if it is “to be genuinely affirming of dominated women, men, and nature” (205). And indeed Ruether believes that Christians can reinterpret their patriarchal past by looking to the deeper ecological messages of the Bible. Ruether argues that “the vast majority of the more than 1 billion Christians of the world can be lured into an ecological consciousness only if they see that it grows in some ways from the soil in which they are planted” (*Gaia & God* 207). Christians as a whole must first understand the inherent value the Bible places on nature before individual Christians’ mindsets can change. Ress also sees potential in the power of Christianity to be a source for empowering local Honduran families to challenge their own oppression. “Although I have grown tremendously uncomfortable with the androcentrism and anthropocentrism of the central

doctrines of Christianity, I do not consider myself post-Christian” (*Ecofeminism* 30). Ress edits a Latin American ecofeminist collective journal called *Con-spirando*. One *Con-spirando* author speaks directly to the potential uplifting impact Christianity possesses for Latin American families and the environment:

In his life's project Jesus offered three proposals to humans: first, each of us can relate directly to God as son or daughter; second, this means that a relationship of equality and solidarity exists among us; and third, the first two proposals demand that we live a relationship of respect and harmony between our species and the earth. (qtd. in *Ecofeminism* 172)

Knowing that they have an ally in ecofeminism encourages Christian missionaries in Honduras to also look to the criticisms of Christianity and Christian mission work by postcolonial feminism and ecofeminists Ruether and Ress.

Postcolonial feminist theologian Kwok Pui-lan and ecofeminists Ruether and Ress each describe mainstream Christianity and by extension, Christian mission work as operating under patriarchal norms. In *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, Kwok Pui-lan notes that Christianity evolved to become a powerful world religion beneath “the imperial patronage of Constantine and subsequent emperors” (10). Councils and creeds associated with a codified Christianity of the Roman Empire, Pui-lan argues, further the perception of women as the lesser gender. The Nicene Creed, which states that “Jesus was the Son of God, begotten not made” by a male God, stripped women of their unique role as life-givers. In contrast to the holiness of God's creation of his own son,

physical sexual relations and women's bodies came to be further seen as inherently un-Godlike (11). Similarly, in her analysis of the Christian theologians St. Paul and Augustine, Ruether writes that they think “in terms of two opposite types of existence, the one derived from the fallen Adam, which is sin and death, and the other from Christ, which is goodness and spiritual life” (*Gaia & God* 128). Of course, according to Genesis, Adam “falls” because of Eve's temptation, and as a result, everlasting life was stripped from human beings (Gen. 3: 17-23). Ruether acknowledges that early Christians, including Augustine, considered women to have been created by God to be naturally subservient to men (*Gaia & God* 138), and a liberative doctrine cannot deny self-determination to half of the human population. Sexist teachings from Christianity's foundational theologians lead Ress to call Christianity “a tradition riddled with patriarchal mindset” for its “appropriation” of women and nature, culture of domination, ownership of the truth, hierarchical relationships, linear thinking, monarchical worship, and “controlled and suppressed violence” (*Ecofeminism* 113, 80). Most indicative of Christianity's inherent patriarchal norms is, as Pui-lan addresses, that “women have been shut out from shaping the collective memory of the church” (67). A very suspicious example of the prevention of women's voices in Biblical tradition is the fact that the Gospel of Mary, “a second-century text in which Mary of Magdala received special teaching from Jesus and became a leader among the disciples,” was excluded from the mainstream Bible (Pui-lan 8). The stench of patriarchy within Christian teaching has most certainly contributed to the oppression of women throughout the world, and

Christianity's patriarchal tendencies were able to spread throughout the entire world because of many Christians' colonialist practices.

Postcolonial feminists and ecofeminists recognize that Christianity spread throughout the world via violent and oppressive colonial means because of its foundations in dualistic God/Human, Human/Nature, Good/Evil, White/Dark, Man/Woman patriarchal terms. In “The Politics of God in the Christian Tradition,” Ruether writes, “Christian conquistadors and Christian missionaries went hand in hand to convert the heathen to Christianity and to establish the benevolent rule of the Spanish, the British or the Americans over lesser people who were in need of Christianizing and civilizing” (333). Pui-lan notes that “gender inequalities are essential to the structure of colonial racism and imperial authority” (66). By feminizing and conquering the land and people, colonial powers position themselves atop the natural order of the universe. Colonialism functions from a mindset that all the world is broken until fixed by colonial powers. “Poor and illiterate 'heathen' women, in particular, were seen as objects of Western compassion, waiting to be taught to read and to take care of basic hygiene” (Pui-lan 72). In the colonialist’s eyes, native men had failed to fulfill their obligation to “tame” their women and children, and too needed conquering. While women and children were being “civilized,” vast male armies fought for domination of land for exploitative farming and mining (*Gaia & God* 198), the logic of which was based on Christian male entitlement to dominate the earth and everything associated with it.

The analysis of the feminization of nature is central to ecofeminist theory and of great concern for Ruether. Patriarchy assigns women to be dominated by men. If nature is associated with the feminine, then the same patriarchal mindset authorizes male domination of nature. The Bible's creation myth in Genesis 1 labels God a male and assigns humans to "fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:27). Ruether writes that "ecofeminism sees an interconnection between the domination of women and the domination of nature" (*Integrating* 91). Ideologically and culturally, women are viewed as more in tune with nature because of their reproductive capacities. Socio-economically, "women are located in the spheres of reproduction, child raising, food preparation, spinning and weaving, cleaning of clothes and houses, that are devalued in relation to the public sphere" (*Integrating* 91). Ecofeminists, then, see the Bible as justifying the domination of women on its first page. By assigning humans to subdue the earth, God is telling humans, i.e. males, to subdue all things associated with the earth, including women. By further extending more natural, or earthly, tendencies to their intended conquests, colonial powers and Christian missionaries legitimize their efforts. As Christian missionaries followed behind colonial aggressors into the Western Hemisphere, they viewed native peoples as children or students in dire need of education. Ruether understands Christian mission and colonialism as having been responsible for subjugation, genocide, and the destruction of culture of indigenous "nature worshipers" for most of the latter part of the twentieth century (*Integrating* 77).

Most of Honduras lives at or below poverty level and depends on the health of the land. It is inappropriate and ineffective, then, for Christian missionaries in Honduras to express viewpoints depicting humans as superior to nature to Honduran communities deeply familiar with the earth's life-giving capabilities. From an ecofeminist standpoint, indigenous cultures of Honduras such as the Garifuna are particularly vulnerable to patriarchal, colonialist Christian mission work. Doubly vulnerable as an ethnic minority within formerly colonized states, the Garifuna are an ethnic group which essentially formed as a result of colonialism (Matthei & Smith 217). Escaped African slaves mixed with Carib Indians in the Lesser Antilles on the island of St. Vincent to form what is now referred to as the Garifuna (Matthei & Smith 216). After winning title to the island after the French and Indian War, the British moved the Garifuna to Roatán, the largest of the British-controlled bay islands of Honduras. Shortly after arriving on Roatán, the Garifuna moved to the Central American mainland and turned the island over to the Spanish (Yuscaran 49). Since then, the Garifuna have been living through a largely unchanged sustenance lifestyle within eyesight of the Caribbean Sea along the coastlines of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua (Yuscaran 45). Their language is a unique mixture of African and Caribbean dialects. Additionally, their religion, although highly influenced by Spanish Catholicism (Yuscaran 50), maintains its pre-Christian roots in ancestral worship and unquestionable ties to nature (Johnson 190). Honduran historian Guillermo Yuscaran writes that that "the core of Garifuna philosophy and religion is based upon the principle of balance—the harmony of spirit in man and nature" (54). Pui-lan, Ruether,

and Ress criticize the patriarchal and colonialist tendency for Christian missionaries to impose their culture, language, and religion on indigenous people. Matthew 7:12 reminds Christians to “do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matt. 7:12). If Christian missionaries in Honduras forget this central message of their religion and demean the Garifuna because of their distinct language, amalgamated Christianity, and way of life closely tied to nature, the 50,000 Christian missionaries traveling to Honduras each year from the United States (“Going Forth”) pose a serious threat to both the lasting potential of the Garifuna as a distinct people and the future of Honduras.

Christian missionaries must keep the humanity of local marginalized cultures such as the Garifuna in mind as they design medical and educational projects in order to avoid falling into the trap of a colonialist mindset. The ecofeminist theories of Ruether and Ress invite Christian missionaries to note the relationship between abusing the environment and discriminating against women, children, and non-Whites throughout the world. Ecofeminists believe anthropocentrism, a human-centered worldview prizing *homo sapiens* as the most important product of the earth's history (Plumwood 16), and androcentrism, a male-centered viewpoint encouraging masculinity at the expense of femininity (Warren 22), overlap and combine to justify all hierarchical behavior from naturism to sexism, racism to homophobia (“Ecofeminism: Symbolic” 46). The Republic of Honduras is no exception to the harboring of these ingrained, discriminatory thought processes. In recent years, the new Honduran government has relaxed environmental regulations and cracked down on dissent. Since the 2009 coup d'état deposing President

Manuel Zelaya, hundreds of female protesters have been murdered as the new Lobo administration “has bent over backward” to please Canadian mining companies by weakening pollution restrictions and privatizing both land and water resources (Williams). Honduras today operates very well for the “haves” but not so well for the “have nots.” As Jesus of Nazareth tells his followers to share wealth with the poor (Luke 14:13) and God commands against pollution (Numb. 35: 33-34), the interests of Christian missionaries and ecofeminists in Honduras overlap. Christian missionaries in Honduras, therefore, should begin devoting greater time and attention to confronting anthropocentric and androcentric behavior in Honduras as a means of discipleship.

Discipleship for many Christian missionaries, however, is the literal sharing of the biblical story of Jesus Christ with a community. Rather than representing Jesus through action, many evangelical Christian missionaries see their prime objective in mission work as passing out Bibles and encouraging Christian conversion. This is not to say that there are not also Christian mission teams whose only mention of Jesus is on their fluorescent team t-shirts. Bruce McFadden, a very active missionary with the Alabama Honduras Medical Educational Network, goes to great lengths to avoid mentioning Jesus on his blog even though he works with an organization whose acronym is AHMEN (McFadden). One reason for articulating an ecofeminist Christian platform for mission work in Honduras is that there is no single definition of a Christian missionary. Still, however, there lies a tangible gulf between missionaries “going forth” as evangelists and those demonstrating the lessons of the Bible through social action.

It is great that each of the hundreds of mission teams working through each of the different Christian denominations is unique, but such variability also necessitates a cohesive guide. Each mission team, both short-term and long-term, has the freedom to design and carry out their mission in best way they see fit. The website, catholicmissiontrips.net, states under its “FAQ” section that “We really leave it up to you to decide what type of trip you would like to go on” (FAQ). Catholicvolunteering.org lists various opportunities for Catholic volunteers in Honduras including evangelism, working in orphanages, medical and educational work (“Volunteer”), and such open direction makes sense when the majority of the country is considered Roman Catholic (“People and Society”). The evangelical movement in Honduras is on the rise (“Going Forth”), however, and evangelical missionaries from the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) concentrate their missionary efforts much more highly on conversion rather than development. One does not need to pour over the SBC website to realize that evangelism and church building are the top priorities of the SBC's International Mission Board (“Go”), its North American Missionary Board (“Send North America”), and its Woman's Missionary Union (“Areas of Missions Focus”). Finally, United Methodist Volunteers in Mission advocates a motto of “Christian Love in Action” and aims “to respond to the needs of local communities” (“What is UVMIM?”). Additionally, one of the United Methodist Church's sister organization SIFAT – Servants In Faith And Technology – teaches marginalized communities in the developing world how to meet basic human needs via appropriate and reproducible technology (“Who We Are”). In short, every

missionary organization attempts to do Jesus' work in Honduras in myriad ways. Many push Christian conversion, and others fill medical and educational voids left open by an inattentive government. Still, others pair short-term relief efforts with long-term development programs. Variability is certainly a strength, but this thesis argues that Christian missionaries in Honduras can more effectively and appropriately meet the Honduran people's needs with the unity of an ecofeminist lens.

Ecofeminists Ruether and Ress' respect for Christianity as a powerful force for meaningful change stands as a proposal for collaboration, but first Christian missionaries must begin analyzing which biblical passages can most effectively and appropriately guide mission work in Honduras. While all ecofeminists do not necessarily condemn Christianity, many do seek to address its more regressive teachings. As such, simply discussing what Ruether, Ress, and other ecofeminists have to say about the difference between the roles Christianity has played and can play in missionary work may sound dismissive of or even heretical to Christianity. For many evangelicals, condemning parts of the Bible that underpin Christian mission work as oppressive is a sure way to end a conversation between a Christian evangelical and a more progressive-minded humanitarian before an invitation for dialogue has even been extended. This is why it is extremely important to acknowledge trends toward addressing social constructs in humanitarian Christian missions before discussing some of the discriminatory drawbacks of Christian teachings.

In comparison to the 1910 World Missionary Conference, its centenary in 2010 focused dramatically more on social justice rather than conversion and evangelism. The slogan of the 1910 Conference in Edinburgh was “The Evangelization of the World in This Generation” (Matthey 259). One hundred years later the theme of the 2010 Conference had evolved to “Witnessing to Christ Today” (Matthey 269). Former director of the World Council of Churches Program: Mission, Unity, Evangelism and Spirituality, Jacques Matthey explains the diversion from a strict focus on evangelism to witnessing as a way for Christians to understand missionary priorities from a more inclusive point of view. Matthey explains that witnessing is a term better fit for today when many people do acknowledge the colonialist tendencies of Christian mission work. “Witnessing has a less aggressive connotation than evangelizing. To refer to ‘witness’ points to a holistic understanding of mission involving attitudes and actions of Christians or churches, not only their words” (Matthey 269). That the World Council of Churches (WCC) aims to convey a more holistic than colonialist message is also supported by the Edinburgh 2010 Conference's website listing such topics of interest as “Women and Mission” and “Ecological Perspectives on Mission” (Edinburgh 2010). Consulting the Web site further uncovers a link to the Service of Documentation and Study on Global Mission database featuring papers presented by missionary groups calling for mission work to focus closer attention on concerns such as the undesirable living conditions of the poor, worldwide misogyny, and environmental degradation.

Indeed both Christian missionaries and ecofeminists seek to address such issues as crippling poverty, violent sexism, and environmental abuse. In ecofeminist Karen J. Warren's mind, "nature is a feminist issue" because "an understanding of it helps one understand the oppression, subordination, or domination of women" (1). Women and their bodies have traditionally been understood as closer to earth because of their life-giving capacity. With support from the biblical message in Genesis 1 to subdue the earth, identifying women with the earth has encouraged their mutual oppression. With this in mind, Christian missionaries may benefit from evaluating which Biblical messages truly stand to liberate the world from tyranny and which do not.

What the Bible does say about helping the poor, being a Good Samaritan, and maintaining the integrity of God's creation is certainly contradicted by the overt misogyny of traditional Christian theology. In *Ecofeminism in Latin America*, Ressa reiterates this point by quoting Mary Daly as saying, "If God is male, then the male is God" (qtd. in 114). Describing God as male proffers many to live within a hierarchical framework where male humans are more closely made in God's image than females ("Politics" 333). Christian missionaries in Honduras might do well to consider God's own gender as something of a He/She/It type of Holy Trinity in order to avoid the complications involved for women who are the subject of an evangelism that tells them to aspire to be like a male God!

Christian missionaries must be careful to discourage a hierarchy of thought in race, gender, and other categories as they are asked to explain their religious foundations.

Ruether's writing suggests always interpreting the Bible more inclusively than exclusively. One example is her interpretation of divine creation. While some may look to the order of creation for some sort of earthly hierarchy, Ruether invites her readers to notice that because God created all things according to divine plan, "the whole of creation can be seen as sacramental" (*Integrating* 76). Ruether also affirms that Genesis 1, the beginning of the Bible, contains inherent ecological messages. In Genesis 1 God creates everything on earth and throughout the universe and labels it "very good." Nothing is inherently evil in this regard, and sin only occurs when humans disobey God. Furthermore, Jesus redeems all of creation through his death and resurrection. According to Ruether, then, "the Christian mission to redeem the world must today be understood as including a redemption of the world from ecological abuse caused by human ignorance and sin" (*Integrating* 76). Following this same logic, because all types of humans of all races and genders were created by a perfect God, it would also be a sin to oppress, subjugate, or deny sanctity to any of God's human creations as well. Christian missionaries in Honduras would do well to keep a loving, liberative view of God in mind when describing Christianity to non-Christians.

The greater message of the Bible that creation is "very good" is compromised, but not dismissed, by the Genesis 2-3 creation story where the female Eve leads the male Adam away from heavenly bliss into earthly sin. According to Ruether, such a denigrating view of women sends the message that women are "physically, morally, and mentally inferior to men" and that their redemption only comes "with their voluntary

acceptance of their subordination to male headship, even if it includes injustice and abuse” (*Integrating* 76). In such stark contrast to the Genesis 1 story, the Genesis 2-3 story suggests that because the female Eve deceived the male Adam with nature, male Adams may regain access to the heavenly state for which they were intended by dominating both women and nature. Christian missionaries need to ask themselves whether a creation story valuing all earth inhabitants or a creation story valuing hierarchies might be more exemplary of their savior Jesus.

Asserting the natural equality of all things is the biblical statement directed to Adam and Eve that “by the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return” (Gen. 3:19). Even though this passage immediately follows the onslaught of the Bible's patriarchal creation story, it does indicate the fact that humans come from the earth and, in order to survive, must work within the earth's natural cycles. A Christian ecofeminist missionary in Honduras who takes the implications of this biblical passage seriously would then, like Ruether, recognize the disparity between a white minority able to cheaply consume fresh fruit year around and the fruit pickers who “lack the money for bread and are dying from pesticide poisoning” (*Ecofeminism*: First 78). Indeed Christian ecofeminists agree that all life is interconnected and sacramental. Ress invites humans to abandon the idea of human permanence (*Ecofeminism* 122), and Ruether reminds her readers that “the material substances of our bodies live on in plants and animals, just as our own bodies are composed from minute to minute of substances that once were parts

of other animals and plants, stretching back through time to prehistoric ferns and reptiles, to ancient biota that floated in the primal seas of earth” (*Gaia & God* 252). It is difficult to discriminate when one understands one's eternal tie to all other living and non-living matter. Christian ecofeminists, therefore, must witness to the eternal connections of all matter as a testament to an everlasting dignity of all things.

Ecofeminists understand the initial Genesis 1 creation story to be less patriarchal than its Genesis 2-3 counterpart because of its understanding of the interconnectivity of life. The Genesis 2-3 story reflects the organization of Christianity, and Western religion for that matter, around “the male monotheistic God, and the relation of this God to the cosmos as its Creator” (*Gaia & God* 3). Furthermore, the male God creating the female human from the male human's own body, thereby prioritizing the male human as possessing similar creative potential as the male God, promotes the dualistic “domination of men over women, masters over slaves, and (male-ruling class) humans over animals and over the earth” (*Gaia & God* 3). By Jesus' day, the Genesis 2-3 story denigrating Eve to the role of untrustworthy charlatan had reduced a woman's role in society to that of property and, when her owner died, poor. In the essay “It Takes a Whole Village To...Do Just About Everything!/: Embracing a Preferential Option for the Poor,” Assistant Professor of Religious Education and Culture at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, California, Eva Marie Lumas discusses why, in Biblical times, a reference to “the poor” included women and widows. Lumas explains that in biblical times “women were believed to be 'the property' of their husbands and had no financial resources of their

own.” Upon the death of their husbands, women “had no money and 'belonged to no one” (75). When in Mark 12:41-44, Jesus is appalled at the sight of an indigent widow donating “her living” to the treasury, the Bible could be interpreted as commenting on the inherent evil of a patriarchal system labeling women property to be maintained by society. The Genesis 1 story, on the other hand, features a sexually equitable God granting humans and animals alike the permission to naturally and equally sustain themselves through herbivorous lifestyles (Gen. 1:29). In *Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion* Ruether says, “Ecofeminism claims an alternative principal of relationship between men and women, humans and the land – a mutuality in which there is no hierarchy but rather an interconnected web of life” (11). Ecofeminists, then, feel very comfortable picking one biblical creation story over another, and Christian ecofeminists in Honduras might do well to explore which parts of other dogmatic messages most appropriately apply in the mission field.

Christian ecofeminists, for example, criticize humans who hoard resources and use the Bible to convince those without power accept suffering on earth based on the idea that true access to resources await in heaven. After all, according to this perspective, a lifetime of poverty, hunger, social-injustice, and pollution may not seem like much when compared to the promise of eternally rewarding heaven. As Ress states, the example of Jesus' vow of poverty and love as “the symbol of what we seek, of how we long to be” (*Ecofeminism* 129) encourages poor women and non-Whites to sacrifice happiness and wellness now for the rewards of the afterlife. Ress further comments that these types of

attitudes “hide real injustices and fail to allow women to distinguish between suffering caused by wrongdoing and the angst present in the ordinary lives of all humans” (*Ecofeminism* 132). Such an attitude encourages oppressed peoples to “bear and even welcome their crosses” (*Ecofeminism* 133) of depleted local water supplies, clear-cut forests, compromised soil health for feedlot cattle ranching, and generally being overlooked by their government “rather than look for ways to get rid of them” (*Ecofeminism* 133). If Christians are to believe that all life is sacramental because all was created by God, they must take great measures to overcome an inequitable resource distribution. One can almost see Ruether screaming from the page when she says “the top 20% of the world enjoys 82% of the wealth while the other 80% of the world scrape along with 18%, and the lowest 20% of the world's population, disproportionately female and young, starve and die early from poisoned waters, soil and air” (*Ecofeminism: First* 78). With such disproportionate numbers, suffering is not a privilege for the world's poor but an unjust condition created by human beings. Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras must be careful to not reinforce messages which condition the poor to accept being poor. Instead, Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras must deny the illusion that anyone has to suffer. Suffering is a human creation, and the Christian ecofeminist does not understand human suffering to be a part of Jesus' message. Did not Jesus suffer so we may live?

Christian missionaries are called to address the problems of the world's suffering poor through action. Jesus states in Matthew 25:35-40 that caring for the world's

suffering poor is caring for Jesus himself. Obviously, sharing the story of Jesus' sacrifice with the world's poor can be a comforting experience for both parties involved; however, simply sharing the story is not spreading the message. The message behind the story of Jesus is to confront and work to overcome injustice *wherever* it may occur. Bishop Pedro Casaldáliga of São Félix do Araguaia in Brazil reminds his church that Jesus warned that “the poor will always be among us” and argues that the everlasting life of which Jesus spoke can be interpreted as the perpetual struggle against resource hoarding on behalf of the world's poor (Casaldáliga 4). Lumas, furthermore, defines the world's poor as the people who are most vulnerable to being denied their right to liberty.

They are all the people who are socially neglected or regarded as socially inferior because of their race, ethnicity, culture, language, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, spirituality, or religious tradition. They are all of the people whose very person as well as their values, talent, knowledge, wisdom, and preferences are not believed to be worthy of respect or development. They are the persons who have been pushed to the margins of society because they are both under-appreciated and under-represented by the exclusionary social values and practices of the upper and supposedly superior ruling class. (76)

As both Casaldáliga and Lumas suggest, simply retelling the story of Jesus without acting on his message is not enough. Jesus was a great story-teller, but he was also a doer.

Following the example of Jesus, Christian ecofeminist mission work in Honduras must

base its evangelism on the saying that actions speak louder than words.

The Bible has also been taken to be a literal call to convert the world by preaching Christianity rather than converting the world to action under the social community of love and care within which Jesus taught. Such obedience to the “word” and not the “message” of the story of Jesus muddies the water that Christians believe Jesus' love turned into wine. While the Bible can be used as a guide to morality and living peacefully in communion with others, the image of a group of Christian volunteers traveling around the world to push a singular ideology recalls colonialist intentions of the European Age of Exploration (Silva 140) rather than informed volunteerism. Ruether and Ress both use Latin American ecofeminist Ivone Gebara as an original, informed, and inspirational source of ecofeminist thought because of her close analysis of the effects of colonialism on Latin American consciousness. In “Eco-feminism: An Ethics of Life” Gebara describes colonization as follows:

Colonization is the occupation of others, through the dimensions of time and space, and the reduction of the identity of the colonized to that of the colonizer The worst part of colonization is the loss of awareness of being colonized and no longer knowing one's roots, or who he or she was. The worst part of colonization is losing self-confidence and one's cultural values, placing oneself in the hands of the other in a submissive and uncritical way. (37)

One critical step to realizing empowerment for one's self is overcoming the effects of colonization. Defeating the manifestations of colonization, then, must always be at the forefront of Christian ecofeminist missionaries' minds. Mark William Radecke, Professor of Religion at Susquehanna University, defines mission work as something far beyond Christian conversion. Mission work, according to Radecke, is supposed to be about building “meaningful, mutual, and ongoing relationships” (22) and not reducing a people's importance to whether or not they can disregard their own cultural traditions in favor of one's own. By only preaching the “words” of Jesus, Christian missionaries risk colonizing the communities they intend to help. Passing out Bibles and instructing young children to memorize key verses from those Bibles comes across more as propaganda rather than the unconditional love and forgiveness expressed in John 3:16. An individual with the financial and technological means to travel around the world, preaching the words of John 14:6 that “Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” can convey a false promise of hope and prosperity to an impoverished community. While preaching the positive messages of love from the Bible is destructive when it supports colonialist actions, acting on the Bible's message of love by building meaningful relationships with the world's poor stands to make a more positive, long-term impact. When Jesus appeared to his disciples the second time after his resurrection, he commanded them to express their love for him by feeding and take care of his sheep (John 21: 15-17). Sheep, of course, have little natural defense and served as an excellent analogy for the world's vulnerable. Informed by ecofeminist

insight, Christian missionaries can confront structural conditions that keep the poor voiceless in Honduras. By looking to what ecofeminists see as the greatest politico-economic challenges to greater Honduran empowerment, Christian missionaries in Honduras can work more appropriately and effectively on behalf of the poor. By building relationships and networking with the most vulnerable families in Honduras to overcome the structural imbalances working against them, instead of just “sharing the good news,” Christian missionaries in Honduras will be able to express their love for Jesus in much more meaningful ways.

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL ACTIVISM AS MISSION WORK

The threads of love, compassion, and respect for all linking ecofeminists and Christian missionaries encourage an alliance between the two groups. Chapter Two describes four overarching political and economic issues that Christian ecofeminists can rally behind in order to most appropriately and effectively enable Honduran families to join the empowerment process. Chapter Two outlines the negative dependent relationships the Honduran government and economy has built with the U.S. government, the International Monetary Fund, and the monocrop agriculture, and maquiladora industries in order to demonstrate that Christian ecofeminist missionaries cannot fully achieve their goals without participating in the international politico-economic realm. Christian ecofeminists in Honduras demonstrate their love, compassion, and respect for their fellow earth inhabitants by standing alongside the Hondurans on the issues challenging Hondurans' self-determination.

Christian ecofeminist mission work involves political activism. Macro-issues such as Honduran politico-economic dependency on the United States government, the International Monetary Fund, monocrop agriculture, and maquiladora industries affect all Hondurans. These international politico-economic issues serve to maintain a disproportionate distribution of wealth in Honduras, encourage domination of women, and lead to disastrously unsustainable and consequential environmental practices.

Christian ecofeminist missionaries, therefore, must always stay informed and politically active on the big issues preventing Honduran families from realizing their potentials. Ecofeminists work to change politico-economic issues that maintain poverty, violence, and environmental health, and Christian mission work inherently functions as a political entity by providing services that governments neglect. Logically, then, Christian ecofeminist missionaries must stand with Honduran communities on the macro-issues contributing to poverty, malnutrition, violence, and environmental degradation in Honduras. For Honduran families to engage the empowerment process they must know what political forces work against them, and a more politically active and aware Christian ecofeminist missionary is better able to make this happen.

Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras have a vested interest in the reformation of the one-sided, colonialist relationship between the United States and Honduras. For individual Honduran families to access independent self-determination, Honduras as a whole must overcome its dependency on the United States. Over the last half century, in order to preserve the Honduran agricultural and mercantile export industry and also to maintain a sense of democratic stability in the midst of a turbulent Central America, the United States has poured economic and military aid into Honduras so that little actual power remains in the hands of most Hondurans. Whereas aid from the United States should improve Hondurans' ability to empower themselves, poverty and debt, hunger and malnutrition, domination and human rights abuses are on the rise. A politically active and aware Christian ecofeminist voice can soundly address and begin to

reform the unsustainably dependent relationship of the Honduran government on the United States.

Economic trade has always been the central reason for the intervention of the United States into Honduran affairs, and the banana industry has always been at center stage. Discussing the relationship between the United States and Honduran banana production cannot be done without also inviting discussion of the United States as a neo-colonialist power. Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras should be very concerned that raising the most commonly consumed fruit in the United States involves maintaining a concentration of wealth for few and poverty for many in Honduras (Soluri 217). Bananas are grown by Honduran workers to feed American families so that, metaphorically, U.S. banana consumption can be equated with the consumption of Honduran families and their livelihoods. Colonialism is a one-sided relationship benefiting the colonizer at the expense of the colonized, and because ecofeminists like Ruether and Ress wish to overcome the colonization of all forms, especially women and the environment, the neo-colonialist relationship the United States has built with the Honduran banana industry should be of great concern. Christian ritual “includes love of creation” (Irrarrazaval 2), and ecofeminism roots itself in prizing the intrinsic value in all creation. Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras, therefore, must confront the neo-colonialist shortcomings of the Honduran banana industry so that all of Honduras benefits from its profits.

The way the Honduran banana industry profits, however, is part of the problem. Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras would benefit from knowing that the most fertile soil in Honduras lies along its North Coast, and while the thousands of acres could be used for properly feeding its undernourished population, it “is given over to plantation agriculture dominated by the two big U.S. fruit companies, United Brands (Chiquita) and Castle and Cooke (Standard Fruit/Dole), producing bananas and African palm” for export (Rowlands 33; 29). Post-colonial feminist theologian, Pui-lan interprets such nonsensical behavior as Green Imperialism. While colonialism and environmental exploitation have always gone hand in hand, the Green Imperialism of the last two decades permits unregulated capitalism “to control and privatize basic necessities of life as well as to patent and monopolize life forms” (215). Under Green Imperialism, Third World families join the marketplace to work to produce food for international companies to sell for profit instead of producing food for their own consumption. In her book *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* Pui-lan argues that “colonization was both a historical and biological process,” whereby rather than “growing for their family, Third World women engage in the production of large-scale cash crops, such as rice, vegetables, flowers, and fruits for export” (211; 215). The export of bananas and African palm comprises 30% of Honduran Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and while most rural families rely on subsistence farming, “the expansion of export agriculture is pushing peasant farmers on to more marginal land” (Rowlands 30). According to Ruether, the effects of colonialist, plantation-style, monocrop agriculture are clear. “The result is

impoverishment of the people and the land” (*Integrating* 107). If the Honduran people and the land do not explicitly benefit from monocrop agriculture, this only leaves business owners to reap profits. Christians know from their scriptures that not investing time and attention to the situations of the poor has disastrous implications for all involved: “He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses” (Prov. 28:27). Trading with a country with singular economic output is not feasible. By working to diversify the Honduran economy, rather than exploit it, the United States may make Honduras a more vibrant trading partner. Before devoting more attention to the effects of monocrop agriculture on the people of Honduras and their environment, however, it is necessary to continue discussing the spiraling effects of the Honduran economy being dominated by the United States government.

Monroe Doctrine-esque, laissez-faire capitalism has always been the main justification for a large U.S. presence in Honduras, and civil instability has always threatened this relationship. According to John Soluri's *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States*, the North Coast of Honduras, where bananas are grown, “was the site of at least seven military interventions during the twentieth century” (11). So while the banana trade encouraged a neo-colonialist dependency of Honduras on the United States, military aid truly cemented the master/servant dichotomy. Cold War fears of communist uprisings and dictatorial regimes around Latin America certainly led the United States to meddle in Honduran affairs. In the eyes of wealthy businessmen and Washington politicians, the entire banana

industry is always at stake without a leader in charge who is friendly to the Honduran role in American consumerism.

U.S. military intervention in Honduras during the last thirty years serves as a prime example of the neo-colonial relationship between the United States and Honduras, and Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras involved in political advocacy might do well to encourage a more equitably covalent relationship between the two countries. As Pui-lan notes, “From a liberationist perspective, Jesus is seen as attacking not only patriarchy alone, but also imperialism, colonialism, and militarism” (97). Following Jesus in Honduras, then, requires advocating for the limitation of the neo-colonialist and militaristic footprint of the U.S. military in Honduras. In order to ensure the safety of free markets, the United States used the 1979 overthrow of the Somoza administration in Nicaragua to give it a presumably noble justification to force a return to democratic rule in Honduras. It was at this point that the United States began providing extensive military aid to Honduras in order to counteract civil wars in Guatemala and El Salvador, oppose Sandinista rule in Nicaragua, and provide overall stability for U.S. trade in the area (Rowlands 30). Between 1980 and 1989 a little over a billion dollars in economic aid, and another half billion dollars in military aid, flowed from the United States to Honduras (Rowlands 30). As a result, two of the most influential forces in Honduran economic and political affairs are the fruit companies and the military, with the actual state government left relatively in the middle. And while one might consider the United States supporting the Honduran military as a means of ensuring regional stability, empowering the

Honduran military encouraged monopoly: “Even the much vaunted 'return to democracy' of 1981 hid a continuing domination by the military. Massive U.S. military aid enabled the military not only to develop the most powerful air force in the region but also to move into control of some key areas of the economy, including telecommunications, the cement industry, and banking” (Rowlands 31). Colonialism results in colonies' economies mirroring those of their colonial oppressors, and it seems that the military-industrial complex encompasses both the Honduran and U.S. economies. The colonizing process encourages conformity to the colonizer, and without political outcry by Christian missionaries and ecofeminists in Honduras, the relationship between the United States and Honduras will continue to be one of dominance and dependence.

The one-sided, dependent relationship between the United States and Honduras manifests itself most visibly by the Honduran government's participation in the United States' War on Terror. While the former Honduran President Maduro's War on Crime was a noble effort, especially since the United Nations considers Honduras to have the highest murder rate in the world (“Crime”), the actions of the Honduran government point toward the immense influence of the United States government on its Honduran ally. In her 2008 ethnography, *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras*, Adrienne Pine notes that in November 2001 the U.S. Congress and in August 2003 the Honduran National Assembly voted nearly unanimously to empower the military to “fight vaguely defined enemies from a zero tolerance perspective” with the “you're either with us or you're against us” mentality (196). Honduras was not only one of the many

nations listed by American President George W. Bush as part of the misleading “Coalition of the Willing,” supplying military support for the American 2003 invasion of Iraq, but it also mimicked U.S. policy lock and step to fight a very visible war on terror at home. Pine notes that on a 2003 trip to thank then Honduran President Maduro for sending troops to Iraq, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell “commended Maduro for his crime-fighting efforts” (Pine 196). Besides the corruption and state violence from a Honduran military, beefed up with U.S. aid and formed “with the sole purpose of controlling the domestic” population, the rise in American military installations in Honduras coincided with a dramatic rise “in the number of women and children earning their living through prostitution (Pine 68); HIV and AIDS became serious problems, with Honduras having 60 per cent of Central American cases” (Rowlands 38). Unhealthy Honduran dependency on the United States and its militarism cries out for Christian ecofeminist intervention, and Christian ecofeminist missionaries must discourage the current politico-economic situation in Honduras in order to replace it with a more preferable system for the Honduran people.

Amidst the spreading evangelical Protestantism in Honduras (Rowlands 31; 43), another unfortunate dependency on the United States arises, that of the achievement ideology. The achievement ideology, or what many evangelistic proponents might call the Protestant Ethic, puts forth the mentality that one's success is based solely on one's determination, merit, and ambition. While ambition and success do indeed correlate, the achievement ideology ignores the inescapable qualities of systematic poverty. Much like

the ideology of the Conservative Republicans in the United States, whom evangelical Christians strongly support, the achievement ideology of Honduras holds that social status is a reflection of one's own moral ambition and does not reflect society's structure (Pine 15). Adrienne Pine relates the achievement ideology ascribed to by poor people in the United States to that of poor Hondurans by saying poor people in both places abide “by the notion that virtue and hard work lead to wealth and happiness, despite the contradictory empirical evidence from their own lives (45). Indeed, in my own work in Honduras over the past thirteen years I have grown close to Honduran families who have gained little wealth and less mobility with their overwhelming work ethic and inspiring faith. This is not to discredit the utility of faith and ambition so central to evangelical Protestant forms of Christianity, but instead to say that there are political and economic barriers in place preventing the Honduran poor from bettering their own situations. Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras recognize that proclaiming the virtues of Jesus' work on behalf of the poor means acknowledging the fact that there are structures in place to maintain a certain level of poverty in the world. Not doing so is refusing to stand up for the poor.

Both ecofeminists and Christian missionaries working in Honduras must stand up for the poor, women, and the environment, connecting their political advocacy in important ways. In order to confront the structural conditions that prevent the poor from increasing their mobility and encourage violence against women and the environment, Christian ecofeminist missionaries must confront the unhealthy, colonialist dependency

of the Honduran government on the United States. The banana industry and the militarism supported through the U.S.-Honduran relationship should be areas of great concern for Christian ecofeminist missionaries because of their minimal impact on improving living standards for the poor, the status of women, and the environment.

In addition, the International Monetary Fund should be a site of activism for Christian missionaries and ecofeminists in Honduras because of its role in deepening Honduran dependence on the United States, promoting monocrop agriculture, and promoting the maquiladora industry. The agreements made between Honduras, the United States, and the International Monetary Fund (“IMF”), do nothing to erase Honduran debt but instead further concentrate wealth in few privileged hands.

Agreements made by the Honduran government with the United States and the International Monetary Fund intend to eliminate Honduran foreign debt, but the conditions under which the Honduran government and economy are forced to operate have the opposite effect. Not only do IMF policies maintain poverty as a way of life for most Hondurans but they also place women and the environment in unnecessary danger.

As a united political force, ecofeminists and Christian missionaries in Honduras are concerned with the illogical burden IMF policies place on Honduran shoulders.

Moreover, as a united political force, ecofeminists and Christian missionaries must actively encourage the international community to aid the Honduran politico-economic system to find paths for success including a more diversified, equitable, and sustainable economy with little external debt.

Honduran external debt and an undiversified economic output are directly related to the relationship between the Honduran government and the International Monetary Fund. The Honduran government owes a crippling amount of debt to the outside world, and its relationship with the IMF serves to maintain this debt. External debt is a significant burden on the Honduran economy. Honduran external debt in 1992 was around \$3.5 billion and represented almost 100% of its GNP and over 250% of exports (Rowlands 33). And after twenty years of strict IMF-ordered structural adjustment policies, the Honduran government has been unable to pay off its external debt (“IMF and World”). Honduras must necessarily overcome its immense debt in order for its people to reap the benefits of a vibrant economy, but the IMF's stipulations of structural adjustment, under which the Honduran government is forced to operate, prevent them from doing so.

IMF policies in Honduras serve to shuffle around Honduran debt rather than eliminate it. Over the last twenty years, the IMF has obviously accepted the fact that Honduras will not be able to repay its debt; however, renegotiated IMF agreements only serve to maintain the debt. In some act of conciliatory compassion, the IMF and World Bank entered Honduras into its Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) campaign. Pine explains the impractical system to reduce Honduran debt as follows:

The HIPC trust fund consists of Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) grants from the IMF (to be paid into an escrow account and used to cover debt-service payments *to the IMF*) and partial debt forgiveness

from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) for *its* loans. In effect, Honduras is being forced to borrow from Peter to pay Paul. (19)

Devising myriad mechanisms for separating the same debt into different categories which still represent money owed to outside creditors does little to address the problem.

Contrary to the empowerment Christian missionaries and ecofeminists in Honduras should envision for the Honduran people, under IMF policies Hondurans' basic ownership of their country is diminishing. Instead of addressing the problem, structural adjustment policies have “had a negative effect on the poorest because of the removal of subsidies on basic items” (Rowlands 33). Under preconditions made with the IMF at the turn of the twentieth century, the Honduran minister of finance and the president of the Central Bank of Honduras, by whom future President Maduro was employed, agreed to the privatization of “social security and public utilities” such as the “Honduran telephone company, the national energy company, and municipal garbage contracts in return for promised debt relief” (Pine19; 17). Additionally, “the IMF and World Bank have forced Honduras to reduce its economy (through free trade agreements) to two tracks: export agriculture and maquiladora-style industry.” As Pine observes, “U.S. retailers are the principal buyers for both industries” (19). The resulting neo-liberal, privatized economy places the Honduran government under orders from outside powers and forces Hondurans to supply the United States with cheaply produced goods for consumption at the expense of their own families' well-being. IMF policies stripping power from the

majority of Hondurans' hands so as to allow wealthier forces to dictate economic pathways is a counterproductive process. Christian missionaries and ecofeminists working in Honduras understand that empowering Honduran families means enabling them to have decision-making capacities and so disagrees with policies limiting Hondurans' routes to empowerment.

Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras must propose an environmentally sustainable, debt-free, and diversified economic plan guided by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights in order to invigorate the Honduran economy and empower the Honduran people. Both Christian activists and ecofeminists protest the disastrous effects of IMF policies on the Honduran economy, women, and the environment.

Christian ecofeminist missionaries might more effectively enable the empowerment process to work for the Honduran people if they were to augment their criticism of IMF-led Honduran development plans with practical alternatives. Indeed, a Christian ecofeminist alternative to current Honduran politico-economic strategies requires true debt forgiveness and an environmentally sound, long-term economic plan informed by civil rights. Guided by these tenets, Christian ecofeminist missionaries can raise to the world the prospect that Hondurans will have less trouble empowering themselves the more the system in place truly works to the benefit of Honduran families.

Christian ecofeminist missionary alternatives to the current shape of the Honduran economy operate from the perspective that IMF policies do not serve to benefit the Honduran people but instead further cement a domination relationship by the United

States over Honduras. Ruether understands structural adjustment to be faulty logic in that it only further spins the cycle of poverty. In order to curb inflation, countries are more or less left with little choice but to subscribe to the IMF's Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP). Instead of empowering the poor, however, these policies place public power in private hands. SAPs ramp up production of exports. As a result, markets flood, and market prices drop. When prices deflate, companies make less money, and when companies make less money, they pay their workers less. A separate effect of SAPs, the devaluation of local currencies causes the local purchasing power of local families to plummet. Hunger and malnutrition are obvious effects when currency devaluation is combined with the mandated elimination of government subsidies for basic foods. So too are illiteracy and access to health care with public schools and hospitals pricing basic rights to education and wellness out of the leagues of the impoverished (*Integrating 5*). As Ruether notes, when purchasing power diminishes, poorer families tend to use resources to educate and care for boys instead of girls because of their greater earning potential in the patriarchal world market (*Integrating 31*). Finally, Structural Adjustment requirements to remove trade barriers in favor of free trade agreements flooded local markets with products from multinational organizations so that local agriculture and businesses could not compete. Ruether comments that while “large multinationals enjoy subsidies and tax breaks from their governments ... local industries in third world countries were not similarly allowed to protect their industries and agriculture” (*Integrating 6*). Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras who are serious about

helping Honduran families work their way out of poverty, must actively protest politico-economic policies serving to maintain enormous disparities in wealth.

Ress and Christian activists know that a preferable option for poor Honduran families offers an alternative to the Structural Adjustment policies by investing in women. Ress understands that when talking about the poor, the conversation automatically must include a discussion of the status of women. Since the 1970s, Ress says, women have been viewed “as an implicit part of the category of the poor; therefore, the option for the poor meant the option for poor women” (*Ecofeminism* 9). A Christian ecofeminist partnership, then, is mutually beneficial to both groups. Christian missionaries who are working on behalf of the poor in Honduras must work on the behalf of Honduran women, and ecofeminists who advocate for environmental sustainability and women's rights in Honduras must necessarily advocate on behalf of the poor. Ress says that a more preferable option for the poor recognizes that “poverty has human and socioeconomic causes” (*Ecofeminism* 31) and that “liberation theology is more urgently needed than ever in the face of neoliberal capitalism, which has aggravated the disparities between the rich and poor” (*Ecofeminism* 31). In “It Takes a Whole Village To . . . Do Just About Everything!” Lumas highlights the way early Christians dealt with unequal wealth distribution. Whereas foreign multinational corporations pay local workers low wages to farm the country's best land for corporate gain, the first Christians lived in common so that most people could have equitable access to resources:

The Acts of the Apostles offers us a radical example of such disciple-citizenship. It describes an occasion when one group of Christians gave up all their private property and shared whatever they had with their whole community such that all had what they needed (Acts 4:32-37) (74; 77).

The liberation theology that Ressa and Lomas imagine serving as a more preferential option for the poor calls on the IMF to cancel its private ownership of Honduran debt and reallocate resources so that hard-working Honduran families may acquire what they need to flourish. And indeed, there are Christian activists arguing for just that.

Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras must work within the progressive strand of Christian activism that advocates cancellation of external debt for the world's poorest countries. Two examples of Christian activism are Michael T. Seigel's Jubilee Campaign and the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. In his 1998 Service of Documentation and Study On Global Mission (SEDOS) speech, "Religious Congregations and the Debt Issues," Seigel argues that the world's religious have a right to express their opinions regarding the way the world's poor are treated because of their common devotion to the poor (1). He then goes on to say that the world debt crisis is a symptom of the deeper problems of the colonialist relationships within world finance. The way forward, according to Seigel, is through the Jubilee 2000 Campaign, so named for the Biblical Jubilee year of forgiving debts and a return to balance. "By calling for a cancellation of the debt and for effective steps to avoid a similar situation recurring, the Jubilee 2000 Campaign is calling for a resolution both to the immediate problem and to

the causes of the problem” (3). Completely forgiving Honduran debt and building economic policies so that massive debt burdens never again become necessary is the type of long-term vision impoverished countries like Honduras deserve. In a sort of conciliatory effort demonstrating its awareness of the failure of the policies it enacted in Honduras, the IMF approved the forgiveness of all Honduran external debt accrued before 2005 (“IMF to Extend”). The IMF, however, only went half as far as Seigel and others had hoped. Instead of fostering an economic program designed to prevent future debt crises, the IMF has again been loaning hundreds of millions of dollars to the Honduran government and continuing its campaign to privatize all of Honduras (Pérez). In order to abandon exploitation as a means of economic stability, Seigel argues for canceling old debts, preventing new debts from being acquired, and encouraging a more flexible economic system.

In a second speech made during the Jubilee Campaign, “Towards Genoa: Continuing the Campaign for Debt Cancellation,” Seigel's words strongly link Christian and ecofeminist distaste for IMF Structural Adjustment Policies in the following remark:

From Catholic religious working in countries undergoing structural adjustment programs, we hear stories of increased gaps between rich and poor, increased unemployment, projects to promote rural development and self-reliance being undermined by the influx of cheap goods from overseas, concentration of ownership of land in the hands of the few as agricultural production is focused more and more on exports, etc. On the

whole, the on-the-ground experience of Catholic religious seems to be negative towards structural adjustment. (3)

Many Christians and ecofeminists align in their opinions of IMF policies. Siegel and the “Catholic religious” disapprove of structural adjustment, and Ruether calls for a restructuring of society far-removed from that put into place by structural adjustment programs. In order to decrease gaps between rich and poor and maximize local solvency, Ruether demands “a reversal of the trends that are concentrating economic power in a few super-corporations” (“Global Capitalism”). The similar reactions from the ecofeminist community and progressive Christian activists on the relationship between impoverished countries and the IMF lends much credence to the possibility of Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras working to truly break the cycle of poverty in Honduras.

A second example of Christian activism is represented by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, a Catholic organization focused on “peace, social justice, and integrity of creation” (Maryknoll). The article entitled “Moral Imperatives for Addressing Structural Adjustment and Economic Reform Measures,” makes two basic claims. The first claim is that all of creation, including all systems created by human beings, concern God (1). After making this claim, the author outlines the basic structures of Christianity as a radical force of love for forgiveness and a sane distribution of wealth (2), in order to make the argument that the Christian thing to do for countries with insurmountable debt burdens, like Honduras, would be to forgive the debt and help them diversify their

economies beyond that stipulated by structural adjustment. Jesus teaches Christians that God will treat our debts in light of our treatment of others' debts to us. Does Honduras' debt situation not require the most favorable treatment? As the Maryknoll office claims,

The crushing international debt burden unjustly carried by millions of people living in impoverished countries cries out for justice. Therefore: To be just, economic reform measures must be accompanied by a definitive cancellation of the crushing international debt of poor countries. (4)

Canceling Honduran debt and helping the country prevent future calamities through diversification must be accomplished. Christians know that wealthy interests able to forgive debts should do so. Jesus ordered Christians to “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law” (Rom. 13:8). Christian and ecofeminist calls to cancel past and future debts and restructure the Honduran economy so that it prevents the decay of the environment and human civil rights expresses just the love which will honor global salvation. That Ress calls for “theologies that question anthropocentrism and that promote the transformation of relationships based on dominance of one race, nationality, gender or age group over another and of the human over other political forms of life” (*Ecofeminism* 136) and that such non-conformist solutions are coming from some Christian missionaries is striking. Christian missionaries and ecofeminists in Honduras must express their common perspectives concerning the IMF, Honduran external debt,

and Honduras' destructive singular export economy so as to help facilitate the implementation of more sensible policies for Honduran families.

The type of monocrop agriculture taking place in Honduras concentrates wealth in the pockets of the already rich, while devastating the free potential of local families and biodiversity. Such actions from a Christian standpoint are unacceptable. Jesus famously told his disciples “Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's” (Matt. 12:17). For what is God's from a Christian standpoint is all of creation, and Christians are called to honor God's creation and not profit from it. “The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life” (Gal. 6:8). Monocrop agriculture which limits biodiversity, in effect spits in the face of the immense and varied ecosystems of our collective earth. Ress notes that “humans are but caretakers of a land that ultimately belongs to God, and they are accountable to God for the well-being of all that dwell there—humans, animals, the very soil itself” (*Ecofeminism* 118). Ruether relies on the voice of ecofeminist Vandana Shiva to define monocrop agriculture as a backward, colonialist practice. In *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development* Shiva describes monocrop agriculture as a practice based on the exploitation of both vulnerable human populations and nature. Where “trickle-down economics” is the rationale for exploitative practices, actual results spin the cycle of poverty for women, impoverished communities, and the environment (15). While working to help Honduras join the world economy should be encouraged, focusing so narrowly on that objective so that a large portion of

the population is left worse off should not. In order to help Hondurans maximize economic and environmental health in the long run, ecofeminists and Christian missionaries must encourage a more diversified agricultural plan that is less destructive to local flora and fauna.

The yellow banana known so well throughout the United States and grown in Honduras, is of a single genetic strain. The Cavendish monoculture was bred for consistency, familiarity, and branding for foreign markets, but the lack of biodiversity contributes to millions of bananas at-risk of developing widespread epidemics. In 1911, land surveyors described the ecology of the North Coast of Honduras in terms of an Eden-like oasis “filled with precious woods and medicinal plants...great fertility...crystal clear waters” (Soluri 50), but today, the landscape is dominated by palm and banana plantation as far as the eyes can see (Soluri 48). As the natural Honduran landscape of forests and wetlands fell to banana production, there were few barriers in place to prevent “the movement of pathogens across localities and regions” (Soluri 6, 183). Destroying the natural landscape to grow bananas to be sold in the United States permitted pathogens to more easily spread from field to field. As a result, farmers began using massive amounts of chemicals in the banana fields to guarantee crop yields. To maintain anticipated crop production, “industrial farming is based on the use of toxic chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides” (*Earth* 101). Thus, the Honduran economy today, shaped by conditions of Structural Adjustment and a century of dependency on the United States, seeks to control nature for short-term profit. Instead of letting Mother Nature produce an abundant variety

of offspring, profit-gearred science has ensured that the Honduran landscape is an endless contrast of untouched diversity on the one hand, and an endless nursery of clones being sent to the United States on the other.

In order to meet the greater long-term needs of the Honduran people, Christian missionaries and ecofeminists in Honduras must rally against the IMF-supported trend of genetically modifying the natural world's biodiversity down to a few strains. In *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*, Shiva positively interprets the way women utilize religion as follows:

Religions that recognize the integrity of creation and the sanctity of life are a source of resistance to this destruction. And while men in power redefine religion in fundamental terms and in support of market fundamentalism, women in diverse cultures mobilize their faith, their spirituality, their power to protect the earth, and life on earth. (139)

Ecofeminists and Christian missionaries in Honduras have to stand alongside local women and their families to redefine what has been redefined, the innate value of all earth that is the earth. In doing so, the banana industry should be a central concern for Christian ecofeminist missionary activism in Honduras.

Genetic modification and agrochemical use in Honduras serves to continue the disenfranchisement of local Honduran families. First, genetic modification costs families money. Genetically engineered organisms have become intellectual property (*Integrating* 20). Local farmers are thus forced to buy seeds for replanting, rather than, as has been

done for centuries, collect seeds for the future. Money which could be saved or invested thereby goes toward maintaining one's own poverty. A second problem caused by genetically modifying the natural world is that of poisoning local families. The banana industry is a prime example. By genetically engineering an organism to resist one pathogen, that organism is at risk of contracting another. No organism can escape disease, except those that have naturally evolved to best fight off certain pathogens sharing the same climate. The bananas grown in Honduras were bred to resist Panama disease, but this leaves them open to contract any other epidemics which might come along. The agrochemicals used to prevent crop loss due to pests and diseases, however, have the consequence of hurting the workers who apply the chemicals and their families. In the early twentieth century, a product known as Bordeaux spray began to be used to combat an airborne fungus that would kill young banana plants (Soluri 107). The chemical, which is used in extremely large quantities over large stretches of land, is known to cause headache, loss of appetite, coughing, and respiratory illness (Soluri 108; 124-5). Sick husbands and sons with little access to medical care either become less productive or die; rural wives and mothers without male counterparts to participate in the market system, albeit for the little money they earn, have scarce means to overcome poverty and make a better future for the next generation (Soluri 141). From an ecofeminist perspective, a market economy dominated by attacks on biodiversity and human well-being due to genetic engineering and chemical war on life seen as worthless, embodies a disdain for all but profit. In "Let Us Survive: Women Ecology and Development," Shiva argues that

“Modern science was a consciously gendered, patriarchal activity. As nature came to be seen more like a woman to be raped, gender too was recreated...Science and masculinity were associated in domination over nature and all that is seen as feminine; the ideologies of science and gender reinforce each other” (“Let Us” 69). From an ecofeminist perspective, then, it is imperative that Christian missionaries in Honduras identify and advocate against anthropocentric practices in order to help women, their families, and the nature they depend on realize their full potentials.

Honduran women also lack access to basic rights as paid employees, but like their male counterparts, they deserve the right to a fair and healthy job site. This is, however, not the case in Honduras' clothing manufacturing industry, or maquiladora industry, as it is more commonly called. As a part of the SAPs initiated by the colonialist relationship with the IMF, Honduras' maquiladora industry should too be considered a location for united Christian ecofeminist activism in Honduras. The Honduran maquiladora industry operates under sweatshop-like conditions. According to Ruether, a sweatshop does not fit one generic description. Ruether defines a sweatshop as operating within a spectrum of poor working conditions.

A sweatshop is any workplace where any or all of these conditions prevail: workers receive less than a living wage, are forced to work long hours (ten to twelve hours a day) without overtime pay, work in unsafe conditions, are harassed on the job, physically and verbally abused, and are prevented

from organizing unions and bargaining for better conditions. (*Integrating* 146)

It is not hard to imagine Honduran factories being susceptible to sweatshop-like conditions under the IMF's neo-colonialist demands to maximize profits. Although the maquiladora is guilty of additional abuses, Ruether identifies Honduras as a center for sweatshop activity for the discrepancy between the amount of money workers are paid for the time they work. "In Honduras pay averages about forty-three cents an hour for up to fourteen-hour shifts, with sometimes mandatory twenty-four hour shifts" (*Integrating* 146). Slave wages and hours are demeaning and can only possibly serve the interests of factory owners. Pine reiterates these working conditions as doubly oppressive in light of the fact that at the turn of the twenty-first century, around 2/3 of maquiladora employees were women. Although women are the majority of workers, few are in positions of authority. The remaining 1/3 of employee positions "requiring more authority or heavier labor" are reserved for men. As low-paid and replaceable employees, women are also denied health care even though they come in regular contact with dangerous production chemicals like formaldehyde and regularly breathe in tiny lint particles (157). Pine points out that "frequent unexplained fainting, kidney infections, and tuberculosis" are common health problems for women in the maquiladora industry. Other regressive employment practices common in the industry include sexual harassment, being denied maternity leave, and being fired by age thirty (142). On the notion of fertility, Pine asserts that it is a myth that women are more in control of their bodies if they are working for money and

having fewer babies. Instead, some factories force-feed female workers birth control pills or offer abortions to forgo paying maternity leave (Pine 164). In an attempt to seize their own empowerment, young women are flocking from their home communities and their families to join the workforce in the maquiladora industry and become consumers; they instead spend their youth learning no marketable skills besides being a part of an indiscriminately demeaning process. I think about the pride Garifuna culture feels regarding their history of dodging slavery. Imagine how degrading it would be for a Garifuna woman to leave her roots in liberation to join an industry based on slavery-like conditions. Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras must discourage the maquiladora industry from operating as sweatshops so that the international economy may empower Honduran women rather than enslave them.

Instead of earning a greater sense of empowerment and seniority in the company as a valuable member of the production process, Honduran women working in the maquiladora industry are becoming colonized bodies, and Christian ecofeminist missionaries are obligated to draw greater attention to this injustice. Many Hondurans worship consumerism to convey a largely absent self-esteem. Acquiring name brand clothing is not possible for many in Honduras. Nonetheless, cheap knock-offs are widely available (Pine 5). Sadly, the colonialist IMF Structural Adjustment policies which mandate a daily devotion by those working in the maquiladora industry to the power of brand-name products sets up Honduras as just a cheap knock-off of the United States. In the introduction of *Women Healing Earth*, Ruether implores her readers to realize that the

colonization of bodies as consumers is directly linked to the exploitation of women and the environment serving to maintain the current distribution of wealth (3). An almost painful example is that of the U.S.-based business, Banana Republic, a name given to Honduras by the author O. Henry in 1904 for obvious reasons. The clothing made by Banana Republic, and Honduras as the actual banana republic, are both “Made in U.S.A.” of imported “fabrics” (Pine 18). Much like the bananas grown in Honduras are clone, after clone, after clone of the same banana, so too are the thousands upon thousands of duplicate parts of clothing made in Honduras. Honduran women, then, are less likely to join the empowerment process but are frequently held back by participating in a exhausting, low-paid and risky environment where they only master a single step in the grand scheme of clothing manufacture. According to Pine, “the young Honduran woman (or much less frequently, man) repeatedly sewing the sleeve on one model of an Old Navy T-shirt may have worked on a different part of a different shirt model the week before, as directed by her maquiladora boss, himself (or much less frequently, herself)” depending on what Old Navy orders, but she never learns to make an entire t-shirt (22). Christian ecofeminist missionaries must advocate for richer work experiences in the factory setting so that Honduran women may become unique and empowered individuals instead of just another stitch on a sleeve. The young women working in the factories around San Pedro Sula instead learn that they owe allegiance to a hierarchy where the United States is on top, and they are on the bottom. Not only do female factory workers work for low wages producing parts of clothing they could never afford, they “are made

to use the term 'Mister' in maquiladora factories to address their managers and sometimes even line supervisors, regardless of the language their superiors speak” (Pine 40). When degrading and monotonous work for a colonial oppressor is the best job Honduran women can get, something must be done.

As a Christian ecofeminist, Ressa understands that valuing women and nature are foundational to a cohesive society. Cultures that do not value women and nature for producing life discourage empowered life experiences for all. As Ressa insightfully observes, “when the feminine is not present, honored in ritual or in a culture's sacred image of the Divine, the entire social fabric is affected, and violence against women becomes commonplace” (*Ecofeminism* 146). When a nation and its own people are not in charge of their own destiny, that nation and its people are subject to the whim of the power, usually white male power, that is in control. Right now, the IMF and the United States are those powers, and they have structured the Honduran government's economy to function in such a way that Honduran families work for the patriarchal master at the expense of their own betterment. Catholic priest and Columbian Fathers' Coordinator for Justice Peace, Paul McCartin, says “our grasping for more and more possessions arises primarily out of our anxieties in the face of death” (McCartin 5). Accumulation as a response to a fear of death, however, is a self-defeating process. As Shiva notes, “a science that does not respect nature's needs and a development that does not respect people's needs inevitably threaten survival” (“Let Us” 70).

Honduran families and their environment have an ally with a politically active Christian ecofeminist movement because of their shared devotion to working on behalf of the vulnerable. With the two groups working together with local Honduran families, the world will be forced to pay much greater attention to the social, political, economic, and environmental injustices occurring in Honduras. By drawing attention to and making the world aware of the forces at work that prevent Honduran families from building their own pathways to a brighter future, ecofeminists and Christian missionaries can much more appropriately and effectively work with local communities toward sustainable means of development. For, as will be discussed in the next chapter, best practices in Christian mission work in Honduras adhere to the lesson of Ecclesiastes 7:8: “The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride.” Furthermore, as fitting with the long-term vision of Christianity, as Ress knows, “ecofeminists work from the micro toward the macro” (*Ecofeminism* 147).

CHAPTER III

RELATIONSHIPS-BASED MISSIONS

Appropriate and effective Christian ecofeminist mission work in Honduras must partner with local communities to organize around individual issues contributing to poverty, malnutrition, and violent and environmentally unfriendly lifestyles. On the macro level, Christian ecofeminist mission work in Honduras must actively discourage the global politico-economic policies bringing wealth and prosperity to a few while more than 70% of Honduran families live in poverty. Additionally, Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras must advocate against abusive conditions for employees of global corporations, Honduran families, and the environment. On the micro level, Christian ecofeminist missionaries should build relationships with local community leaders to encourage unity and discussion in order to meet local educational, environmental, health, and social challenges. Christian mission work, informed by ecofeminist activism, stresses the universal tenets of love and compassion for the earth and all its systems over traditional, hierarchical evangelism in order to not invalidate rich cultural experiences. Chapter Two explored how Christian ecofeminist missionaries may advocate on behalf of the Honduran people via international political means, and Chapter Three imagines how Christian ecofeminist missionaries should function on the local social level. Christian ecofeminist missionaries invite communities to empower themselves by opening up community networks of dialogue. Christian ecofeminist

missionaries encourage Honduran communities to begin the empowerment process by engaging in a conversation directed at identifying social pathways toward liberation.

Each Christian ecofeminist community empowerment program is tailored to the specific needs of specific communities. Each community may have similar needs, but the way those community members choose to meet those needs is up to the individual community. The Con-spirando Women's Collective, an ecofeminist empowerment network across Latin America, and the Urraco Health Promotion Programme, an NGO-established health promotion project catered to the needs of local women, serve as examples to guide Christian ecofeminist missionaries in building appropriate and effective community empowerment programs. By describing two specific models for empowerment specific to Latin America, this final chapter aspires to inspire the foundations of Christian ecofeminist mission work in Honduras.

The Con-spirando women's collective serves as a prime model for Christian ecofeminist mission work in Honduras because it functions as an exploration of more inclusive, comprehensive spirituality to both overcome the colonialist practices of global patriarchy and to preserve the earth's homeostatic, life-renewing properties. As one of the founding members of Con-spirando, Ress has helped define the 21-year-old organization as a “women's collective working in the areas of ecofeminism, theology, and spirituality throughout Latin America” (Con-spirando 148). The collective began and still functions as a gathering ritual for local women to receive positive affirmation by sharing their life stories, challenges, hopes and dreams. What began as a ritual of story-telling through

“drama, dance, music, and poetry; through earth, fire, water, and wind; through native Mapuche and Mymara chants and drums; through silence; often through tears” became a network determined to seek a spirituality and theology that speaks to the heart of both women's lived experiences and the sacred nature of the planet (Con-spirando 148-149). The ecofeminist perspective of Con-spirando depends on women analyzing their own gendered experiences, and as Rowlands notes, such analysis “provides a critique of supposedly neutral institutions and reveals the many manifestations of male bias in the development process” (6). In Honduras, a case of femicide, the murders of women, is registered with the police every two days (Femicide). Ignoring violence against women and androcentrism ignores a very real part of daily Honduran life and limits the success of the development process in Honduras. Women gathering together to learn about each other's unique perspectives and experiences, therefore, promises to raise greater awareness of how suppressive and violent patriarchy invades all areas of society. In order to change Honduran women's everyday situations, Honduran women must share and record their daily experiences. With greater awareness raised, Honduran women may be more empowered to speak out against the oppression they experience to family members, community leaders, and/or government authorities.

Modeling the Con-spirando women's collective in Honduras can serve as a mechanism for Honduran women to formulate their own empowerment. Con-spirando inspires ritualized ecofeminist meetings and leads “workshops, seminars, and conversations in feminist theology, gender studies and ecofeminism, including an annual

two-week summer school on ecofeminist spirituality and ethics that concentrates on myths and their power over us” (Con-spirando 151). Moreover, Con-spirando publishes a quarterly journal to link women across nations and continents. In the first issue of the Con-spirando magazine, *Revista Con-spirando*, Elena Auila set the tone for the collective with the following foundational preface:

We seek theologies that take account of the differences of class, race and gender that so mark Latin America. We hope to open new spaces where women can dig deeply into our own life experiences without fear ... We seek spaces where women can experience new ways of being in community; where we can celebrate our faith more authentically and creatively; where we can rediscover and value our roots, our history and our traditions...We call for theologies that question anthropocentrism and that promote the transformation of relationships based on dominance of one race, nationality, gender or age group over another and of the human over other forms of life ... We call this posture ecofeminism. It is within this perspective that we seek a spirituality that will both heal and liberate, that will nourish our Christian tradition as well as take up the long-repressed roots of the native peoples of this continent. We want to explore the liberating dimensions of our experience and imagination of the Holy. To do this, we “*con-spirar juntas*.” (Con-spirando 150-1)

Since 1993, the preceding mission statement of *Con-spirando* has been lived in full as women of all backgrounds share their spirituality through lived experience. Instead of practicing band-aid mission work where the cycle of poverty is treated symptomatically, what a powerful step it would be if Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras put their energies into uniting local women through a feminist dialogue concerning common and unique experiences with poverty, malnutrition, violence, and other societal ills. Identifying commonality serves to raise greater awareness of shared oppressions and offers local women the chance to seize their own empowerment together as a unit rather than individually.

Christian ecofeminist missionaries attempting to undertake such an initiative in Honduras, similar to the *Con-spirando* women's collective founded in Chile, must explore each participant's own rich genealogical background. In addition to providing an environment where women may hold forth on who they are, a central component of women empowering themselves is to realize the value of their genealogies. In order to achieve self-empowerment and self-realization, Ressa invites Latin American women to look deep into their pasts as mixed people. All people, especially Latin Americans, are a mixture of ancestries. Each combination of lineages over the years has contributed to the unique mix of genes which culminate in the self. As Ressa notes, choosing to acknowledge the vitality of white ancestry while ignoring indigenous background centers one within the established, oppressive dualistic power structure where white and powerful people are diametrically opposed to indigenous and powerless persons ("After Five" 53). While

coming to understand one's own sense of self may involve incorporating pre-Colombian forms of spirituality into Christian worship, as the Garifuna do, Christian missionaries need not worry. Ecofeminists do not necessarily discredit Christianity as a way to explain “Divine Mystery” (“Ecofeminismo Holistico”). In other words, investigating other positive, life-affirming spiritual pathways does not contradict or invalidate Christianity but can help make one's personal relationship with Jesus to be more meaningful. If Christian missionaries truly strive to help facilitate the empowerment process with local communities in Honduras, they cannot possibly denigrate local families' own historical journeys. Jesus told his disciples that there is “no greater commandment” than to love God and fellow earth inhabitants as they wish to be loved (Matt. 12: 30-31). Do not most cultures want their traditions and history prized as equally important as those of other cultures? Yes, they do, and validating the amalgamated Christianity of the Garifuna, for example, instead of ignoring the unique cultural underpinnings of their spirituality, would be “loving thy neighbor.” The Con-spirando women's collective understands that non-Christian cultural traditions, in addition to Christianity, belong on the road to empowerment for Latin American women:

And all over Latin America women are taking a new look at the region's persistent and overwhelming devotion to Mary. Is she the Mother of God or Mother Goddess? Why is she, rather than Christ, the principle source of prayer and devotion? What relationship does she have to indigenous cosmologies? Here at *Con-spirando* we are also grappling with this dear

and ancient mother, who may also be a source for our oppression as well as our liberation. (“Who Are We?” 59)

Community empowerment programs, like those set in motion by Con-spirando, can help Honduran women and families identify what common threads link their unique relationships with poverty, malnutrition, violence, and other manifestations of poverty.

The success of Christian ecofeminist mission work and local women seizing their own empowerment depends on dialogues like those modeled by Con-spirando. Christian ecofeminist missionaries cannot possibly know how best to work with local Honduran communities if those communities are not encouraged to talk about uplifting and humiliating life experiences. Indeed local Honduran communities will not be able to effectively build relationships with Christian ecofeminist missionaries without first identifying what social conditions warrant transformation and why. Building mutual relationships based on honest dialogue will not only inform Christian ecofeminist mission work in Honduras so that it is more appropriate and effective, but it will also encourage unity and action among local Honduran communities as individuals are more aware of their neighbors' personal experiences.

Deep, honest dialogue between Christian ecofeminist missionaries and local Honduran communities fosters meaningful relationships aimed at overcoming local crises. Communities active in the development process are more empowered than ones that passively accept relief assistance from Christian mission teams or other international aid organizations. Jo Rowlands, like Ressa and her Con-spirando peers, understands that

empowerment is not something that can be packed in a missionary's suitcase and sent along with a group of weekend missionaries on a direct flight from Atlanta to San Pedro Sula. She understands that “empowerment as a gift does not involve a structural change in power relations” (12). Empowerment as a role, on the other hand, helps communities learn to expect better. Like the Con-spirando women's collective, Rowlands knows empowerment involves developing one's own sense of self. Empowerment is not being asked by a group of short-term missionaries where they should set up a 6-hour makeshift medical clinic so that they can make the most use of their time. Empowerment is knowing one has the capacity and right to instruct a medical brigade where the most appropriate place to set up a day clinic would be. As Rowlands observes, “empowerment is thus more than participation in decision-making; *it must also include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions*” [emphasis in the original] (14). Individuals expressing entitlement to actively participate in the development process understand the first steps in the empowerment process. Christian ecofeminist missionaries should note, however, that each pathway to empowerment looks different but may involve expressing the community's needs beyond those addressed by regularly-visiting Christian missionary groups. Much like what Ressa and the Con-spirando women's collective address in their feminist dialogues, Rowlands' model of empowerment in Honduras is context specific: “Understanding your situation is important; if you do, you are more likely to act to change it” (15). Rowlands understands empowerment to function within the following three interlocking categories:

- personal**: developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the effects of internalized oppression
- relational**: developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decisions made within it
- collective**: where individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have had alone. (15)

Honduran women developing the capacity to incorporate these three categories into their consciousness is not something Christian ecofeminist missionaries can schedule, but Christian ecofeminist missionaries can work with local community leaders to provide appropriate and achievable structure. Empowerment does not mean the same thing for every community, and it cannot even be applied the same way with every person in the same community.

Rowlands explores a case study of how community empowerment programs have functioned in Honduras, and while different from the Con-spirando women's collective, the Urraco Health Promotion Program provides useful insight into location-specific development models for Christian ecofeminist missionary projects in Honduras. The Urraco Health Promotion Program was established in Urraco in 1985 to help the people of Urraco meet the healthcare needs of their community (Rowlands 47). Urraco is an area along the North Coast dominated by the banana industry (Rowlands 41), and the health promotion project began as an attempt to confront the lack of quality health care for the majority of the population without access to the minimal healthcare provided to those

living in the banana camps. In addition to high rates of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and syphilis, Hondurans in Urraco, like those all around Honduras, live in an environment where parasitic infections dominate their lives. Parasitic infections are more than a health issue, however, because of their relationship to underdevelopment. “Parasitic infections are frequent because of poor hygiene and poor water quality. Malaria is endemic and dengue is common. Because most houses lack any form of waste water drainage, there are many pools of stagnant water” to facilitate mosquito-born illness (Rowlands 44). In conditions of underdevelopment, and where communities lack the resources to prevent parasitic outbreak, preventable disease lurks right around the corner. In addition to disease, alcohol abuse and violence against women flourish unrestricted as “law enforcement is virtually non-existent—certainly justice is beyond the reach of the poorest people” (Rowlands 45). Additionally, employment prospects are exploitative in Honduran towns where men seek exhausting work in the banana fields and women move to San Pedro Sula to join the maquiladora industry. All of these conditions made Urraco a prime place for Concern America, a lesser-known non-governmental organization (NGO), the local Catholic Church, and its youth-nutrition program to join together in establishing a health promotion program (Rowlands 47).

The evolution of the Urraco Health Promotion Program should be of critical importance to the Christian ecofeminist missionary. The program was designed as a voluntary two-year course for community leaders to learn skills in preventive and emergency health care, but it quickly became a center of feminist dialogue and

empowerment for the way its female participants evolved the program beyond its initial goals. For two years, health promoters from over two dozen surrounding communities met weekly in local circles and monthly as an entire unit to discuss a lesson from the book *Donde No Hay Doctor (Where There is no Doctor)*. In addition to engaging in academic and personal discourse, health promoters also charted the monthly growth of local infants and children. When they found children who were not growing, health promoters alerted mothers and shared health improvement strategies. The retention rate for volunteer health promoters was around fifty percent, and there was some success in reducing malnutrition rates (Rowlands 47). Upon graduation from the program, health promoters served as unpaid volunteers responsible for purchasing, housing, and filling the fifteen medicines they were trained to store and dispense properly (Rowlands 48). And while the program's initial goals were to help the communities around Urraco overcome juvenile malnutrition, being trained to care for their community, being given the responsibility to care for their community, and working through the Catholic church with outside funding led many health promoters to experience dramatic increases in self-confidence and self-worth (Rowlands 49). Most definitely, it is the way this particular program helped to empower its health promoters beyond the intended goals that Christian ecofeminist missionaries should note.

In the example of Rowland's Urraco case study, Christian ecofeminist missionaries wary of undertaking a community empowerment program might do well to remember the familiar Christian song that goes “It only takes a spark to get a fire going”

(Kaiser). As was the case for Ressa and her peers upon founding the Conspirando women's collective, unforeseen results abounded in the Uracco health promotion program. Fellow health promoters began expressing their problems with each other more openly, when they had previously been afraid to do so. Others began sharing their skills with community members who had not participated in the program (Rowlands 50). Still, others refused to work as unpaid volunteers with their newly-received education, a result upon which Rowlands does not frown. Ressa argues that "it takes at least a minimum sense of self-worth and self-confidence for someone to state that their time and effort is worth payment, and to set conditions on their involvement" (Rowlands 52). The ability to price one's own skills into the marketplace indicates not only confidence *in* one's own training but also one's ability to transform one's own situation *with* that training. And while many women saw financial value in their training, the training led other women to dramatically alter the way they viewed their relationship with their family. One woman named Reina – ironic because it means "queen" in Spanish and this was a woman not born into power – stopped using corporal punishment as a method of behavioral modification with her children. Reina's relationship with her husband also changed dramatically:

Before ... I didn't value myself; rather I was subject to the man. My first husband treated me badly. He told me 'you are no use as a wife'; and what I did was start crying, and he would say 'I'm going to look for another wife better than you'. Now it's not like that. Now I know that we're equal,

that all women are equal, and with him, well ... I'm not going to die over all that. Now I claim my rights, and I've done all sorts of things.

(Rowlands 54)

Another woman, Rosa, recognized her right to empowerment as a prenuptial agreement. “It'll be difficult, but when I marry I'd like my husband to be like this: that he shares the work with me. Men have a right to help in the kitchen too, to wash the dishes, to sweep, in complete democracy” (Rowlands 52). On the one hand, Reina seeing her right to a husband who treats her as an equal and Rosa's recognition that men need not be placed in some uniform box may have been epiphanies revealed as a result of the health promotion program; on the other hand, the two women may have experienced such feelings well before joining the program but feared expressing them until they developed a stronger sense of self-esteem and agency. Either way, Christian ecofeminist missionaries must appreciate the powerful side effects of focused attention on a community. By equipping local leaders with the knowledge and tools they need to overcome issues specific to their locale, they are better positioned to take ownership of the empowerment process and replicate the educational programs within the community on their own. By simply building meaningful relationships with Honduran communities, Christian ecofeminist missionaries can also help community leaders identify community problems, develop and implement solutions, and eventually feel more confident about exploring what they may have previously considered impossible.

Little is impossible when Christian ecofeminist missionaries commit to building meaningful relationships with local communities in Honduras. Much is possible with much work; nevertheless, Christian ecofeminist missionaries working in Honduras would be badly unprepared without swallowing the hard truth that uprooting injustice by empowering the world's poor to take control of their own fate and that of the earth will be a long and arduous process. It is this pursuit, after all, which ultimately cost Jesus of Nazareth his life. In the section closing her case study of the Urraco health promoters' training program entitled "Aspects Working Against the Empowerment Process," Rowlands notes that a single and finite two-year healthcare training program can be lacking. While the concrete goals of curbing community malnutrition and equipping community leaders with skills in basic first aid were met and sparks of empowerment began to ignite among the program's graduates, Rowlands says that a truly empowering community development program has to function from a wider base: "To provide a forum for the empowerment process, the programme would need to have a structure, focus and methodology that would motivate women to continue to be active participants, and to use their own initiative to tackle issues which they themselves had identified" (62). Addressing the complicated nature of the process, Rowlands continues, "However, to encourage a sense of agency in this way might entail a challenge to the programme's semi-autonomous state" (Rowlands 62). For sure, helping communities design the most appropriately and effectively empowering development program is an immensely-complicated process. It may be for this reason that many Christian mission groups in

Honduras tend to focus on short-term relief efforts. Nonetheless, a Christian ecofeminist community empowerment mission project in Honduras understands humankind's relationship with the earth and time. With the immense amount of time that has gone by and the incalculable amount of time that has yet to come, Christian ecofeminist missionaries must be comfortable with the amount of time needed to help Honduran families seize the empowerment they need to demand an end to poverty, malnutrition, disease, violence, environmental degradation, and other detrimental issues.

Christian ecofeminist missionary community empowerment programs in Honduras appreciate the time required to eliminate the cycle of poverty and should begin now. Speaking to the seemingly infinite amount of time that has passed by for humankind to arrive at our current point of consciousness, Ressa reminds her readers that we are all equal in that our fundamentally equal atomic existence is as old as the universe itself (*Ecofeminism* 217). And as infinite as the universal struggle for peace and personhood seems to have been here on Earth, Ressa suspects that we are “at the beginning of a new common creation as we embark on the journey of ridding ourselves and our world of” injustice, inequality, and domination in general (*Ecofeminism* 201). Ecofeminists and Christian missionaries working in Honduras can find solace in the conclusion that, at some point in the future humankind will have experienced, both the beginning and the end of the oppressive patriarchy which so limits the full potential of the earth and all its brilliant features. Christian ecofeminist missionaries in Honduras may begin fanning the flames of a more egalitarian future in which Honduran families do not live with the daily

degeneration of poverty and its manifestations, and as the song goes, “It only takes a spark.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Christian missionaries have made a bad name for themselves over the years, but this no longer has to be the case. Christian missionaries can overcome their association with colonization and exploitation by working alongside ecofeminists. Both Christians and ecofeminists share common core values of faith, hope, respect, and love, and it is upon these core values that a Christian ecofeminist mission work may be born in countries like Honduras. By rethinking evangelism as active love rather than Christian conversion, Christian ecofeminists can overcome their stereotypical aspiration to convert the whole world and take on Jesus' true mission of eliminating oppression for all. By focusing attention on the structural political, economic, and social causes of poverty, malnutrition, disease, gender inequality, and environmental degradation in Honduras, Christian ecofeminists can most assuredly work alongside Honduran communities to ensure that positive change is both possible and foreseeable. Supplementing government oversight and neglect in Honduras with short-term material medical and educational support is a necessary band-aid job that Christian missionaries and ecofeminist volunteers in Honduras are well-suited to provide, but they must also do more. Instead of treating symptoms of injustice, Christian ecofeminist missionary activism vaccinates against a degenerative cycle of poverty and violence in Honduras with both targeted political

activism and investments in social capital through long-term community agency programs. If Christian ecofeminists work on both the international politico-economic and the local social levels to help communities develop strategies to overcome their own circumstances, their long-term efforts increase the likelihood that short-term support from foreign benefactors will become less necessary at a much quicker pace than it would without such intervention.

Political activism, like short-term relief-style mission work, is but one prong in a strategic plan to eliminate the causes of poverty and injustice across Honduras. Christian ecofeminists understand that the Honduran economy is in trouble when remittance incomes from the United States outweigh profits from both monoculture plantation farming and maquiladora industry. Christian ecofeminist missionaries also understand that the crippling poverty, violence against and subjugation of women, and environmental degradation in Honduras are manifestations of unequal resource distribution and neo-colonialist relationships with the U.S. and the IMF. The boondoggle posed by the stagnancy of extreme poverty rates also requires the social organization that a Christian ecofeminist mission work in Honduras can provide (“Honduras – Poverty”). International agreements and national visions to overcome poverty, violence, and environmental decay for Hondurans as a whole hinge on local Honduran women, their families and communities' ability to address issues specific to them. Such large hurdles require teams of Christian ecofeminists who are willing and able to concentrate greater effort on local

social development so that Honduran communities can more effectively demand an end to injustice in their lifetimes. If the past few centuries of Christian mission work in Honduras have been plagued by regressive colonialist mentalities, the Christian ecofeminist missionary activism of the future will serve as a progressive, justice-centered cure to the problems Honduran families live with every day.

WORKS CITED

- “Areas of Missions Focus.” *Woman's Missionary Union*. Web. 10 Oct 2011.
- “Basic Beliefs.” *Southern Baptist Convention*. Web. 10 Oct 2011.
- Casaldàliga, Pedro. “Another Way of Being Church.” SEDOS Conference. Rome, Italy. July 1998.
- “Crime.” travel.state.gov. U.S. State Department – Honduras Country Specific Information. Web. 28 Feb. 2012.
- “Edinburgh 2010: Witnessing to Christ Today Centenary of the 1910 World Missionary Conference.” *World Council of Churches*, 2010. Web. 8 Aug 2011.
- “FAQ.” *catholicmissiontrips.net*. Catholic Mission Trips. Web. 10 Oct 2011.
- “Femicide: The Greatest Human Rights Violation for Women in Honduras.” *Honduras Weekly – National*. 28 Aug. 2011. Web. 09 Sept. 2011.
- Gebara, Ivone. “Ecofeminism: A Latin American Perspective.” *Cross Currents* 53.1 (2003): 93-103. Print.
- . “Eco-feminism: An Ethics of Life” *Sacred Earth, Sacred Community: Jubilee, Ecology, and Aboriginal Peoples*, ed. Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative (2000): 33-37. Print.
- “Go.” *imb Connecting*. International Missionary Board. Web. 10 Oct 2011.

“Going Forth and Multiplying.” *Economist* 398.8719 (2011): 49. Print.

Hanisch, Carol. “The Personal Is Political.” Carol Hanisch Official Website. Web. 04 Mar. 2012.

The Holy Bible, New International Version. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.

“Honduras.” Canadian International Development Agency. Web. 12 Oct 2011.

“Honduras - Poverty Assessment: Attaining Poverty Reduction.” worldbank.org. The World Bank. Web. 14 Feb. 2012.

“Honduras's Experiment With Free-Market Cities.” *Wall Street Journal Online – The Americas*. 14 Feb. 2011. Web. 09 Oct. 2011.

“IMF and World Bank Support Debt Relief for Honduras.” imf.org. International Monetary Fund. 10 July 2000. Web. 28 Feb. 2012.

“IMF to Extend 100 Percent Debt Relief to Honduras Under the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative.” imf.org. International Monetary Fund. 23 December 2005. Web. 08 April 2012.

Irrarrazaval, Diego. “Re-Foundation of Mission – A Latin America Study.” *Missiology: An International Review* 25.1 (1997): 61-68. Print.

Johnson, Paul Christopher. “On Leaving and Joining Africanness Through Religion: The 'Black Caribs' Across Multiple Diasporic Origins. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 37 (2007): 174-211. Print.

- Kaiser, Kurt. "Pass It On." *The United Methodist Hymnal*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989. Print.
- Lumas, Eva Marie. "It Takes a Whole Village To . . . Do Just About Everything!." *New Theology Review* 24.2 (2011): 72-80. Print.
- "Maryknoll." maryknollgc.org. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.
- McCartin, Paul. "A Theology of the Environment." *The Japan Mission Journal* 51.3 (1997). Web.
- Matthei, Linda M. and David A. Smith. "Flexible Ethnic Identity, Adaptation, Survival, Resistance: The Garifuna in the World-System." *Social Identities* 14.2 (2008): 215-232. Print.
- Matthey, Jacques. "From 1910 to 2010: A Post Edinburgh 2010 Reflection." *International Review of Mission* 99.2 (2010): 258-275. Print.
- McFadden, Bruce. *AHMEN Medical Missions in Honduras*. Alabama Honduras Medical Educational Network. 30 Jan. 2011. Web. 25 Mar. 2012.
- "The Missionary Spirit." *The Priest*. 66.9 (2010): 29-9. Print.
- "Missions Work." *Southern Baptist Convention*. Web. 10 Oct 2011.
- "People and Society: Honduras." *CIA – The World Factbook*. Web. 11 Oct 2011.
- Pérez, Camila. "IMF Approves \$202 Million Loan for Honduras." *International Monetary Fund – Central America*. 01 Oct. 2010. Web. 08 April 2012.

Pine, Adrienne. *Working Hard, Drinking Hard: On Violence and Survival in Honduras*.

Berkeley: U of California P, 2008. Print.

Plumwood, Val. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1993. Print.

“President Lobo Blocks Airport Exit Fee Hike.” *Honduras Weekly – National*. 21 Dec.

2011. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

Pui-lan, Kwok. *Post-colonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. Louisville: John

Knox, 2005. Print

Radecke, Mark William. “Ten Worst Practices: Misguided Missions.” *Christian Century*

127.10 (2010): 22-4. Print.

Ress, Mary Judith. “After Five Centuries of Mixings, Who Are We?: Walking with Our

Dark Grandmother's Feet.” *Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on*

Ecology, Feminism, and Religion. Ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether. Maryknoll,

New York: Orbis Books, 2005. 51-60. Print.

---. “The Con-spirando Women's Collective: Globalization from Below?” *Ecofeminism*

and Globalization: Exploring Culture, Context, and Religion. Eds. Heather Eaton

and Lois Ann Lorentzen. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003. 147-62. Print.

---. *Ecofeminism from Latin America* (Women from the Margins). Maryknoll: Orbis,

2006. Print.

---. Interview with Ivone Gebara. “Ecofeminismo Holistico.” *Revista Con-spirando*

4 (1993): 44-5. Print.

- . "Remembering Who We Are': Reflections on Latin American Ecofeminist Theology." *Feminist Theology* 16.3 (2008): 383-96. Print.
- Rowlands, Jo. *Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras*. Herndon, Va: Oxfam, 1997. Print.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. "Ecofeminism: First and Third World Women." *Ecotheology* 2 (1997): 72-83. Print.
- . "Ecofeminism: Symbolic and Social Connections of the Oppression of Women and the Domination of Nature." *Feminist Theology* 3.9 (1995): 35-50. Print.
- . *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992. Print.
- . "Global Capitalism: A New Challenge to Theologians." *National Catholic Reporter*. 7 Feb. 2003. Web. 30 March 2012.
- . *Integrating Ecofeminism Globalization and World Religions*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005. Print.
- . "The Politics of God in the Christian Tradition." *Feminist Theology*. 17.3 (2009): 329-38. Print.
- . *Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996. Print.
- Seigel, Michael T. "Religious Congregations and the Debt Issue." SEDOS Conference. Rome, Italy. 17 Feb. 1998. Web.

- . "Toward Genoa: Continuing the Campaign for Debt Cancellation" *Service of Documentation and Study on Global Mission*. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.
- "Send North America." *North American Mission Board*. Web. 10 Oct 2011.
- Shiva, Vandana. *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*. Cambridge: South End, 2005. Print.
- . "Let Us Survive." *Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion*. Ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2005. 65-73. Print.
- . *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development*. London: Zed Books, 1989. Print.
- Silva, Alan J. "Conquest, Conversion, and the Hybrid Self in Cabeza de Vaca's *Relacion*." *Post Identity*. 2.1 (1999): 123-46. Print.
- Soluri, John. *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States*. Austin: U of Texas, 2005. Print.
- Van Engen, Jo Ann. "Short Term Missions: Are They Worth the Cost?" *The Other Side* (Jan. 2000): 20-23. Print.
- "Volunteer Opportunities: Honduras." CatholicVolunteering.org. Web. 10 Oct 2011.
- Warren, Karen J. *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective On What It Is And Why It Matters*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000. Print.
- "What is UMVIM?." United Methodist Volunteers in Mission. Web. 10 Oct 2011.
- "Who We Are." sifat.org. SIFAT. Web. 11 Oct 2011.

Williams, Jody. "Listen to the Women of Honduras." *Ottawa Citizen*. 04 Mar. 2012. Web.

10 Mar. 2012.

Yuscaran, Guillermo. *The Garifuna Story*. Tegucigalpa: Nuevo Sol Publicaciones, 1990.

Print.