

***Biamslist* preliminary discussion towards 2007 Conference on Mission and Migration**

The Conference prospectus

Stories of asylum seekers, tensions between ethnic communities, questions about immigration policies, are constantly in the news. Students of Christian mission however will want to look at deeper questions raised by social mobility and the opening up of international borders throughout Europe - and beyond. Biblically, there are threads of argument about the possession of land, national identity and the need for hospitality to strangers; historically, missionary movements have always been involved in crossing frontiers, geographical and cultural; the transformation of world Christianity has been significantly shaped by experiences of 'exile, migration and dispossession'; and the witness of churches in the West today is challenged and enriched by the presence of 'diaspora' churches and immigrants who are also missionaries in Britain and Ireland. Vital theological and political issues are involved. Will integration, assimilation or multiculturalism determine the shape of our communities over the next few years? And what is God doing in the midst of all this?

Starting things off - from Martin Conway

I have just been reading the excellent address given this weekend by Samuel Kobia, the Kenyan General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, to the staff of CYTUN, the Welsh Council of Churches. He refers to a public statement from the Central Committee of the WCC in 2005, called 'Practising Hospitality in an Era of New Forms of Migration', which also looks like a rather solid statement of the challenges and opportunities facing many, many of us as nations, as Christians, as individuals and communities in face of the constantly growing number and quality of those forced in one way or another into migrating away from their original homes. So I warmly recommend both these to all concerned with this debate; they can both be found via the World Council of Churches website, www.wcc-coe.org.

And while I'm writing, has anyone else seen a short paper 'Witnessing in the Midst of a Suffering Creation', published by John Knox House, Geneva? This is essentially a 'letter' addressed to 'Churches, Mission Agencies and all Christians concerned with the Church's Mission' followed by a 10-page text and 5 practical examples from very different situations. So it is very much addressed to us in BIAMS! It evidently arises from a conference held there last September to explore in what ways the whole matter of climate change, global warming and the threat to our environment from carbon emissions, deserves to be seen as part of the Christian mission entrusted to Christ's Church. Not surprisingly, they obviously considered that the absence of this whole area of question and challenge from virtually ALL previous debate about the mission agenda is a disgrace for the Church.

This link to environmental issues, acknowledged by Philip Thomas

Thanks Martin for that useful connection between environmentalism and migration as a context for mission. It was just this fact that inspired the introduction of this year's BIAMS Conference theme by way of last year's day conference on environmental justice! And of course we can multiply the links to other things like militarism, water resources, trade and poverty etc. It seems that Michael Nazir Ali's description of Christian mission, 'from everywhere to everywhere' could have the notion of 'all about everything' included with it as well!

... moving on to something of a literature search

Roger Bowen made a number of these points in his (I thought) excellent introductory article in the latest BIAMS Bulletin. For those who didn't see it, it is (or shortly will be) on the BIAMS web-site www.BIAMS.org.uk. He appended some reading resources:

Mission and Migration, Missiology XXXI.1 (Jan 2003) - 7 articles
Mission and Migration: some implications for the 21st century church, J.Hanciles, IBMR 27.4 (Oct 2003)
Refugees in the 21st Century: Can we find a solution, Lluís Magrina, *Christianisme i Justícia*, Booklet 123 www.fespinal.com
Furthering Humanity: A Theology of Culture, T.J.Gorringer, Ashgate (2004)
Faith in Asylum, Nicholas Sagovsky, The Gore Lecture, Westminster Abbey, 2005
The Quest for Images of Missionaries, Sherron Kay George, Missiology XXX.1 (Jan 2002)
I wonder if anyone has read (or would like to look up) any of these and offer a synopsis? Or whether you have things you would like to add Roger?

The Kobia references that Martin gave are very relevant. Samuel Kobia was also speaking in Edinburgh (at the Towards 2010 consultation). Did anyone hear that who could let us know what happened?

Further resources from Nelu Balaj

Another resource which you might find useful is *Asylum Principles*, published by CCRJ (Churches Commission for Racial Justice), accompanied by a booklet containing theological reflections that underpin these principles. The Reflection booklet was written by Dr Anthony Harvey, and by Fr Raphael Armour and Revd Carrie Pemberton. You can download the PDF version of two documents either from ACTS website <http://www.acts-scotland.org/racialjustice/resources.shtml> or CTBI website www.ctbi.org.uk/ccrj.

... and Roger Bowen ...

Immigrants: your country needs them, Philippe Legrain, Little, Brown, £12.99.

A timely stimulus for reflection: Strangers and Citizens rally

I wonder if anyone was involved in Strangers into Citizens rally in London yesterday?

If so, what do you think of the proposal for an amnesty for visa overstayers and irregular migrants? Do you think that migrant workers (whatever their status) have rights to fair pay and protection? And if an amnesty was granted, do you agree - as the organisers of the rally assert - that the rights of the nation to control its borders would not be compromised? Is the fact that regularising migrant workers would (apparently) bring more than £1billion in tax revenue a sufficient reason for supporting an amnesty?

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor was a principal speaker among the 'faith leaders' at the rally. Are other Christian thinkers involved? And if so, what sort of theological/biblical principles inspire their contributions?

In what ways might involvement in this movement be seen as a participation in the mission of God - and are there any ways in which such involvement might compromise it? And what difference is the presence of so many Christian migrants in this country today making to our understanding of global Christian witness? Any thoughts?
Philip Thomas

Martin Coway responds with some theological resources

No, I wasn't in London for the rally yesterday (May Monday), but I have - just last week - come across a remarkable piece of theological writing about the whole situation about migrants in this country and about the obedience of Christians to the call of God in the person of Jesus in regard to such people.

... expanding on the CTBI paper commended by Nelu Balu

I am no expert in this field, but took to the style and indeed direction of those pages very warmly indeed. Harvey's long article is followed by a rather shorter piece jointly written by Carrie Pemberton (the leader of CHASTE which is sponsoring 'Not For Sale Sunday' on May 20th) and

Fr Raphael Armour who is an Orthodox chaplain at one of the 'removal centres' (like the one at Campsfield near Oxford) where the detainees are clearly desperately unhappy these days. This is much less profound, but also moving in its own way. So the whole paper should certainly be required reading for our Cambridge Conference. I take it that the 'Asylum Principles' is also a significant document as the latest considered statement from the specialist group of the UK churches, but I haven't read it yet myself !

Jim Harries offers a radical perspective from Africa – on mission principles

Prosperity gospel and a generally, usually very impractical, hankering after the prosperity of the West, is something that a missionary to Africa has to discourage if his/her whole ministry is not going to become one of 'Westernisation' rather than 'Christianisation'.

There are genuine Christians outside of the West. That is those who genuinely put God before the wealth of this world. I only hope that such will be encouraged by finding Christians should they ever get to the West with a similar orientation. I hope those seeking to assist immigrants etc., in appreciating how 'poor' a situation some of them come from, will give spiritual ministry appropriate priority over material concerns. Practically I think this could mean that it is more important to give time, a listening ear, a Bible reading and prayer than to rush to put pressure on immigration officials or arrange for language learning, British-standard facilities etc. for immigrants.

Philip Thomas responds:

Could it be, Jim, that it is because they have been listening, sharing and praying with migrant communities that the Catholic church* has been prominent in the Strangers to Citizens movement? In other words, are 'spiritual ministry' and 'material' advocacy mutually exclusive? I really appreciate your very focussed attention to appropriate mission paradigms (hope the recent consultation in Doncaster went well - is there a report?), but while sharing all your concerns about the 'prosperity gospel', I can't think that Christian discipleship involves the active promotion of poverty - especially when the poverty of some is used to sustain the affluence of others. And issues of mission and migration are not just a concern of the West. Africa has more than its share refugees and migrant workers. What would Christianisation as distinct from Westernisation mean there?

*Incidentally the sermon preached by the Archbishop of Southwark at the mass which began the march last Monday can be found at www.cathoic-ew.org

Andy Draycott reiterates a spiritual/material, aid/advocacy paradigm

Thanks for the stimulating thoughts. I suspect that theological reflection on the possible idolatry involved in regarding and representing to ourselves and others the goods kept safe or made available by national borders would encompass both material and spiritual ministry.

Jim Harries replies (to Philip Thomas especially)

You say: "I can't think that Christian discipleship involves the active promotion of poverty ..."

It would be very easy to misunderstand one another on this one. You mention that poverty may sustain the affluence of others. But then, so may wealth sustain the affluence of others. (See the other email I have just sent.) For example, a wealthy development worker operating in 'poor' Africa relieves the conscience of the wealthy people in the West to the effect that they are 'doing

something' or 'doing what needs to be done', when actually the wealthy development worker may, because of his wealth be totally ineffective.

How can a development worker's wealth render him ineffective? In many ways. I have outlined these at length elsewhere. In brief, being wealthy in a poor community results in isolation (for many reasons), which in turn results in distance, and thus ignorance of the community. That ignorance may prevent 'solutions' to poverty from becoming visible. The wealthy person's activities (offering incentives for someone to do things for him) will easily be a distraction to others who may otherwise have found those 'solutions'.

From my limited experience, refugees in Africa may be (materially) better off than nationals. This is because international agencies that take care for them may have better resources that are better managed than some African governments. It is only a short step from there to someone preferring to be a refugee, or taking advantage of refugee status for personal gain.

Looking at an ideal situation, a Christian community would welcome another community coming in fleeing from, say, war. But, it would oblige that incoming community to act responsibly, be respectful, humble etc. The two communities on account of their geographical proximity are likely to understand one another relatively well, and so presumably would be relatively good judges of what is important, valuable and respectable etc. Certainly they'd be more knowledgeable than professional refugee workers.

Should there be an international refugee agency in the vicinity though, then of course there would be competition for its attention. Local people would not receive the refugees if they knew that the West was already making provision for them. Thus this opportunity of intercultural Christian charity, sharing and exchange would be lost.

You may be aware that these are concerns of the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission (www.vulnerablemission.com).

and to Andy Draycott

In Africa we talk of 'holistic' ministry. That is, God provides things like food, motorbikes and wives as well as spiritual peace and everlasting life. Hence the 'West' looks very different from here than from there.

Philip Thomas responds

I take your point Jim, about the need for sensitivity, both ways, in the relationship between 'migrant' and 'host' (and especially Christian) communities.

Interestingly, at the Trafalgar Square rally, the Anglican Bishop of Southwark cited his experience in Zambia, where a visitor was given hospitality for two days, but on the third was expected to take up a hoe and work in the communal gardens ... in other words to identify with, and share responsibility in the common life of the hosts. In your perspective that could suggest that the visiting development worker should take up a hoe by leaving his tractor behind! But in a 'developed' situation, where a visiting migrant/refugee has to join a capitalist labour-market, he or she should not be forced to accept working/living conditions or remuneration which are in effect exploiting the vulnerability of the visitor in a strange culture ... denying the newcomer a hoe with which to contribute to the common good. Part of Christian mission will be to critique both situations on behalf of the 'stranger in the midst'.

This is broadening the concept of migration and mission ... which I might make the subject of another posting.

Human Trafficking – introduced by Isabel Kelly

I was interested to see Carrie Pemberton's name mentioned in one of your or Martin Conway's communications. I belong to a group working against Human Trafficking and we had a weekend in Essex in April. ..

Already our borders are being exploited with the trafficking of people both for the sex industry and for bonded labour. Sex trafficking is the third largest and most lucrative organized crime after the arms and the drugs trades. More arms can be made and more drugs can be processed but these trafficked people are REUSABLE! What dignity is there in that?

Jim Harries applies his analysis to this aspect of the discussion

I am not wanting to speak in favour of human-trafficking, but just to put another (African) perspective on it. Someone trafficking people may see themselves as doing them a favour.

There are many people here in East Africa, and even more so I guess in other parts of the continent, who are in difficult straits. That includes those who work for rates that are in the UK a 'pittance'. Say someone works for £50.00 per month. A well meaning person could easily see themselves as helping them if they get them a job in the UK for £100.00 per month. But of course once they get to the UK, the person will be seen as exploited etc. The 'exploited' person in the UK, is still a LOT better off economically than many people outside of the UK.

I emphasise 'well-meaning'. Is it not better to get someone a UK job for £100.00, than to leave them on a job in Africa for £50.00? In practice it could be a lot less than £50.00. (I am not saying that this is justified. I am presenting the issue, not proposing a solution.)

Some people are so desperate that they would snap at the chance of 'selling themselves'. That is, as a 'slave'. Slavery was of course a very 'normal' institution for human societies for centuries (including Biblical times). The absence of the slavery option is for many simply death. Most of us would prefer slavery to death. This role of 'slavery' as a social safety net is these days rarely considered. The absence of the slavery option can result in many people who may have been saved being left in poverty, or left to death itself.

See article in Christianity Today, march 2007, entitled 'Free at Last'. This talks of Zambian young men being brought to the USA to sing. In the end, the person bringing them is condemned as some kind of modern-day slave trader. I cannot comment on the individual details of this case. But, I suspect that there are no end of young men in Zambia who would like to come and sing in the US, but fewer and fewer people ready to bring them over through fear of the kind of circumstances described.

There is a lot more to this situation than often seems to be realised. Is it not better to give 100 people a raise in income from £50 to £100, than to give just four people (say) an income of £1250? But this option is not allowed, because once across the border, someone is deemed worthy of £1250. Yet if it is four people at this level of income - how are they to be chosen from the crowd of 100? Whoever chooses, has taken some almost divine power on themselves. Hence they may prefer to do nothing - that is, to bring no-one.

Nelu Balaj challenges some of this

[Jim with the risk of being controversial I would like to make a few observations to your reflection. I am making these remarks first as a person who is an immigrant to this country from a relatively](#)

poor country, secondly as a "ex-missionary" with over two years experience of work in a very poor African country; thirdly as a servant of the church working with migrants, asylum seekers and minority ethnic people in this country; and finally as a student of mission (in the sense of one who learns - not literary student).

I agree with you that to give time and a listening ear and support in prayer are very important and essential actions one can give to immigrants and asylum seekers in this country. But when you meet people who are daily dehumanised by our system because they happen to have a different passport, or because they have arrived to this country without the right documents I think that putting pressure on immigration officials might be the right way of acting in Christ's way. When a pastor (or any other person) who left his country in fear for his life to seek refuge in this country for him and his family is treated with suspicion, kept for over four years in a limbo, then out of the blue is told that they will to be deported to the same place from where they run for their lives, and then he is looked up with his four children in a prison for months (as criminals) just because they are 'failed' asylum seekers, I think prayer and listening ear are not enough.

Some people might find a remark that seems to suggest that we should apply lesser standards to immigrants, not just offensive but out of place. Some might even call it pure racism. Because I hold a different passport should I not be entitled to the same services and standards as any other person living in this country!!?? Our biblical tradition reminds us to treat the foreigner and the sojourner in our midst with dignity and Jesus encourages us to be hospitable.

I am sure that your perspective is from Africa, but probably not of an African - of a disempowered person. When I worked in Africa I had always the option to leave Africa if I had a bad time or even if I felt like it. But a person from an African country does not have the luxury to leave whenever things are getting bad for him or her.

I agree with you that immigrants do not necessary put wealth before anything else, but on the other hand why should not people from a poor country seek to find a better life for themselves and their families - this is a natural desire and a right for everyone - the same as British people go all over the world to better themselves (even missionaries sometimes go with this in mind).

Widening the relationships: migrants, settlers and tourists

The earlier exchange, with Jim Harries, perhaps highlights the way in which the issue of migration and mission is not just about peoples who seek to settle and integrate within a new host community, but includes those who, from choice or necessity, find themselves temporarily on the margins of a foreign society.

Could this mean that a Western tourist, in a luxury hotel, might be seen as a temporary migrant just as much as a refugee in a transit camp? If so, does a Christian holiday-maker have any responsibility to the host community?

And what about a Christian who is doing business in developing countries? I have been reading recently about a move by Alcan to locate their primary aluminium production to South Africa - in order to take advantage of 'cheaper' fossil-fueled electricity than had been available from renewable hydro-electric power in Canada. This means that squatters in Soweto will actually be subsidising share-holders (mainly) in the West! An interesting inversion of the complaint heard in this country that economic migrants are taking 'our' jobs"?

Where does Christian mission sit in these situations? Philip Thomas

Jim Harries pursues the point

It would seem that if a 'poor' person coming to the UK needs to be brought 'up' to the local standard, then doesn't a 'UK' person going to a poor country need to be brought 'down' to the local standard?
Or what?

Nelu Balaj seeks some further clarification from Jim

I found some of your comments somewhat confusing (or I might have misunderstood them): in one of your previous emails in which you seemed to speak for 'Africa' you made a comment that suggested that immigrants to this country should not be offered the same standards of services as other people in this country. I have drafted a response to that email but I left it in my draft folder, but after some reflection I thought I should keep out of this discussion. However now that I see the discussion continuing and as one who is interested in the issue and works with migrants I feel that I should send out that email - it will follow this one.

I totally agree with Philip that there is a stringent need for us to engage seriously with all the issues that are being presented to us by this fluid world. And this situation does raise serious questions for our 'doing of mission'. At the same time we have to bear in mind that migration is a very complex phenomena and should be approach as such.

As people with economic power and with British passports we have the luxury to travel wherever we like, almost whenever we feel like it (even could stay in a luxury hotel in Africa)! We also could chose to be economic migrants, if we like to do so (could missionaries be also seen as economic migrants?). But let us bear in mind that people with wrong kind of passports and very limited economic power often cannot even move freely or afford to move within their own countries.

I feel that as people who have the power and luxury to move from country to country we need to have a little more humility and consideration for those who do not have that luxury.

I think that it would be decent for us to try and go 'down' to the 'local standards' when we go and live in a poor country. As I mentioned in the other email (which will follow this one) I come from a poorer country and when people (often missionaries) coming from the west sought to live like us, they were highly regarded by the members of our society (unfortunately the reverse is often not reciprocated in this country to people that come to live here).

I also think that Philip raises a very important point when pointing to life at the 'margins' of society. Many immigrants in this country are often forced, not by choices of their own, to live at the margin of this society (and most of the time on the margins of the church as well). But often for immigrants from affluent countries to poor countries marginality becomes actually privilege.

Jim Harries replies

Thanks for your wise and well thought out comments.

I do agree with you here that the ability these days for (say) British citizens to travel as and when they like, is indeed incredible. It is less often realised that there is an associated responsibility, to use travel privileges wisely. Western people visiting poor countries expect service of a certain standard, and because they have the money to acquire them often get just that level of service. Locals do not have the financial flexibility to insist on the same. Flush toilets are often an issue in my experience. Westerners can insist on vast expense being incurred just so that they have flush toilets on their annual 2 week visits. Are toilets so important?

Referring to your other email ... I do not claim to know simple answers to all these issues. (I do believe there are more answers to be had through attention to language and culture issues, and sensitivity to non-Western cultures, which is these days often missing.)

Emma Wild-Wood's experience -

I was interested in Jim's scenario,

'Looking at an ideal situation, a Christian community would welcome another community coming in fleeing from, say, war. But, it would oblige that incoming community to act responsibly, be respectful, humble etc. The two communities on account of their geographical proximity are likely to understand one another relatively well, and so presumably would be relatively good judges of what is important, valuable and respectable etc. Certainly they'd be more knowledgeable than professional refugee workers'

I was in Bukavu in 1994 just after the Rwandan Genocide when about 300,000 refugees came into the city. The Aid agencies were there in vast numbers but were overwhelmed nevertheless.

Many Rwandans headed for the church they were members of in Rwanda and asked for help. Most churches and individuals gave willingly and at considerable cost to themselves - they opened their homes, and their schools, accepted the chopping down of trees for firewood even though they knew it would cause soil erosion. I think there is much to be learnt from such open-hearted generosity. Congolese I talked to would explain it as the 'African way', and/or 'their Christian duty' and even 'it'll be our turn to flee next - we hope they'll be as hospitable!' The ability to give without counting the cost, to respond to immediate need without worrying over much about the longterm effects, the recognition the 'there but for the grace of God, go I, an appreciation of common humanity and common problems were all very apparent in the early days. They certainly taught me much about patience, kindness, goodness.

However, it would be easy to romanticise the situation. The strain on the Congolese was immense and the refugees were there for a long time. The Aid agencies did alter things. The refugees were 'better off' for health care etc (as Jim suggests) and some Congolese were employed on international salaries while others were impoverished by the refugee situation. But what would have happened without the aid agencies being there? Would the refugees have spread themselves thinly enough for the local population to cope? I'm not sure. The scale was so huge - and it was worse in Goma. If there hadn't have been international intervention could the internal war in Congo from 1996 - 2004+ have been avoided? Again, I'm not sure. Although, with hindsight, things should have been done differently. And certainly involving local people in decision-making would have been a good start.

I think what I want to say, is that extremely complex situations often demand response on different levels. As Christians what is our response? A friend who'd worked in Congo with CMS went to Goma with the RED Cross at the time. He became a bridge between the big aid agency and the local Christians, because he knew the people and the language. He worked within a flawed structure to achieve better results.

For mission in a crisis refugee situation how could one sustain the self-giving? how can Christians be facilitated and supported by their brothers and sisters around the globe?

Vinoth Ramachandra introduces a different perspective

I live in Sri Lanka which, along with Somalia, Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan and several other countries, seems to belong to an international 'blacklist' where travel is concerned. Every Sri Lankan needs a visa simply to transit in any European/North American airport, let alone leave the airport to visit friends or do any sightseeing. Even applying for such transit visas is time-consuming, expensive, and involves answering a lot of humiliating questions. Owing to the silly antics of a few, all who carry the same passports are stripped of their individuality and treated as members of a criminal collective. The innocent are punished for the guilt of others. In any other area of life, such behaviour

would be condemned as barbaric. International travel exposes the hypocrisy behind the liberal rhetoric of equality and individual rights.

This is also why I am opposed to a blanket amnesty for all visa 'overstayers' (or 'undocumented workers' to use the US terminology). Such amnesties perpetuate the same collectivist thinking. There are many genuine political refugees/asylees (and others who have been deceived by unscrupulous criminal gangs) whose cases need to be heard with understanding, generosity and compassion. But I know of people here who are relatively secure and well-off but who have lied, cheated and even forged documents to obtain visas to the West. I also know people with *bona fide* motives and impeccable credentials who have been refused travel visas to a Western nation simply because a family member had 'overstayed' his/her visa. A blanket amnesty would be a slap-in-the-face for such honest travellers, who probably constitute the majority.

For instance, I overheard a US immigration official telling an applicant in the US embassy in Colombo, 'Your brother went to study in the US and didn't return. We assume you will do the same unless you can prove to me otherwise.' I felt like telling him, 'If he overstayed, that's your problem, not this man's. You have the resources to find him and fine him or send him back. If you have not, isn't it because your government has allowed him to stay and work?' However like a coward, I remained silent. Where immigration officials are concerned, we are all reduced to cowardly submission. For there is no higher court of appeal against a local embassy/consulate.

Now for another aspect to migration. No less than seventy per cent of foreign PhD students in the US become US citizens. The Australian government openly advertises for Sri Lankan professionals (engineers, accountants, doctors, et al) to emigrate as families. I have friends who have spent upto a year in Australia without a job, but drawing on Australian social security, with the full blessing of the Australian government. At the same time, the latter exercises one of the most brutal policies against poor asylees and economic migrants. Many of the well-off Asians settled in Australia share their new government's views on immigration. (It is a well-known fact that migrants everywhere are often the most xenophobic of citizens, jealously guarding their newly-acquired jobs and privileges!). The irony is that many affluent churches preach 'family values' while their members employ domestic helpers from Indonesia, Thailand or the Philippines who are forced to leave their young children behind them. The demand in high and middle-income countries for 'cheap' labour has meant that more and more children in the poorer countries are growing up without one or more parent.

It is perhaps impossible for you who have British passports and can holiday in almost every part of the world to understand just how humiliating international travel can be for most of the world's population. And I am not talking of those forced to flee their homes because of war, genocide, political repression or environmental disasters - experiences I have been hitherto spared and of which I am not qualified to speak. Poor countries also put up barriers against other poor countries. I need a visa to travel, for whatever purpose, to almost every country in the world, most of which do not have embassies or consulates in Sri Lanka. This means that most of the world is barred to me. How much more to

another Sri Lankan citizen who does not have my educational qualifications or financial assets or international connections that enable me to travel to, at least, some countries from time to time?

I have often puzzled over this phenomenon. I can understand the fear that a nation has of being swamped by migrants or refugees from an unstable or poverty-stricken neighbour. But does Mali or Mongolia really fear that Sri Lankans are going to turn up in droves, laying claim to social security or depriving locals of their jobs? I can only put it down to the dead hand of bureaucracy, which has accompanied the idolatry of the nation-state. Rules are drawn up imitatively and passed down to immigration officers. Bureaucrats cannot allow exceptions. They cannot think 'outside the box'. In the meantime, the wrong kind of exceptions are allowed in rich nations. Corrupt politicians and business tycoons can buy British citizenship easily.

The affluent Sri Lankan migrants in the West (all of them now with Western passports) are one of the principal reasons why the war in this nation has dragged on for so long. The families of both Sinhalese cabinet ministers and the Tamil Tiger leadership are safely ensconced in Western capitals, and are not affected by the bloodshed that they encourage and fund from abroad. So I hope British Christians will temper their (justified) enthusiasm for the new 'cultural diversity' in Britain with a more global perspective that takes into account such factors as the 'brain drain' (of people often trained at local taxpayers' expense), funding of terrorist states and anti-state movements around the world, and the complicity of Britain and other rich nations in the local conflicts that generate mass migrations (e.g. the arms trade, offshore tax havens- most of which are British protectorates- that help corrupt politicians and army generals, as well as criminal networks involved in human trafficking).

You have taken up a thorny but very important issue for your next BIAMS consultation. It is thorny because it impinges on so many other issues (and I have only hinted at some) and cannot be discussed in isolation from these.

Kirsteen Kim gives notice of another conference on the theme

"The impact of migration on the church and the ecclesial context" is the theme of a 6-8 June 2007 conference in Nairobi, Kenya of the Global Ecumenical Network on Migration (GEM). To be opened by Kenya's minister for immigration, and hosted by the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), the conference will be attended by representatives of churches, church-related organizations and ecumenical bodies in Africa, Asia, Australia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, North America and the Pacific.

Philip Thomas looks for essential themes in the discussion so far:

Thanks to all who have offered ideas and experience to the preliminary discussion on Mission and Migration. With the BIAMS Conference only a week away, I wonder what essential issues have emerged so far? There is room in the programme for exploration of particular interests in the way the theme is approached, and these might also provide a useful conceptual framework on which to plot the different presentations that we look forward to in Cambridge.

Looking over the exchanges (which I will try to summarise for the conference, and then put on the BIAMS web-site) I think they raise four areas for elaboration:

Biblical and theological foundations. What principles and precedents should inform distinctively Christian contributions to current thinking and acting over the issue of migration?

Migration, politics and power. People on the move as a result of war, exile and environmental pressures; issues of asylum and human trafficking; economic and political migration. How might Christians discern the *Mission Dei* in the midst of global population movements?

Global community and national identity. As markets become increasingly open, there are demands that borders (to some people at least) should be more securely closed. And what should we look forward to when migrant communities become embedded in host cultures - assimilation, integration or separation. What is the cash-value of 'multi-culturalism'?

Churches and migrants. How can local churches minister to new arrivals in their midst? Does Christian mission end with 'aid' or does it extend to 'advocacy' on their behalf? And what of 'reverse mission', and the influence of newcomers and diaspora churches on British and Irish Christianity?

Do you think that those headings cover the sort of issue that have been raised in previous discussion? Do they provide a basis for further discussion - at the Conference or in this forum?

Comments, additions and elaborations on that summary

I remain concerned about two things; (1) we must not get bogged down by topical questions, led by politicians, on the 'problem' of immigration - we must not forget that historically migration has been the spur for most mission outreach; (2) we must not forget that the real host nations are in the South, not the North - hence Vinoth Ramachandra's contribution was specially valuable, pointing out the complexities of migration and showing that simplistic answers, at either extreme, are almost always false. I hope that next week we shall hear their voices. **(Roger Bowen)**

I would add to the last heading (churches and migration) 'integration', or something similar which could lead to a discussion about the place of migrants in our churches. I see for example that in Glasgow a number of new black churches are emerging constituted by new migrants in particular from Africa. I have had comments from people implying that some of these new churches are a result of less than a very warm welcome for the new arrival from 'indigenous' churches. **(Nelu Balaj)**

I was wondering if we could engage with Lord Carey, asking him the theological foundations for his urging new PM to tighten controls on immigration.

See link
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6234542.stm> (Jeff Kirby)

I assume that a Christian understanding of land (ownership/trusteeship/stewardship, etc) will be integral to the discussions. As I visit different parts of the world and try to understand different cultures, so often it is the varied understandings of what land means to people that hold the key to successful living together. I expect it will be raised under 'national identity', but I thought it would be helpful to raise it before the BIAMS conference - if totally unhelpful to raise it so soon before the conference starts! (Mike King)

I have some work-in-progress on concepts of territory in Islam and the Bible. (Ida Glaser)

Two points - first the CTBI will issue, has issued an extensive statement on immigration issues and govt policy largely drafted by Paul Weller, based on a group chaired by Nicholas Sagvosky (they produced one last year on Asylum which may be on the CTBI website).

Second - a very practical issue is what effect, influence transforming effect should immigrants (already Christian or converted) have on existing 'native' churches. This is particularly relevant to the C of E with the arrival of Christians from different parts of the world - and for me with my Iran connections and the numbers of Iranians being converted in this country on how they contribute to learn from the C of E as it is - and is changing - what are the practical missiological and ecclesiological models? (John Clark)

Living in a community that is almost entirely migrant (1st – 4th generation), where my children are the only 'ancient british' pupils at their school, and being myself that strange creature a 'third culture kid' (having been born in India of missionary parents) ... these are issues that resonate deeply.

One issue I have not seen addressed very much is that of the call to become 'rooted' in the place we are in, however little we have chosen to be there. It seems to me there is an important and often neglected theological theme in places like Jeremiah 29, where the people of Israel (migrants in Babylon) long to be 'home' but are challenged by God against all their instincts to work for the peace and prosperity of their new home – and to be involved in social, ecological, economic, political and spiritual regeneration (all five dimensions are clearly there in Jeremiah 29). For both 'host' and 'migrant' communities there is a big challenge here, to encourage and enable newly arrived communities to play a full part in the new place they find themselves in. (Dave Bookless)

And as a follow on to Mike's e-mail if we take even a cursory look at the historic conflicts that have resulted in so much forced migration it is easy to see how important these understandings of 'land' are. What might a Biblical theology of land look like if we are moving away from the traditional nation state understanding? (Janice Price)

Thanks to all who have taken part in this discussion. I will try to incorporate the additional comments in the summary to be put forward for the discussion groups on the Wednesday of the Conference. (Philip Thomas)