**Marks of a Colonial Context
*10.28.10***

01. Colonialism a political-economic phenomenon whereby various European nations explored, conquered, settled, and exploited large areas of the world. The purposes of colonialism included economic exploitation of the colony's natural resources, creation of new markets for the colonizer, and extension of the colonizer's way of life beyond its national borders. (www.answers.com/topic/colonialism)

02. Colonialism is accompanied by *colonization*; that is, the physical settling of people from the imperial country. Before colonization can be effected, the indigenous population must be subdued and assimilated or converted to the culture of the colonists; otherwise, a modus vivendi must be established by the imposition of a treaty or an alliance. Typical aspects of colonialism include: racial and cultural inequality between ruling and subject people, political and legal domination by the imperial power, and exploitation of the subject people. (www.answers.com/topic/colonization)

03. Colonization occurs when one people is conquered by another people through destroying and/or weakening basic social structures in the conquered culture and replacing them with those of the conquering culture.   Colonization robs the colonized of most of their land and resources. Loss of the land base means loss of the foundation for their traditional social, economic and cultural ways of life.   Colonization robs the colonized of their cultural inheritance. Colonizers view and treat the colonized as lesser human beings; this leads to stigmatization, shame, and sense of worthlessness. (Bill Mussell, member of Skwah First Nation, “Cultural Paths for Decolonization.” http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/publications/aboriginal-people/bck/2)

04. Theology is not merely ‘Faith seeking understanding’ through harmony with reason and science, while leaving traditions of injustice and structures of oppression intact, and colonial domination unchallenged. Theology is not an attempt to explain away suffering. Rather, it is critical reflection on life-transforming faith-practice with a view to more liberative and socially transformative theo-praxis which would tackle the ground of poverty and suffering (A. Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation,* New York, 1988, pp. 81-83). In doing theology the primacy of praxis over theory is affirmed, and the primacy of social analysis and involvement over detached philosophical speculation. (Samuel Rayan, SJ, Vidyajyoti, Delhi. “Decolonization of Theology”: 2.6. <http://www.sedos.org/english/Rayan.html>)

05. Jesus made it a point to decolonize the religion and the theology of the people, which had been occupied by royal, priestly and wealthy settlers from the time of Solomon. Power centers molded religion for the socio-religious periphery. Worship was centralized to suit monarchical politics. Religion became priest-ridden and expensive, legalistic and burdensome. It had its outcastes and untouchables. It also had its ways of fleecing the poor and ‘devouring the houses of widows’. Jesus marginalized the temple and all priestly pretensions. Worship shall be in spirit and truth. Mercy, not sacrifice. People, not Sabbath. Relationships have priority over offerings to God. God offers life to sinners, not death. Rules of purity and pollution are not decisive at the level of the heart. Amassed wealth is no sign of divine favor. God’s favorites are the poor. Finer faith is found among ‘the gentiles’ than in Israel. With such teaching and corresponding practice Jesus’ work of decolonizing and revising traditional religion and theology was so far-reaching that, while the liberated people rejoiced, the powers that be decided to rid society of the radical prophet. (Samuel Rayan, SJ, Vidyajyoti, Delhi. “Decolonization of Theology”: 3.3.4. <http://www.sedos.org/english/Rayan.html>)

06. William Herzog argues (*Parables as Subversive Speech*, p.113, 1994) that the opposition to Rome and its agents is expressed in the gospels with the subtle indirectness—the ‘hidden transcript’—that is characteristic of chronic peasant resistance rather than spasmodic revolts. Immediately following the parable of the tenants in Mark 12, for example, the question of resistance is implicitly raised once again in a question about whether Jews should pay tax to Caesar. Jesus feigns obedience with the language of compliance while, at the same time contesting imperial authority: “Jesus said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s. The parallel narratives that contain the story (Mk. 12:13-17, Mt. 22:15-22, Lk. 20: 20-26) suggest that Jesus is being goaded by the Pharisees and ‘Herodians’ into exposing the underlying resentment against the roman poll tax, the *kensos*. When Jesus calls for a *denarius* in this story, he is not calling for an ordinary coin; the coin’s inscription laid claims to the emperor’s divinity, linking roman power to the cult. The Pharisees and Herodians inadvertently confess that they have conceded too much by the very act of carrying the coin and thereby being in a position to provide it for inspection. Instead of pointing out that Jesus has begged the question of what exactly would belong to Caesar, Luke is able to say, ‘And astonished by his answer, they become silent.’ The silence arises from the fact that Jesus’ antagonists have incriminated themselves. (Brett, Mark. *Decolonizing God: The Bible in the Tides of Empire*. Sheffield Phoenix Press, p. 141, 2009).

**Which of these MARKS are present in the congregation or church body?**

**The organization or church body …**

**Social Analysis**

1. Does not provide knowledge and resources to critically examine what is happening: obscures the history—fails to link outcomes of a colonial conquest (i.e., the exploitive enrichment of whites and co-incidental, consequential impoverishment and immiseration of Native Americans and African Americans) with contemporary racial hierarchy and racial disparities; neglects historical-critical analysis.
2. Does not understand its own material assets, and those of its members, to be the result of the colonial enterprise and colonialism’s living legacy of genocide and exploitation of peoples of color. Instead interprets its material assets, and those of its members, as representing a blessing from God (or virtuous work or racial traits of a superior civilization). Portrays the colonizer group as having a ”natural” mandate to continue controlling the material assets in its possession under a self-serving rationality of “good stewardship.”

**Theology**

02. Engages in a colonial reading of Jesus and the Jesus movement without any awareness that it ***is*** a colonial reading and without appreciating how its self-interests are being served by this interpretation.

03. Sees the post-Constantine, white Christian message as being non-problematic and “enlightened.”

04. Holds a worldview that understands morality as an individual, optional concern (Christianity as individual spirituality) and not as an ethical-political stance – closed to opportunities of political awareness or involvement that would include questioning its own use of resources.

05. Is silent about (sometimes because of true ignorance of – not knowing that one does not know) the historical references in scripture, causing congregants to miss the imperial context of Jesus’ life and to not recognize the ways Jesus was speaking against Empire.

04. Is silent about (sometimes because of true ignorance of – not knowing that one does not know) the historical references in language, court decisions, law, and the US Constitution, causing citizens to miss the imperial context not only of the birth of the nation but all of its land acquisitions (wars against Native American nations, Mexico, and Spain) and to not recognize the ways actual US history violated the basic rules of justice, truth, freedom, and right doing.

05. Does not discern the colonized nature of common sense knowledge circulating within the society, propounded by idea leaders of all institutional sectors, broadcast through media, representing vested colonial interests, because our common sense knowledge has so absorbed the “colonial theology/worldview,” that it has not yet found a place to stand for critical introspection.

06. Does not acknowledge the colonized nature of Biblical knowledge received through the Church and the fact that, because the Church has so absorbed “colonial theology,” it has not yet found a place to stand for critical introspection.

07. Has not yet undertaken or advocated for church-wide (conscientious) effort to unearth the information and interpretations that have been historically suppressed which would allow members of the church to recognize the anti-colonial nature of Jesus’ life and stories.

08. Regularly uses the symbolism of lightness to represent goodness and darkness to represent evil, as well as other symbolism suggesting the rightness of the colonizer identity and worldview. Disregards the destructive harm this inflicts on colonized people – responding as if this harm is of no “real” significance or moral import.

**Embodies Colonial Power Relationships**

09. Perpetuates the legacy of colonial arrangements – those who have control and power continue to have control and power. Absolute power remains with the colonizer. Although that power may be invoked infrequently, it is always “there.”

10. Has no vehicle available to represent the worldviews of the colonized, so the worldviews of the colonized are not present.

11. Communicates and interacts with communities of color from a position that is hierarchical, superior, and patronizing.

12. Is not actively involved in teaching the poor to liberate themselves from the rich.

13. Understands itself to have the power, right, and ability to define the interests of the colonized.

14. Its primary work is never to decolonize itself – this can never be accepted as what the “interests of the colonized” most require.

**Lacks Moral Commitment/Conviction**

15. Doesn’t “push,” uphold, or enforce the laws, rules, proclamations, resolutions, or policies it has already enacted in support of equity, non-discrimination, justice, or restitution.

16. Avoids what knowledge is available—decision makers of the organization do not attend workshops (i.e., antiracism) or other events that would start to lift away the shroud that’s thrown over everything).

17. Defines “what counts,” “what’s important” as that which contributes to maintaining the status quo. White epistemology (white way of knowing, colonialist worldview) is what counts and is given priority and weight. Therefore antiracism / decolonization work is not counted as essential or critical to the values and mission of the organization. At best, such work is optional.

18. Does not follow-up on what is learned following an antiracism or a white privilege workshop (— hearing but not doing).

19. Fails to address the colonialism in the members’ own personal lives and in contemporary life as a society -- failing to speak out against the immoralities and hypocrisies in our lives that Jesus spoke against in his time.

**Does Not Acknowledge/Name its Own Position in the Colonial Order
– does not “see itself” in any of the analyses**

21. Normalizes and sometimes explicitly approves private property (ill-gotten gains—legacy of stolen land and stolen labor), consumption and other “marks of success” in the colonial project – not naming the problematic of wealth and consumption as necessarily being the outcome of an oppressive colonial (capitalistic) system.

20. Does not take seriously, as a model for the members’ own lives, the way Jesus lived or the way his movement shared material possessions communally. Instead, private property, consumption and other “marks of success” in the colonial project are normalized and sometimes explicitly approved – not naming the problematic of wealth and consumption as necessarily being the outcome of an oppressive colonial (capitalistic) system.

21. Justifies and normalizes the culture of exploitation; accepts the whiteness of the organization as “the way it is” – the norm – despite the harms experienced by People of Color who enter.

22. Assumes the universality and rightness of white norms and of the legitimacy of white privilege, perpetuating the colonial mindset in relations with people of color.

23. Cultivates a colonial cultural climate – instead of condemning the alliance of the organization with the wealthy, the cultural climate is one of celebrating the fruits of imperialism (costly trips, attained political power, high-priced charity, educational levels, land base provided by homesteaded farms and GI bill financing, recreation and lake cabins in “white space” areas ….).

24. Is characterized by self-aggrandizement and celebration of the benefits that have come from the colonial project and whiteness.

25. Is characterized by self-satisfaction of having realized the values of success in dominant society, with no reference to the costs to other people of what those values represent.

26. Supports the alliance of the organization with the trappings of power, including educated elites from other nations.

**Engages Primarily in Accommodating Political Action**

27. Uses 501(c)(3) status and other economic factors as rationale to block equity, social justice, or antiracism activity of the organization.

28. Serves as a cultural mediator or cultural broker on behalf of the colonizer community to colonized community, uncritically transmitting, upholding, or enforcing the values of the colonizer to communities of Color.

29. Is invested in the advantages coming from capitalism, from its members who are doing the work of continuing the system to block radical changes – the kinds of changes that would be necessary to restructure things to lift the burden of oppression from the poor.

30. Engages in activities that soften the “punch” of oppression without changing the basic relationships that produce oppression. The attention given to the oppressed is in the form of charity.

31. Recognizes and sanctions organizations whose work supports the colonial project; does not ally it self with organizations opposing the colonial project (“too radical” or “too political”).