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**Transgressive Bodies**

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Mission in the midst of Empire is a key theme for the Council for World Mission (CWM) and its member churches. The process of developing this book began with a consultation in Durban, South Africa, which sought to create a platform where theologians from various regions gathered in a spirit of fellowship as they presented Bible studies, sharing of insights on life-affirming theology as they discerned the signs of the times.

We recognise the work of the CWM in the conceptualisation and facilitation of the development of this book. Special thanks to Rev. Dr. Collin Cowan, General Secretary of CWM for his commitment, passion and laying the ground work with his remarkable presentation at the Durban consultation. Thanks to the Office of the Mission Secretary, in particular Rev. Dr. Sudipta Singh and Ms Maria Fe Ceballo Labayo who organised the consultation and supported the process of the development of the book.

We are grateful to all the writers who contributed to this book and who have dedicated their time, scholarship, stories and their commitment to addressing the issue of Empire.

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Preface
Collin I. Cowan, General Secretary, Council for World Mission

This book is a product of a consultation held in Durban in 2014, focusing on the CWM vision statement: Fullness of life through Christ for all creation. Attending scholars were invited to focus on what it means to experience life-affirming communities throughout the length and breadth of this beautiful world in which we are privileged to share space. In the CWM, we understand that we are required to live out this vision in the context of Empire and it is for this reason that our attempt at enabling our members to develop missional congregations becomes so central and strategic to our priority at this time. This consultation thus sought to benefit the CWM through inputs meant to assist the organisation give content to its vision and mission and to read Scripture with hermeneutical lenses informed by our various social locations, thereby enabling us to view and engage the social landscape that defines our context.

The CWM vision statement came about through a process of wrestling with the question of what it means to do God’s mission in the context of Empire. We agonised over the blatant and bare-faced death-dealing, life-denying forces that are desecrating and destroying God’s creation, causing groaning of irreconcilable proportions. We admitted that we are on a journey of death, caused largely by humans’ doing the very things we desire which are those that destroy us; because our insatiable appetite for personal advancement, at any cost, placed us at odds with other human beings and with the rest of God’s creation, on whom we depend for the very life we desire. We asked ourselves what window there is for our liberation and how might we manage to lay sight thereon and then claim its freeing winds. In discovering our utter futility in this respect, we turned to Scripture and heard afresh the affirmation of Jesus: ‘I am come that you might have life, and have it in all its fullness’ (John 10:10). The fullness of life for all creation is how Jesus interpreted his mission in the context of the Roman Empire. And the particular instance in which these words were uttered responded to the way in which a person with a disability was relegated to the dumps, by those who colluded with power at the expense of the marginalised.

In Chapter 9 of the Gospel of St John ‘a man born blind’ was healed by Jesus but could not be received into the community because they were not ready for him. Not only had he been given sight, he was also given voice and his voice vexed the community, whose interest and responsibility it was to protect the status quo. This nameless man had found his true identity with the freedom Jesus released in him, and he was prepared to live as